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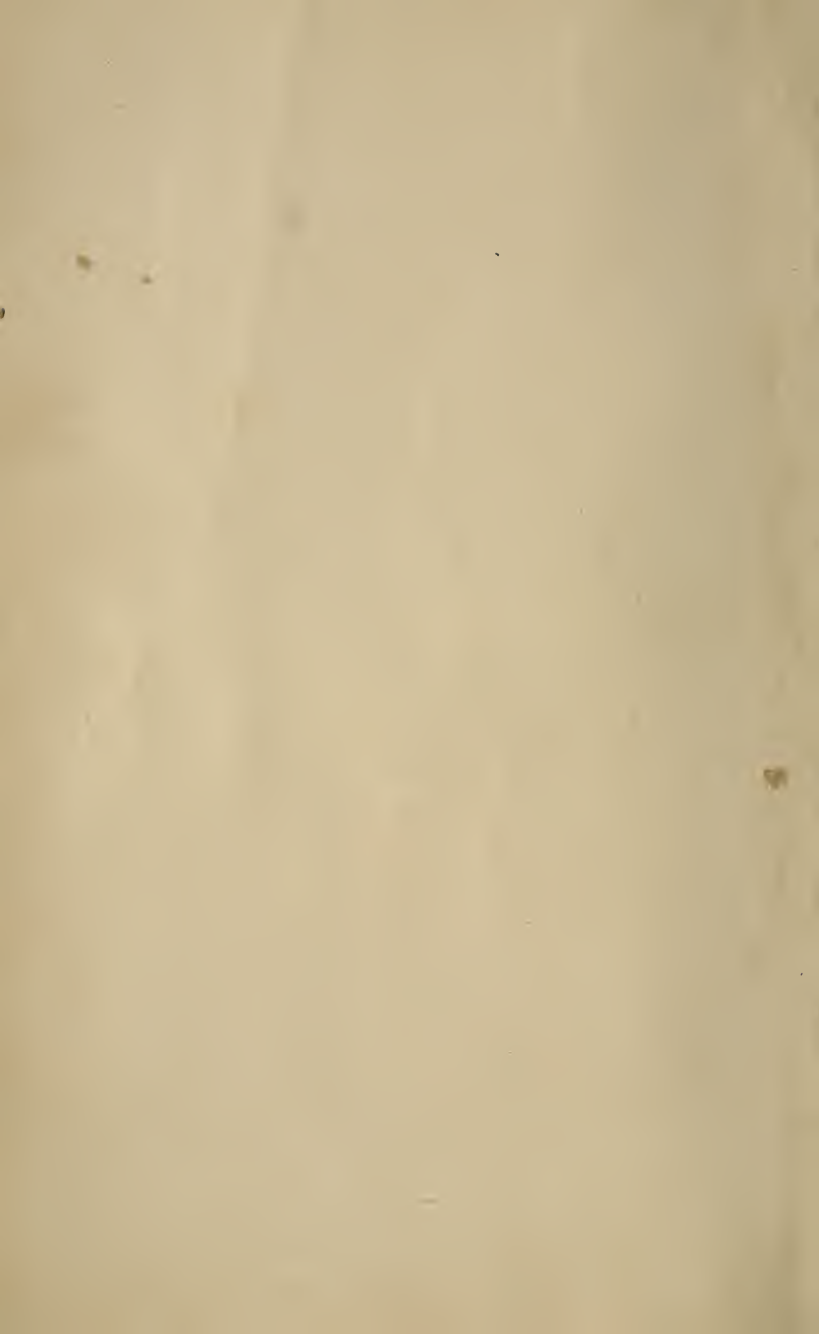
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# GENTLEMAN JACK;

OR,

# LIFE ON THE ROAD.

A ROMANCE OF INTEREST, ABOUNDING IN HAIR-BREADTH ESCAPES,  
OF THE MOST EXCITING CHARACTER.

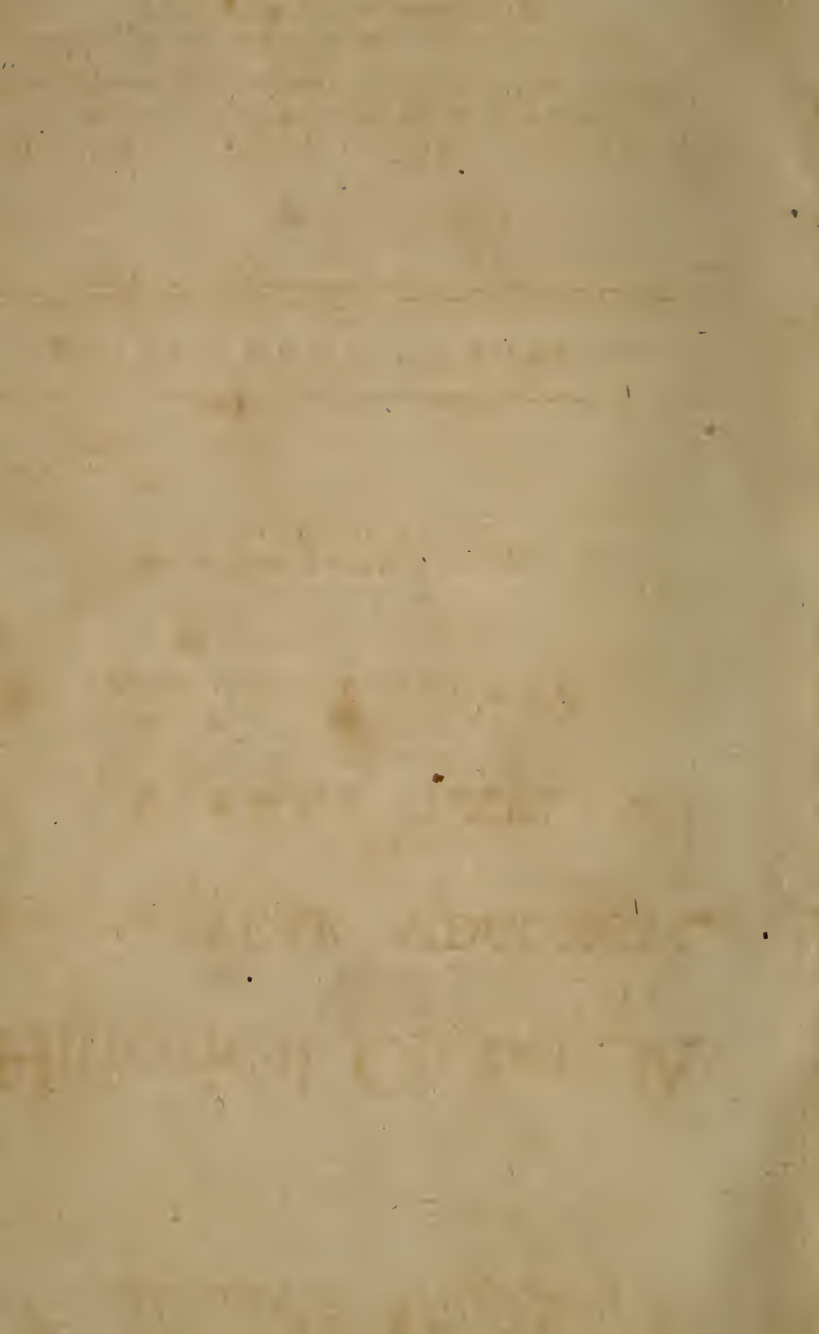
BY THE AUTHOR OF "PAUL CLIFFORD."

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LONDON:

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE Romance, if Romance it may be called, of "GENTLEMAN JACK ; OR, LIFE ON THE ROAD," having attained an amount of popular favour never before experienced in the annals of periodical literature, is now presented to the reading public in its complete form, with the conviction of the publisher that it will be ever considered as a standard work.

The extraordinary success of this work may be accounted for from the fact that there is not a page of it that does not glow with a life-like reality. Every incident is not only possible, but highly probable, and naturally flows from some one feeling it, although from the antecedent circumstances it would be impossible to anticipate what is to come.

We need not inform the readers of the following pages that the personages therein represented

" In their habit as they lived,"

are not the coinages of fancy, but realities ; and many of the surprising adventures of Claude Duval herein mentioned are perfectly authentic.

With many thanks, both to the press and to the public, the publisher begs to present the work as a whole to the lovers of rational fiction.

London, February, 1852.

Gen. Ac. Ray 3. 10. 58. B. 10. 11. 24

# PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive and accessible account of the history of the United States from the time of its discovery to the present. It is intended for the general reader, and is not intended to be a technical or scientific work. The author has endeavored to present the facts of our history in a clear and concise manner, and to show the causes and consequences of the events which have shaped our nation.

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# GENTLEMAN JACK;

OR, LIFE ON THE ROAD.



HAMPSTEAD HEATH IN 1780 — A NEW MOON.—THE GIBBET AND THE OATH.

THE corpse had hung in the gibbet till autumnal rains had bleached face, hands, and clothing. Suddenly there came such a gust of strong wind that it swung the body horizontally from the gibbet. Two figures emerged from among a clump of firs. They were a girl and a lad; the girl clung to the boy, and in terror said:—"Oh, Claude, Claude, are you sure that you saw it?" "Saw it, May? Yes, as plainly as—as—I now see the moon in the clouds. It was the figure of our poor father." "You know, Claude, that our poor father is no more. Let us return home again. Oh, Claude, Claude, you know where this leads to." "I do. But it was towards here that the figure pointed." "You did not scream, Claude." "No, sister May, no. I saw the figure move onwards the little window that looks this way, and it pointed in the direction of this place and then I sobbed 'father, father, father!' when it seemed to

roll away like a mist, and I heard nothing but the wind moaning round the cottage."

"It was very dreadful, Claude."

"Yes, yes, and yet I was more sad than frightened, so you see I rose and called to you, May, to tell you that I was going out upon the heath, and you would come with me. I have brought the old pistol with me, May; then we will now for the first time, look upon that which we knew there was to be seen on the heath, and yet never dared approach, for I think that was what my father meant to-night."

As this brief conversation was proceeding, the orphans, for such they were, had been ascending a raised portion of the heath, and when they reached the summit of what might be termed a little knoll, the young moon pressed out again from among the drifting clouds, and the girl in the distance—a distance that looked greater than it really was at that dubious hour, caught a sight of the gibbet. With a cry of agony she threw herself upon her brother's breast, exclaiming in thrilling accents—

"Claude, Claude, it will break our hearts. It will—it will."

The boy guessed well what it was she had seen, and he shook with a visible emotion for a few moments, before he dared himself look in the direction to which she had alluded. Then however, while her fair face was hidden on his bosom, and her long silken hair streamed about him, for it had escaped from its confinement, he shaded his eyes with his disengaged hand, and looked at the gibbet.

It could be but faintly seen, but if only the shadow of it had met his eyes it must have greatly moved him. The moon disappeared again behind a drifting cloud, and like a phantom the gibbet was gone.

"May, dear May," he whispered, "look up and speak to me. I am quite sure that, very dreadful as this thing is to us, that the dread of how dreadful it is must be worse than the reality. Come on, and lean as heavily upon me as you please; I am sure that our father whom we know is in heaven, meant us to pay this sad visit to night, as we were about to leave the place to-morrow. Come on, do not tremble so, May, courage, courage. We are not so utterly wretched even now poor, friendless and forlorn, as we really are, as he, Sir Lionel Faversham, who persecuted our poor father to death, and yet knew his innocence."

"He—he was innocent, Claude."

"He was. He told us that he was, and we will believe him as we believe in God, May."

"Oh, yes, yes. It is something to know that he did not do the deed they said he did, Claude. That although he perished fearfully he perished innocently. I dare not look up again, but—but I will not leave you, Claude. I will go with you, but you will not ask me to look up again. Tell me you will not, for I know it will kill me to do so, or drive me mad, which would be worse. Oh, Claude—Claude, what will become of us?"

She sobbed hysterically upon her brother's shoulder, and stout hearted as the boy was, he now shook with emotion, and could hardly command his voice sufficiently to speak articulately. He did, however, after a slight pause, manage to breathe some comfort to the heart of May.

"Creep gently on," he said, "and you shall not look up, May, if you do not wish. For myself, I feel that before I leave this place, I hope for ever, I ought to take one last farewell glance at our poor father. Come on gently. See, the moon is peeping out again."

It was so. Through a wide straggling opening in the clouds, the bright and beautiful moon showed her silver crescent, and sent down a flood of silvery radiance upon the earth. The two mourners, for such indeed they were, slowly approached the gibbet, and now they were so near to that dreaded and truly dreadful object, that May felt she dared not raise her eyes from the ground, lest they should be blasted by the awful sight before her. To Claude, even, it was an act evidently of desperate resolution to look up, and when he did so, it seemed almost as if, by some more than natural power, he had wrenched his head in that

direction. Immediately on the other side of the gibbet was a bridle path, and beyond that again was a deep declivity descending into the road-way for carriages, but all in that direction was gloom, for the tall fir trees completely prevented any observations beyond the gibbet, at which Claude continued gazing, until his eyes were so filled with tears that he could see nothing, and then he dashed them away with his disengaged hand, and looked again.

"Father, father," he said, "they murdered you. You did no murder, although Sir Lionel took an oath to say he saw you do it; and why he was so wicked, God only knows."

"Claude, Claude," gasped May, "I—I never told you—but now in the presence of this dreadful object I feel that I ought."

"What do you mean, May?"

"I have thought at times that I knew why our poor father offended Sir Lionel Faversham; I do not rightly understand it, but Sir Lionel met me once upon the heath. He dismounted from his horse, and flinging the bridle across his arm, he would walk by my side to our cottage-door, and as we went, he asked me if I should like a coach to ride in, and to be a lady. Then when we reached the cottage he whispered something to our poor father, who, thereupon, raised his hand and struck him. Sir Lionel left the cottage without a word, and our father turning to me, kissed my cheek, and said, 'Never mention this affair, my May. It is quite over.'"

"And soon after came the—the charge against our father of murdering the steward of Sir Lionel in the shrubbery of Faversham House," cried Claude. "Oh, God—God, I see it all."

He clasped his hands, and dropped upon his knees at the foot of the gibbet.

"I swear," he cried, "I solemnly swear——"

"Oh, no, no, no," sobbed and entreated May. "Take no wild oath of revenge, Claude. Let us now pursue our original intention of going to London, and there seeking some honest means of livelihood, turning our backs for ever upon this place, which must, even to think of, be a horror to us."

"I will have revenge—no—not revenge, but justice. Henceforth a sense of my father's wrongs will make me a foe to all mankind, except those who shall assist me to avenge them; here in presence of his poor remains, I swear——"

"Hush! hush! Claude, do you hear nothing?"

The tramp of a horse's foot upon the bridle path, just beyond the gibbet, came upon their ears, and by one accord they both leant forward, to listen in the direction from whence the sound proceeded.

"Who is it?" whispered May. "Who is it?"

"Some chance traveller on the heath," replied Claude. "Listen! listen! and yet it is a strange time of night, and the road is seldom used except by those who are familiar with it, and who are going to Faversham House. Stand in the shadow, Mary—of—of——"

The gibbet he would have said, but with a shudder he paused, and did not pronounce the word. May understood what he meant, and crouched down sobbing by the foot of the appalling object. The horseman evidently approached rapidly, and yet there seemed to be an unsteady, uncertain mode of progression about the steed, as it neared the spot where the corpse hung in its grim corslet of chains. It seemed as if the rider by whip, rein and spurs, were urging the animal to more speed than it chose, or had the power from fatigue or otherwise to make. At length, just such another light cloud which had produced a dimness over the surrounding scene, had swept across the face of the moon, and all was clear again, the horseman reached the point of his route, which was directly opposite to the gibbet, then it seemed as if some sudden panic had seized the horse, for it reared and plunged instead of proceeding onwards.

The moonbeams fell upon the figure of the traveller. The light wind carried his voice, as he uttered an imprecation, to the ears of Claude, who clutching his sister's wrist with a vehemence that forced a slight scream from her lips, exclaimed—

"It is Sir Lionel!"

Like a lump of lead, and with a heavy dashing sound, the dead body at this moment fell from the gibbet, and lay in a huddled-up ghastly mass at the feet of Claude—a mass of rusty iron, tattered clothing, and half decomposed flesh and bleached bones. Claude was upon his knees. The drops of mortal agony rolled from his brow. He plunged his hand into the breast of his clothing. The moonbeams fell glittering upon the barrel of a large holster pistol. It was levelled across the dead body, finding a resting place upon some of the iron work that had enclosed the head of the gibbeted malefactor. A sharp ringing report followed, and then horse and man rolled over the declivity, and disappeared in the profound darkness beyond. There was a crashing of branches of trees—a struggle and a cry, and then the thundering sound of the horse's hoofs, as he galloped madly onward, came upon the ears of Claude.

"'Tis done," said the lad. "'Tis done. The steed gallops home, but the rider remains on the heath. 'Tis done. I could not miss such a shot as that. Father, you are avenged! You are avenged!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST ROBBERY.—THE ROAD TO LONDON.—THE INITIATION OF CLAUDE.

FOR a few moments now there was a death-like stillness, and Claude might well be, as more calm reflection came to his aid, alarmed at the consequences of the act he had just committed, for however, in the heat of his passion, or the excitement of a moment it might bear the impress of a just retribution, its results could not be a matter of indifference.

It was from the clear intelligence and candid mind of his sister that Claude now sought for counsel what he was to do.

"May, May!" he said. "You know what has happened, May speak to me—speak, do not chill my heart by this silence—dear May speak to me."

She was silent still, and then Claude by a more accurate look at her pale face, discovered that she had fainted, and probably quite unconscious, that any such act as he had committed had been done, and this thought produced a singular revulsion of feeling in Claude.

"She knows nothing," he said to himself. "She fainted perhaps before the shot was fired, and it was not all fright which caused her to do so—exhaustion—weakness from want of proper food, has some share in it.—Oh God, that it should be so. That one so good and so beautiful as you are, my poor May, should want what to so many are superfluities.—What can I do. What—what ought I to do?"

He rested his head upon his hands for some few moments, and then he made a resolution which will be best understood in its results, which were immediate.

After satisfying himself that May was still perfectly insensible, he gently crept from her side, and passing the gibbet made his way to the brink of the abyss down which Sir Lionel Faversham had rolled.—Then holding tightly to an alder tree which grew close to the edge; he tried to pierce with his eyes the gloom below, but he could see nothing. The rank vegetation effectually excluded all light, and to all appearance it just seemed like looking into a well. His determination, however, was made, and clutching at whatever roots or branches afforded him a chance of support, he slowly but safely descended the precipitous bank.

The depth was about thirty feet, and it took Claude some time, before he reached the road-way that wound through the hollow of the heath at its base. The moon was still struggling with the fleecy clouds which seemed resolved like some advancing host to obliterate her brightness, but at intervals there was light enough

to distinguish one object from another. The horse Claude knew was not there, but the rider he fully expected to find, nor was he disappointed, for a long dark object met his gaze, and he thought that a strange groaning sound came faintly upon his ears.

Creeping along with his body bent almost to the earth, and his hands outstretched, he made his way for the few paces that separated him from the body, and then he touched it. At the moment of doing so he shuddered, for there was to the imagination of the boy, something terrible about a corpse; but, muttering some indistinct words to himself, in which the name of his sister was intermingled, he gathered courage and began to execute his purpose, which was to find if the fallen man had money with him, which would enable him (Claude), and his sister to reach the metropolis in safety, and there subsist for a time until some better fortune should enable them to look more smilingly upon their fate.

"It is a just retribution," said Claude, "I—wonder if he carries a purse with him? This need never be known to May. It never shall be known, or to her perception each coin, and each particle of food purchased with it, would seem to be accursed."

His fingers trembled so, that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could make the requisite search for the valuables which Sir Lionel might be supposed to have about him, but at length he found a long silken purse, which, from its weight, and the rich jingle of its contents, he judged contained what to him was a considerable sum in gold. Twice his hands had touched a bunch of gold seals that hung from the watch pocket of Faversham, and as often had Claude shaken his head, and left them, but now he lingered and listened attentively—not a sound came upon the night air, and for the first time, he showed a symptom of that mad-brained recklessness, which was a characteristic of his after career, for snatching the watch from the pocket, where it had lain so snugly, he said,—

"It's just as well to be able to know the time when one pleases."

The watch was a repeater, and in his haste, Claude pressed the spring, when, to his surprise, for he had no notion of such a contrivance, the little silvery bell struck one, and then chimed a quarter.

"Hush! hush!" said Claude, quite involuntarily, as he sprang to his feet. He then placed both watch and money in his pocket, and commenced clambering again up the steep ascent to where he had left May.

There was a strange feeling at his heart now, and a kind of dizziness about his brain, which Claude could not, or fancied he could not account for, although had he been a little more inquisitive into the sources of his feelings, and a little more candid with himself, he might have come to the conclusion, that those feelings were the result of the consciousness that he was both a murderer and a robber. The excitement of a moment, and strongly outraged feelings might do something in extenuation of the pistol-shot, but as regarded the purse and the watch, there could be invented no such excuses.

But the deed was done, so when Claude scrambled on, and when he had just reached the brink of the precipice, he nearly fell the whole distance back again, so startled was he by the sudden touch of some one on his arm from above, and the pronunciation of his name. The accents were those of May, and he recovered, saying—

"Oh, May, how you frightened me."

"Claude, Claude, what has happened. Tell me what has happened. Did not Sir Lionel fall over the bank, Claude?"

"Yes, and after that I heard the horse's hoofs upon the road towards the Bull and Bush."

"Then he was not killed by his fall?"

"Certainly not, May—She knows nothing, and in her confusion has forgotten the pistol shot," thought Claude, "and so far things turn out as I would wish them."

"Shall we come home?" said May, placing her arm across her eyes, lest they should take in a view of the horrible gibbet.

Claude was silent for a few moments and then he said:—"You know, May, we have talked often of leaving here for ever; why should we not do so to-night? There is only the cottage that we need care for—suppose we go to London at once, May, and see what fortune has in store for us. I have a little money, and we will so husband that that it shall last us a long time. What say you, May? The distance is short—what is that?"

The jingle of bells and the creaking of wheels had come upon his ears, and almost as he asked the question of what it was, he replied to it by adding—

"Oh, it is the Hendon waggon, which has just left the Bull and Bush. There is a chance for us, May—we can meet it about half a mile further on, where the road rises to the level of the heath, and so go on to London, and never again with my good will shall I look upon Hampstead-heath by night or by day."

"We are alone," sobbed May, "in the wide world, We have no friends but each other. Where you go, Claude, there will I go, and, Heaven knows, this place is too full of heart-breaking recollections to bind us to it. Let us go at once."

Claude was well pleased to find no opposition from May to leaving, and without casting another look at the awful spectacle that was at the foot of the gibbet, although they both lingered a little, and May wept bitterly, they left the spot making their way across the heath, guided by the monotonous sound of the bells that were at the heads of the waggon horses.

"Stop!" cried Claude, as he and May met the waggon near the Castle. "Stop. Can you give us a lift to London? We can pay."

The waggoner paused and stopped his team, and seemed to be considering a little, after which he said, half aloud—

"It's not very likely, now, surely, and I may as well earn a shilling." Then he cried in a louder voice. "Scramble in at the back, you will find lots of straw. Be quick about it, for I am rather late to-night—that's right—but, look you, if your places are wanted you must get out again and ask no questions, mind that now."

"There will be room enough for us, and a dozen others too, I should think," said Claude, as he assisted May into the waggon, and sprang in after her.

"I don't know that," muttered the waggoner, "and I am half afraid now of the captain. Yet it's a chance, and I don't see why I should not earn an extra shilling when I can. They are only a boy and girl, too, and can be easily put out if needs be, and yet—I don't know—I wish I had'nt—"

Thus muttering his doubts and fears about something which was quite unintelligible to Claude, the waggoner put his horses again in motion, and they crept at a lazy pace over the heath, which then had none of the snug villas and smart cottages about it that it has now; for with the exception of two trees, and Lord Mansfield's large house, there was not a more desolate spot to be found, at night, than the beautiful heath of Hampstead.

For a good half mile further on, no house or light was to be found, and the waggon, which was a large covered one, with an amazing width of entrance at the back, and containing nothing but a quantity of loose straw, had advanced about half that distance when Claude's heart beat violently as he heard distinctly the gallop of a horse across the heath, for a dread that in some inexplicable way the murder and robbery of Sir Lionel Faversham might have been discovered, and suspicion placed upon him, was busy at his brain. A sensation of absolute sickness came over him, as he heard the hollow ringing sound of the horse's hoofs upon the common.



The waggon stopped.

"Hilloa!" cried the waggoner, "do you hear, or have you gone to sleep? You can't stay any longer. Come out directly; or it will be worse for you! Come out, I say, or we shall all be in a nice mess. Confound me for a fool to take you till I was clear of the common!"

"Who is it? Who is it?" cried Claude, as the sound of the horses' feet came nearer and more distinct, giving evidence that he who was approaching would soon be close to the waggon.

"You would be none the wiser if I told you," replied the man, speaking hurriedly and betraying the utmost anxiety to get rid of his guests. "Scramble out any way, so that you be off at once. It's too late, he's here, I'm in for it at last!"

All this happened with such rapidity, and May clung so closely to her brother who was likewise rather entangled in the straw that lay so thick at the bottom of the waggon that even had he felt fully inclined to obey the hurried and rather vehement commands of the waggoner, he could not have done so with sufficient celerity to save the latter part of his speech, to the effect that it was too late. Under these circumstances, then Claude did the best thing he could, which was to remain ready to act according to circumstances getting as far as he could with May still clinging to him to the upper end of the capacious vehicle.

The night was now darker than before, for a mass of clouds had come across the young moon, threatening to obscure its light effectually for some hours so that Claude had no sense but that of hearing through which he could obtain any information.

"What do you tell me old Peter," cried a careless laughing sort of voice, "two persons in the crib—eh? A girl and a boy! Well, well, no matter. I like good company, and they will be none the worse for a ride to London with me. Where are they? Tell them to get up to the far end, and they will come to no harm. Throw open the canvass, Peter—don't you hear that there's half-a-dozen horsemen on my track?"

To the intense astonishment of Claude and the alarm of May, the horse with its rider bounded lightly into the waggon, and the canvass at the back was immediately closed upon them both.

"Down, Silversides! down mare," cried the man, and by the motions of the horse among the straw, Claude was aware that it had lain down on its side. He drew May as far as possible away from dangerous contiguity to the animal's feet, and then mustering courage to speak, he said,—

"Sir, we are not disposed to be in your way. We only want a lift to London."

"Very good," was the careless reply, "but mark me, my lad, if you prate of what you have seen to night I'll find you out, if you were as difficult to get at as truth in the bottom of a well, and cut your throat! Who are you?"

"My name is Claude Duval, and this is my sister May. Some people, however, will call me Jack," I don't know why. Pray who are you?"

"Humph, you want to know who I am?"

"I should like to know, for somehow I think we shall be friends yet."

"Do you my lad—well then I don't recollect my real name, but among my pals I am called Sixteen-string Jack, and this is my mare, Silversides."

## CHAPTER II.

SIXTEEN-STRING JACK FINDS AN APT PUPIL. — THE BROTHER AND SISTER SEPARATE.

AFTER the mysterious personage who had so unceremoniously sprung with his horse into the waggon, had thus spoken, there was a pause of some few minutes duration, for neither Claude nor his sister could make much of the rather singular name of Sixteen-string Jack, and they feared to make a comment upon it lest

they might offend one who evidently had the power to turn them out of the waggon if he chose.

"What are you thinking about," at length cried Jack, "I warrant now you are nicely puzzled to know what I am, so I will tell you; I keep a toll on the Great North Road, and as I don't like to trust anybody to collect my dues I do it myself, and as there are unreasonableness people who object to pay, I carry a good brace of bull dogs with me."

"Bull dogs, sir?" said Claude.

"Aye pistols. These are my bull-dogs, and they never bark when I don't want them, but when I do, they open tongue to some purpose. Then again some folks after they have paid, go prating about it, and get others to ask disagreeable questions, so that I give the spur to my good steed, Silversides, and off we are over hill and dale like the wind. It's a brave life, I'm the real lord of many manors. The king of the road, and whoever travels by moonlight is a subject of mine, and must pay my taxes. What do you think of all that, my lad?"

"I hardly know what to think," said Claude.

"Don't speak to him," whispered May; "don't speak to him, he's a highwayman, Claude. Let us get out of here and walk."

"Hist!" cried Sixteen-string Jack, suddenly, "not a word, on your lives. Don't you hear?"

Claude listened, and distinctly then heard the tramp of horses feet, and in a few moments a loud authoritative voice cried,—

"Hilloa! Pull up waggoner. How far have you come, my man?" and by the trampling of horses and the bustle around, Claude felt certain that several horsemen had congregated about the waggon. He could hear too, by the hard breathing of the steeds, that they had been going at a quick pace, while the tone of inquiry of him who spoke was hurried and anxious.

"Woa!" cried the waggoner, and the horses paused, while the jingling of the bells at their heads, nearly ceased—"Woa! Anan sir? what *wur you* a saying?"

"How far have you come down the road, my man?"

"Oh, how far? From Goulders Green."

"Has a horseman passed you on the heath?"

"One did.—A chap on a bay horse, and was'nt me a going it. Hounds! I thought he'd a been right over me waggon and all, I did. Hark ye my man says he, if you say you saw any one to night on the heath, says he, you may as well cut your own throat, says he, cos it will save me the trouble, says he, of finding you out and cutting it for you, says he, and then off he was like a shot; drat him I aint afeard of him, drat his impudence."

"Our man without a doubt," said the horseman. "Which way did he go?"

"Beyant there, to Caen Wood I take it."

"Follow me gentlemen, this will be a good night's work if we rid the neighbourhood of that notorious highwayman, Sixteen-string Jack, I fired at him, and perhaps he is wounded, in which case he cannot hold out long. This way gentlemen, follow me, and don't spare whip nor spur."

The party of pursuers galloped off across the heath, and the waggoner without taking any further notice of the transaction, put his horses into motion again and entered the village of Hampstead.

"They were looking for you," said Claude to the highwayman.

"They were, my lad, but you see they are baulked; I wonder what the time is, I gave my watch this morning to Nan Eyles, and the one a gentleman lent me about half an hour since, upon the heath, has run down."

"I can tell you the time," said Claude, on the impulse of the moment producing the repeater he had taken from the pocket of Sir Lionel Faversham. "I can tell you exactly the time, I dare say, and it strikes too, though I don't know how exactly to make it."

It was too dark for the watch to be seen, but the highwayman was surprised to find that such an article was in the possession of such a lad, and he said,—

"Hand it to me. If it be a repeater I can make it strike."

By the feel, rather than by any aid from the dim light that now and then from a miserable oil-lamp came into the waggon, Claude managed to place the watch in the hands of his new acquaintance, and then he had the pleasure, in a moment, of hearing the little fairy-like bell sound the hour.

The different persons in that waggon were very differently affected by those slight and musical sounds.

The highwayman felt that there was a mystery attached, and he held his peace, and listened for the remarks of his companions, as being most likely to afford him some clue to what was as yet a perfect puzzle.

Claude was occupied with a mixed feeling of joy and pain. He listened to the sounds of the repeater with almost childish pleasure, but he felt at the same moment that May's suspicions would be aroused, and that he must in some way or other, either by falsehood, which he held in contempt, or by the plain truth, satisfy his sister's doubts.

But to poor May the tinkling sounds were full of nought but horror. Almost intuitively she seemed to be aware that the trinket was the prize of some lawless deed, committed when or how, she knew not. She had penetrated enough of their fellow companion's character to dread any closer connexion with him, and her soul was overshadowed by dread of disasters none the less appalling for being undefined, which loomed fearfully out from the darkness of the future. She felt that her brother's fate was in some way connected with the possession of the watch, which had appeared among them as mysteriously as if it were indeed one of those gifts of seeming value with which the spirits of evil were said to tempt men's souls. A moment only elapsed, when in a startled and fearful voice she broke the silence.

"Oh! Claude, Claude," sobbed May, "how came you by a watch?"

"What matters it," answered Claude, "where it came from? I have it, and that ought to be sufficient. It will make a pretty ornament for you, dear May, at holiday times, when fortune smiles once more upon us."

"Nay, talk not so, dear brother," whispered May, "I could feel no pleasure in wearing it, unless I knew how you came by it; and poor orphans as we are, and homeless wanderers too, Claude, I dare not hope for happy times for many a weary day to come. Set my heart at ease, then, and do not aggravate our present misfortunes by filling my mind with fears that I dare not give utterance to;" and May threw herself weeping on his neck.

"Fears! what have you to fear, May? Did you never hear of one person losing a watch on a dark night, and another person finding it?"

"Such a thing is quite possible," said May, "but even then, Claude, the watch would not be yours to keep or give to me. It would be your duty to hand it over to those who would find an owner for it."

"And many thanks I should get for that, sister. No, no, dry your tears, dear May, and rest satisfied that the watch shall not pass from my hands to another, owner or not owner, unless he who demands it is a better man than myself."

"Claude, Claude," exclaimed poor May, "how can you grieve me by saying so?—you cannot mean what you say."

"Ho, ho," cried Sixteen-string Jack, "I find you are a lad of mettle—eh? Come you may trust me, my lad. How came you by it? It's a dangerous companion for you, if there should be any hue and cry. You might do a worse thing than make me your friend in such an affair. You are silent—you are afraid to trust me. Perhaps that's natural; but have not I trusted you? A word from you to the horsemen that a minute since stopped the waggon, and I should have been taken. I could not have held my own against such odds, and then, as sure as to-morrow's sun will rise, I should have swung at Tyburn. I would fain do you a good turn. This watch may be your destruction."

"Keep it yourself, sir," said May, "and for God's sake, Claude, say not another word about it!"

"Nonsense, pretty face," laughed Jack; "for a pretty face I am sure you have however, let him speak out."

"I took it," said Claude, "upon the heath from Sir Lionel Faversham."

"You robbed Sir Lionel Faversham to night upon the heath? The devil! And is this the first little adventure of the sort?"

"The very first."

May burst into tears, and clung convulsively to her brother, as she sobbed,—

"The last likewise—the last, Claude, send back the watch, and ask for forgiveness. Oh, Claude, I thought we were unhappy, but I knew not what wretchedness really was until now; you will do as I implore you, Claude? speak, speak to me, and say you will do so."

"A dangerous course, miss," said Jack; "it's too late."

"Yes," said Claude, drawing a long breath, "yes, it's too late."

May sobbed bitterly, while the highwayman whispered to Claude,—

"You have done now what cannot be undone. As for expecting any mercy, even if you chose to seek it from Sir Lionel Faversham, you might as well expect a famished tiger merely to pass you in a lonely place with his compliments. If he can find you, he will not rest until you are in the cart on your road to Tyburn. You are fortunate in coming across me, for I can afford you both counsel and protection. When we get to London I can find an asylum for yourself and your sister until the hue and cry is over, and then you can take your own course, and unless I am very much mistaken, I can guess tolerably well what that course will be. A good horse!—a pair of pistols!—a light heart—and—"

"The road!" cried Claude. "Life on the road! I am poor and friendless—my father's bones bleach upon the heath. The sense of deep wrongs lies wrinkling at my heart, and I cannot bow and smile my way through life for a sup or a crust. The road for me! A short life and a merry one—and the sooner it begins, the better."

"Hurrah," said Jack; "you are the lad for me. Here we are at the King's Head, near Kentish Town, where I can give you a welcome until to-morrow, and then take you to a safer place still."

"No, no," cried May, in a voice that was almost a shriek of despair. "No, no,—oh, God, no!—Claude, Claude, you are mad!—You know not what you say!—I implore you by the tie that binds us, orphans as we are, to each other, to pause. Claude, Claude, for my sake, if not for your own, I beseech you not to give way to this frightful temptation. If you would seek happiness or peace, seek it in honour, truthfulness, and in honesty. You are on the threshold yet of life; you have not sinned deeply, Claude. Oh plunge not rashly onwards in the desperate course you suggest."

"Really, my dear," said the highwayman in a bantering tone, "you—"

"Peace, sir," said May, "interrupt me not. I am talking with a sister's love to a brother. Shame, shame, upon you who have become hardened in vice, to strive to warp him round to a love of your own evil courses. Shame, shame, upon you, for your own guilt, but doubly shameful is it to snatch from a right course, a being, who cannot know as you know, the evil that presents itself to him in such fleeting but alluring colours."

"Very good," said Jack, "say your say, my lass, and let your brother take his own course, it don't matter to me; my career is fixed."

The waggon had stopped, and a glare of light came into its interior from a lantern that a man who had come out of a public-house door held up, while he shaded his eyes with his hands. The scene within the waggon was a strange one. The highwayman's horse, which occupied by far the greater portion of the interior, lay upon its side, while Sixteen-string Jack kept his hand upon the creature's head. The highwayman's dress could now be distinguished—he wore a scarlet coat with large lappels, slightly disclosing an embroidered waistcoat, and the lace ends of a rich, but not by any means scrupulously clean cravat. From the tops of his boots hung a knot of coloured ribbon, from which he derived his cognomen of Sixteen-string Jack, and take him altogether he looked the very

beau ideal of the knight of the road at that strange period when highwaymen were as much public characters as Members of Parliament are now. Claude was standing up, and steadying himself by holding part of the awning of the waggon, while May was kneeling at his feet in that attitude of intensity she had assumed to warn him from his desperate purpose of taking to the road for a livelihood.

"Hilloa, captain!" said the man, "What's it all about? Have you got some company?"

"I have," replied the highwayman, and then, turning to May, he added, "you are doing me a great injustice; you fancy I want to persuade you brother to go upon the road, but you quite forget that he has been there already, and that all I offer him is protection from the consequences of what has happened on Hampstead Heath, to-night. Do you fancy now that he has nothing else to do but to wish to lead a quiet, virtuous life, and that he will be permitted to do so? I can tell you it is not so. He will be hunted like a wild beast for what he has already done, and all I want him to do, is to stand at bay a little. But you may settle it between you, what can it matter to me?"

"Claude, do not answer him;—Claude—Claude."

She rose, and flung herself upon her brother's neck, so that he was prevented from making any movement towards Sixteen-string Jack, but he held out his hand, and the highwayman nodded, as much as to say, I comprehend you, you have made your choice, and then, pointing to the inn, the door of which was kept rather uncomfortably open, he paused a moment, as if expecting Claude to make an effort to release himself from his sister's detaining embrace, and follow him.

"May," whispered Claude, "May, you know not what you advise, I will speak to you to-morrow; let us to-night accept of rest and shelter where we can."

"No—no. Better starve—better be destitute in the streets, than enter that house."

"I cannot make such a return for a kind offer."

"Say you will not, Claude, and I shall understand you, although I shall never believe that it is you who speaks."

"Listen to me, May; you shall be kept like a lady, your happiness and comfort shall be my first care, you shall want for nothing. Let me go—let me go."

She clung tighter still to him; Sixteen-string Jack laughed, and Claude's cheek reddened, for he thought as boys are apt to think, that it reflected upon his manhood to be detained thus by his sister, so he spoke more angrily.

"May, I say, release me!"

As these words were uttered he flung her from him, and jumped from the wagon. With a cry of grief she followed him, and clung again to his apparel, but again he shook her off, and rather roughly too, so that had not Sixteen-string Jack interposed his arm she would have fallen, but when she found to whom she owed the temporary support, she shrunk back from him with a shudder, and clasping her hands, looked for a moment or two earnestly at Claude.

"Come, sister May," he said, "the rain is falling and the wind blows still, come in."

"No," she said, "no; since it must be so, farewell, Claude."

In a moment she darted off, and was lost to sight in the darkness.

"Stop—stop," cried Claude, "May, you will not go alone and destitute. Stop—oh stop!—listen, May, I have more to say to you."

He would have rushed after her, but the highwayman held him by the arm, as he cried,—

"Pho! pho! she won't run far. You will have her back agan soon. Where is she to go to? make yourself comfortable. Landlord, bring a bowl of punch, and let it be the best you can make. I and my young friend must be better acquainted."

"But—but," said Claude. "but my sister——"

"Oh, you will see her again soon enough. Besides, what idea would you have of her affection, if she starts off from you, the first time there is

any little difference of opinion, while you, as a man ought to know best what to do?"

This was attacking Claude at his weak point.

"Oh yes," he said. "We men are not to be guided by women."

"Of course not. Come in, come in. The punch, landlord, the punch. The wind is cold indeed to-night. Claude Duval, you will be famous; I am no bad judge of such matters, and something seems to tell me that there never was yet a knight of the road, who will be able to compare with you. I shall be proud of you as a friend. Come on, come on, and we will talk more of it."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE LONELY HORSEMAN.—THE NIGHT ATTACK.—THE HUT.—A FAMILY CARRIAGE.

Two years have elapsed since the incidents recorded in our first and second chapters. It is a cold—bitterly cold night in January. The east wind is scattering sleet and hail like small sparks of sharpened steel through the air, and all as far as the eye can reach is darkness and desolation. In the midst of such a scene, and at a such a time, a solitary horseman is trotting across Ealing Common.

It is not by a regular bridle road that this horseman proceeds—on the contrary, whenever by the sound, and it is only by the sound that he can come to an opinion, in consequence of the darkness around him, he finds that his horse is on a beaten track, he turns aside until again there is nothing beneath the cautious hoofs but the green turf, or small pools of water into which it almost each moment splashes.

"Now by all that's good," muttered the horseman, as he clenched his teeth against the keen wind, and with his disengaged right hand, dashed the half blinding sleet from before his eyes. "I would not have come out on such a night as this, had it not been that the gaming table has so completely cleared my purse that it sadly lacks replenishing. It will look positively ungentlemanly to stop anybody on such a night, but needs must when a certain old friend of mine drives, so hurrah for my old luck, and here I am upon the high road at last."

There was just light enough to distinguish the principal road that went across the common from the darker colour of the grass that fringed it, and the solitary horseman now kept within half a dozen paces on the turf by the side of it.

By the turn he had now made at right angles to his former course, his back was turned towards the cutting sleet that was driving through the air, and he certainly got on much more comfortably than before, while he half sung to himself a popular air of the day, and when he fancied, and in most cases it was but fancy, he saw a hillock before him, he made the obedient horse give a demi-vault, which it executed with surprising grace and ease.

"Ah, my good Sue!" apostrophised the rider. "My good Sue, what should I do without thee? What should I be without thee, my gallant lass—fleet of foot—long in wind—sagacious, and more faithful than many human beings. I love thee, my Sue!"

As he uttered this panegyric upon his horse, he patted the neck of the animal, which by a short neigh seemed to be fully sensible that just then it was a special object of its master's commendations, and to be well pleased accordingly.

Suddenly the horseman gave the rein a peculiar touch, and the steed stood as motionless as though it had been carved in stone.

"Hush! hush," he said, "my old acuteness of hearing is bothered by the wind and the sleet, or I hear the sound of horse's feet."

After then listening for a few moments he still was in doubt, for he suddenly flung himself lightly off of the horse, and placed his ear nearly on a level with the ground to listen, this process quite satisfied him, and vaulting into the saddle again, he said,

"Yes some one comes, I am not mistaken, and I have only to hope that his purse is well lined. It will be a great insult to a gentleman of the road if it be not, and must be resented accordingly. We shall see, we shall see. The horse's footsteps sound clean and clear as though it was no common hack. Now Sue, my lass, we may have a little adventure to warm our bloods, and faith we need it on such a night as this."

The sound of an approaching horse at an easy canter, was now plainly perceptible, and the highwaymen, for such our readers of course conclude him to be, walked his steed gently along the road, to meet the advancing traveller, and the dusky figures of a horse and man were soon seen against the leaden-coloured sky.

Thus approaching each other, but a very few minutes could elapse ere the highwayman and his intended victim came face to face, and saw as much of each other as upon such a night could be seen.

"Halt!" said the highwayman, "halt! answer me one question, Sir Traveller, and answer it upon your honour."

"What do you mean? Keep off, as you value your life," said the traveller, in stern accents; "I am armed."

"Very good. It is unsafe to travel unarmed, and not always safe even with arms; but to my questions: Are ye a gentleman? by which I mean, one who eats the bread of idleness, and is not engaged in any business pursuits."

"A gentleman!" said the stranger, "who dare dispute my right to that title?"

"Good. I never condescend to stop any but gentlemen, and since you assert your right to the designation,—stand and deliver?"

"What?"

"Your money—watch—rings—or, your life!"

"Now, by Heavens, this is the most barefaced and impudent attempt at robbery I ever heard of. You will consult your own safety by getting from before my path."

"You are mistaken, sir; I wish to behave towards you with all due courtesy, but you will best consult your own ease, by complying with my demand. As for my safety, I set my life upon casts like these, and am willing to stand the hazard of the die."

"Take it, then," said the stranger; and drawing a pistol from his pocket, he snapped it in the face of the highwayman. The powder flashed in the pan, without discharging the weapon, and the traveller, casting it to the ground with an imprecation, was fumbling in his pocket for another, which did not seem to be so ready to his hand, when, with a suddenness and a vehemence that could not be resisted, the highwayman closed with him, and grasped him by the collar, exclaiming as he did so, and flung him from his seat,—

"You should keep your powder dry."

"Villain," cried the traveller, as he lay half stunned by the fall.

"Not so," replied the highwayman, "if I were, what would there be to hinder me repaying you in kind for your intention, to blow my brains out by actually performing that process upon the small quantity you evidently only possess. Once more, your money and valuables!"

He had dismounted; and while his horse, Sue, stood profoundly still, the stranger's steed, alarmed at the confusion, scampered away over the common, and was out of sight in a moment in the darkness.

"Take my purse, and here, too, is my watch. I have but one ring, and that I wish to keep—not so much on account of its value, as from recollections connected with it."

"Oh, certainly. Don't say another word about it."

"You are chilvaric in your way," added the gentleman, as he made a vain

## GENTLEMAN JACK; OR,

fort to rise but found that he had struck his head so severely against a stone, that the darkness seemed full of strange grotesque shapes, swimming before him I—I ask you a favour——”

“What is it?”

“I can scarcely speak. I think I shall faint from this fall. There is a travelling carriage coming with ladies, and one man; spare them. One lady is an invalid.”

“What way is it coming? From town or country. Nay, you have already said so much, you may as well give me full information. You are silent—eh? Why he has fainted, I suppose. He must be seriously hurt, for it is not from any faint-heartedness he has gone off in this way. But if people will be obstinate, and resist the tolls, they must take the consequences. I won't leave him here though, to be run over by somebody, I can't be far off old Jarvis's place at Hanger-hill. If I could get him there, he would be safe until the morning and Jarvis could easily say he found him lying on the common. It shall be so; Sue, my lass Sue!”

The horse was close to him in a moment.

“This is not what you are exactly used to, my Sue,” continued the highwayman “but at a pinch you won't object, I dare say. Humph! a tolerable weight, though thin enough.”

He had lifted the insensible form of the traveller, and laid it as well as he could across the horse's back, and then taking the bridle in his hand, he guided it across the common, with which at that dark hour he seemed wonderfully familiar until he reached some trees skirting a low hedge, which formed the boundary of a little garden surrounding a miserable looking cottage. Then he paused, and blew a whistle in a peculiar manner, and in a few moments a man appeared at the door of the cottage, with a lantern in his hand.

“Jarvis its I,” cried the highwayman.

“My noble captain! has anything happened amis?”

“No, but here is a gentleman who has had a fall upon the common, and muddled his brains for a time. I want you to let him lie quiet till the morning, when no doubt he will be all right, and relieve you from further trouble. If he remains on the common, who knows but somebody might rob him—eh, Jarvis?”

The man put the lantern on the ground, and by placing his hands on his sides, was evidently upon the point of bursting into a roar of laughing at what he considered such a famous joke, when he was checked by the highwayman's crying,—

“Peace, peace! I have no time to spare.”

“Oh, certainly, captain; another job a coming, I suppose?”

“Possibly.”

The still insensible stranger was lifted from the horse's back and carried into the hut, after which the highwayman mounted his horse again, and went back to the common at a hard gallop, until he reached the main road again that went across it, when once more he drew rein and listened.

“I hear nothing,” he muttered, “could he have been deceiving me for any purpose? I am quite certain no travelling carriage has passed here to-night. Shall I be content with what I have already done, or shall I wait for it. Humph! ladies, he said, and one man; there will be more purses than one, and who knows but this fellow may take credit to himself when he returns to tell the story, for frightening me from an attack on the carriage. No, my Sue, we will not be put off by the story of an invalid lady; and if there be one, we will be so gentle that she shall feel no shock to her nerves. Ha! It comes.”

He distinctly heard during a lull in the wind, the grinding sound of carriage wheels in the soft sandy soil. The horse too, seemed as though it pricked up its ears, and was fully alive to the excitement of its master's adventures. He paced slowly onwards in the direction of the approaching sounds, while the



highwayman in a low but not musical voice sung to himself a popular ditty, said to be composed by himself :

There's no life like a life on the road,  
A good steed and a light heart give me,  
Whi e misers are counting their gold,  
I am careless, and happy, and free.

There's no life like a life on the road,  
A pair of good bull-dogs give me,  
Let plo-ders ge sleeples with s ghs,  
As a king of the road I shall be.

He paused again to listen, and it was only at intervals when the wind lulled that he could do so, as blowing as it did from him in the direction from which the carriage was coming, it carried the sound away, instead of towards him, till he heard sufficient to be quite convinced that he was not mistaken, and slackening even the quiet walk of his horse, he turned it on to the grass again, so that no sound of its footsteps should create alarm in the minds of those who were approaching.

The road from Shepherd's Bush, then a wild desolate place, to Southall, was indeed so celebrated for the daring deeds of highwaymen, that it was no uncommon thing for people to turn back instead of crossing Ealing common, if there was any reason to suppose there was one of those night adventurers upon it, and hence it was that our hero did not think proper to give any premature notice of his presence to those whom he wished to attack.

And now about a quarter of a mile from him, he saw two faint star-like lights, and he knew them to be the carriage lamps, so that he had now a capital guide to the approach of the vehicle, and was able to take his station in the part of the road which he might think the best adapted for his purposes.

There was a hollow of about fifty feet in length, and it was in the lowest part of that where the highwayman took up his station, there being behind him a clump of fir trees, which effectually hindered his figure from being seen against the night sky. Moreover, those trees, tempered the wind considerably, so that the spot on which he fully intended to stop the carriage, was on that night the calmest upon the whole common, as well as, in consequence of its lying so low, the heaviest bit of road for the tired horses to struggle through, and so one at which they could be most readily stopped.

But it is time that we should take a peep into the travelling carriage, and see who they are that are so likely to be stopped.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### A HEIR AT LAW.—BEAUTY IN TEARS.—THE PROTECTOR.

THE travelling carriage which was doomed to come to an abrupt stand still upon Ealing common, had emblazoned upon its panels, the arms of one of the most ancient Oxfordshire families, and it contained personages so different in mind and manners, that even if it were not intimately connected with our story, it would be not a little curious to peep into it, and see how they behaved themselves individually towards each other.

It was one of the old fashioned roomy family coaches, that held six people without any inconvenience to speak of, and was drawn by two fat lazy horses, who never condescended to get out of a quiet walk of about five miles an hour

which was thought really very good work indeed, the more especially as the roads were but indifferent. On this occasion, however, there was a light load, for but four persons occupied the interior of the carriage.

One of them was an elderly lady, who seemed absorbed in painful reflections, for every now and then she shook her head, and gave utterance to a deep sigh. Then there was sitting next to her a young lady, who held the old lady by the hand, and who in a whisper would at intervals say something to her, which was intended to be cheering. On the opposite seat, crammed into one corner, was a younger lady, and all her efforts seemed to be to get as far as possible from a man who was on the seat beside her, and who was about one of the finest specimens of the "gents" of the period, that could probably have been found.

His coat was sky-blue, and had cloth enough about its skirts to make another of ample dimensions. His ruffles descended to the tips of his fingers. His hat diminished at the top to a ridiculously small circumference, and he held in both hands a riding whip, with the silver end of which he patted his mouth with great complaisance.

"Well, cousin Cicely," he said, "you don't seem the worse for your journey as yet, at any rate, do you now?"

This speech was evidently intended to procure a reply from the young lady, who held the hand of her elder companion, but it failed in that object, for the only notice taken of it consisted in a slight—a very slight inclination of the head from her.

"Well," he added, after another pause. "You may as well speak, I'm sure."

"What would you have her say?" inquired the old lady, tremulously. "You cannot expect that we should feel very happy?"

"Hem! Well I don't know that."

"What! Are we not now destitute?"

"Oh, no, no; I—that is you can look to me, you know. I used always to be counted a generous sort of fellow. The fact is, you take to heart the loss of the little property at Guilford, but it can't be helped, you know. You came into possession, all of you, because it was thought I was drowned on the river, but Lord bless you, I wasn't drowned at all. The fact is, I was picked up insensible by a Dutch smuggler and carried to Holland, that I was. He! he! he! Well, you must know I had no money, and—"

"You have told us all this before," said the old lady.

"Well, I was only saying—he! he! he!—Tom Brereton is like a cat, he always lights upon his legs—everybody says that. Well, you see, a fat little Dutch girl fell in love with me, so I borrowed some money of her, and bilked her. He! he! he! Then I came to England and found my old governor dead, and as I was supposed to be drowned, you and your family had walked from a couple of attics, in Bloomsbury, into the little Guilford property. Your son, too, must, to put himself forward in the army, borrow £100 on it. Lord! how you all stared when you saw me. Well, you ask me to come to London with you, to go to your friend Hammerton, the lawyer, and talk about it. Yes, says I—talk away. He! he! he! and here I am. This is my carriage, you know, properly speaking, though you do ride on the best seat."

"We will resign it to you," said the young girl.

"Oh, no, no—never mind me—I only just mentioned it, that's all."

"You may be the son of my poor brother, whom I call poor, because he was uncharitable," said the old lady, "or you may not; for as you know very well, if you be the person you represent yourself to be, I have not seen you since you were a child."

"If I be? Well, come, that is good. But the lawyer will soon put that to rights, and as for not seeing you and your family, the old governor, who has gone to glory I suppose, used to say, 'Tom, always keep out of the way of your poor relations. They will borrow your legs else, and leave you nothing but stumps to walk upon.' He! he! he! Good that was."

GENTLEMAN JACK ; OR, LIFE ON THE ROAD.

"And kind," said the younger girl, who sat on the same seat with him, and who now in a tone of bitter sarcasm, pronounced these two words.

"Well, miss pert," said Tom Brereton, "I don't see that you have any right to meddle with it. You are only——"

"My friend," interrupted the young lady opposite, and as such entitled to respect."

"Respect a fiddlestick! Upon my life, for people going out of their property you are about as confounded a set of stuck up folks as ever I heard of. I suppose your son, Markham, old lady, has got to London by this time, eh?"

"I don't know, sir," said the old lady.

"Oh don't you, ma'am. Well, I can't say I see why you should all of you be in such a way. You were poor before, and you will only be poor again, you know. I dare say you thought it an uncommonly nice thing, to drop into £230 a year, but after all you can go back to the two attics in Bloomsbury, you know, and try and get some sort of work to do, so as to pay me off by degrees, what you have already spent of mine. He, he, he! I think I ought to have rent for the house too, so long as you have been in it; upon my life I do."

"Can it be possible?"

"Rather."

"Alas, alas! and this is the amount of mercy I am to expect from my brother's son. Young man, we have told you candidly that we are now going to call upon a lawyer, to ask him what you can demand, and what you cannot."

"Oh I know that, but you need not all of you be in such a pet with me. If you had been civil, you need not have given yourself half the trouble. You were not over inclined to give me even a seat in the coach, though I did ask for it. He, he, he! my own coach, too. And why you should all be offended, just because I told Cicely she was pretty, and gave her the least tickle in the world, I don't know."

"If I were to inform my son, sir, of your conduct," said the old lady, "I would not answer for your safety one moment afterwards. I wish he had remained with us, but one reason why he did not was, that the road is so infested with highwaymen, he wanted to ride on till we were quite among the houses, to clear the way."

"Highwaymen! Bless my heart, you don't think there's any danger, do you? I've got £20 in my pocket, besides all my papers to prove who I am. Bless me. I—I don't feel comfortable at the idea of a highwayman, at all, somehow. I like my money."

"No doubt of it," said the girl on the seat with him.

"Of course I do, but I like my life better, and had rather, of course, like any reasonable man, pay something any day than be in any danger."

"So I should think."

"Ah, to be sure, you are after all a more sensible girl than I thought you. Now I tell you what we will do if a highwayman should stop us. I'll just slip down among the straw, and you can all of you say there are no persons but women here, and beg them to let you go."

"I should rather be inclined," said Cicely, "to direct attention to you, as bearing the semblance of a man, in order to protect our riches."

"No, no. You wouldn't do that now. How uncommonly unfriendly. Where are we now I wonder. Hoi, hoi! postillion, where are we now?"

"Ealing common sir."

"Just look out, and if you see a gentleman on a black horse, ask him to ride close to the window and not leave us, will you, and I'll give you a shill—I mean sixpence when we get to town, look sharp out now. God bless me, Ealing common. Why there have been more robberies on Ealing common lately, than everywhere else put together. They say Sixteen String Jack comes on this road sometimes, along with Claude Duval."

A slight start and exclamation from the young girl at his side, attracted the attention not only of Tom Brereton, but of the other ladies as well.

"What alarms you," said Cicely and then darting a glance at her contemptible cousin, Tom Brereton, she added, "pray sir, keep your fears to yourself. We do not share them, and therefore cannot feel in any way interested in them. If we should be attacked by a highwayman, he will perhaps for a moment fancy we have a man to protect us, but he will soon find out his error."

"Ah," said Tom, without showing much discomposure at the utterance of this remark, "I should not wonder now, but you think you will put me quite in a pet by what you say, but, he, he, he! it won't do, I assure you. Oh, dear no, and besides every inch that we get nearer town, there is less chance of a high man, and I of course am the more comfortable."

"You cannot surely sir," said the old lady, mean breaking silence, "that you have any serious intention of considering my son Markham as indebted to you for the use he has mistakingly made of the little property he thought belonged to us?"

"Why, as to that ma'am—aunt I suppose I ought to call you—as to that I —"

What sort of reply Mr. Tom Brereton was about to give to the remark of his aunt, is most unfortunately lost to posterity, for at the moment he had got so far in his speech, the carriage came to an abrupt halt, and a loud clear voice from the road side, cried—

"Move another pace, postillion, and I will try the temper of your skull with a couple of slugs."

"Murder!" groaned Tom Brereton, as according to his former expressed view of expediency in such a contingency, he slipped off his seat down among the straw at the bottom of the carriage. "Murder! - There is a highwayman at last."

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE RECOGNITION.—THE BOBBERY AND THE RESCUE.—A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

A SLIGHT cry of terror was all that came from the old lady, and Cicely, flinging her arms round her mother, said with extraordinary courage—

"Be not alarmed, no man will wantonly injure us. I have heard that these highwaymen some of them have chivalric notions of honour, where females are concerned."

"Oh don't mention me to him whatever you do," whined Tom Brereton. "Only think of my £20, my papers, and perhaps my life. Have mercy upon me. Confound the seat, I can't get under it. Miss Cicely—cousin Cicely, recollect we are cousins you know. Oh lord, here he comes."

The side lamps of the carriage sent a halo of light around the vehicle, and by its assistance the occupants of the vehicle could see a man's face, at one of the windows, which he rather dexterously let down from without, and then in the softest and most winning accents, as he laid his hand upon the panel of the door, he said—

"Be not alarmed ladies, I beg. I am aware that there is an invalid here, and will do my spiriting gently. I have the honour to request your purses and watches."

"Spare our lives," said the old lady.

"Lives! Oh, madam, can you fancy that I am a ruffian? I was misinformed, for a young gentleman, with whom I had the honour of a little conversation on the road, informed me that a man was of your party. You seem, however to be

alone, but do not let that circumstance alarm you. Unprotected females are the care of every gentleman."

"Will you permit us to pass, sir," said Cicely.

"Certainly, miss, will I, after the little ceremony of exacting a slight tribute, since you are travelling over my territory. All monarchs must have supplies, you know, however much in this case, I regret to see a shadow of alarm upon so lovely a face."

Cicely drew back as this compliment was uttered, for in her eagerness to endeavour to dissuade the highwayman, to allow them immediately to pursue their journey, she had brought one of the sweetest countenances the world ever saw, within the sphere of the lamp light, so that the highwayman caught a full sight of it, and he never forgot it.

"Take this," said the young girl, who had not yet spoken, as she handed a small silk purse to the robber. "Take this—look at it at your leisure, but leave us now."

"Who's that?" he cried. "Eh! Who spoke?"

As he uttered this hurried query, he looked more curiously into the carriage, the result of which was, that he saw the back of Mr. Tom Brereton's sky-blue coat.

"Hilloa! what have we here?" he added. "Any skulking, eh?"

With the butt end of a large holster pistol, he dealt the hidden youth so serious a blow that he rose with a howl of pain, crying,—

"Oh Lord—oh Lord! Oh my back! Have mercy upon me, good Mr. Highwayman, I'm only an unfortunate young man who has nothing to give you. If you please, sir, to let me go this time, I'll take care the next time I meet you, to have a few pounds about me."

"Why, what poltroon is this?" cried the robber. "Come out, sir. Come out on to the common, and let me have a good look at you, that I may know a coward when I see one again. This fellow, ladies, is a disgrace to your society. Come out."

"Oh dear me. Now cousin Cicely, and you aunt, and you, miss what's your name, do say something for me, or I shall be murdered, I know. Oh dear—oh dear. Why did I come myself instead of sending somebody else on this errand?"

"Will you come out?"

"Don't insist upon it, I beg, sir, and I'll give you £10 down, upon my life I will."

"Be still, my Sue!" said the highwayman to his horse, and then immediately dismounting, he opened the door of the carriage, and seizing Mr. Tom Brereton by the collar, dragged him at once into the road, where that valorous individual fell upon his knees in the mud, and roared for mercy."

"Your money or your life!"

"Oh yes, of course, sir. You will be paid. In this pocket book is my money, I'll get it out, sir, in a moment. Thank you, sir, I'm very much obliged, indeed."

"There's no occasion for so much trouble," said the highwayman as he twitched the pocket book from the trembling hand of Tom. "I can take it out myself at my leisure."

"But sir—good kind, sir. There's all my papers there to prove who I am."

"Never mind, you are sure to gain by the exchange if you are taken for some one else. Ladies have you any more money than what I have received?"

"We have but a small sum," said Cicely, "and God knows how sadly we want it."

"It is rather strange," replied the highwayman, "that ladies travelling in their own carriage should only have a small sum, and want that sadly; but if you will tell me upon your honour, that such is the case, I will take your word."

"Upon my honour it is so," said Cicely.

"That is sufficient, I have the honour, ladies, to wish you good night."

Cicely's hand was upon the edge of the door, and before she could be aware

of what he was about, the highwayman had raised it audaciously to his lips, and kissed it, adding in a soft and most winning tone—

“Believe that there are worse folks on the road of life, who pass along unsuspected, than Claude Duval.”

“Claude Duval! Then you are that celebrated highwayman, who for the last year has filled report with his exploits, and—and—who——”

“Who never forgot that he was a gentleman in the presence of ladies,” added the highwayman, “I have the honour to wish you good night. You may pursue your journey in peace, but should you be stopped at Shepherd’s Bush, just say that Sue and her master has bidden you good night, and you will be allowed to pass on unmolested.”

With these words, the highwayman left the astonished travelling party, and springing upon the back of his horse, was in a moment lost in the gloom that was beyond the little circle of light, cast by the side lamps of the carriage. Mr. Tom was still in the mud, hardly able to believe that after all he had really escaped with his life, from what he considered the most terrible danger he had ever been in, in all his career.

It was the postillion who first broke the silence that now ensued, and he did so by saying, in most dolorous accents—

“What shall I do ladies? Shall I go on. It was no fault of mine you know?”

“Yes, yes,” cried Cicely, “go on as quickly as you can.”

“No, no,” shouted Tom Brereton. “Stop a bit—stop a bit. Don’t go without me, you forget that I was pulled out of the coach. Stop I say, don’t be going on in that sort of way. Hilloa! I’m all over mud. Come, come, a jokes a joke, but this ain’t one.”

The postillion was glad to get on, and in fact before Tom had began to call out in this way, for being left behind, the vehicle had already moved on a short distance, so that the terrified and bewildered postillion fully imagined that the shouting arose from other highwaymen, or perhaps the same, who might have come back, fancying he had not got enough out of the party. The consequence of this was, that instead of stopping, he started the horses on at increased speed, and after a further attempt to hold on by the back of the carriage, Tom was left sprawling in the dirt.

Cicely knew very well that such a catastrophe had occurred, but she did not under the circumstances think there was any very urgent necessity for taking any steps to rectify it, and in a few minutes Tom was out of ear-shot. As for the old lady she was in such a state of fright, that she scarcely knew what had happened, while the younger girl who had given the small purse to Claude Duval, uttered not a word.

Once Cicely thought she heard her weeping.

“Do not be alarmed, May,” she said. “All is over now.”

The young girl who was thus called May, started and spoke in a timid voice—  
“Oh yes, it is all over. Thank God it is all over, and he has taken nothing from any of you. Oh most of all, I am deeply thankful for that. That is indeed a mercy.”

“Nay, he could take but little from us, May, seeing that we have so little to lose, and certainly for a highwayman he was about as polite as any one could possibly with any reason expect. I am most anxious about my brother, Markham, and fear that some evil has befallen him upon the road. You are weeping again, May.”

“I am deeply affected.”

“Nay, my dear May, you should not allow a little circumstance like this, so to affect your nerves—all is over now.”

“Can I be otherwise than affected,” said the young girl, “when those, who in my state of destitution gave me food and shelter, are exposed to danger. Was I not a wanderer without a home in the streets of London, when you and your dear kind mother met me and took me home with you.”

"Yes, but the candid manner in which you told us you were an orphan, and your name was May Russel, convinced us that we were right in thinking well of you, and your whole conduct has confirmed the thought."

"Yes, yes, I told you my name was May Russel, God will reward you."

"Say no more, May. That is a subject upon which you know I exacted, some time since, a promise that you would not speak, I know all that you would say, and therefore exacted such a promise. Let me beg of you to keep it, but, be assured, that let our condition be what it may, and our means ever so much reduced, you shall share with us what we have."

What reply the young girl would have made to this generous speech cannot be told, for at the moment she was about to open her lips to speak, the carriage stopped, and the postillion in a voice of terror, shouted,—

"Oh, Lord! here's another of 'em, I shall have them slugs in my nob yet, afore we gets to Tyburn Gate. Here's another! Here's another!"

A horseman galloped up to the carriage, and in a clear voice, said,—

"Ladies have you been stopped by a highwayman to-night, for I have?"

"Yes, yes," said Cicely. "Yes."

"Probably then a little bead purse that I took from him, belongs to one of you."

"Took from him!" cried the young girl, who had been called May. "Have you—you killed him?"

"Oh, no. We had a little encounter, and I gained the victory, after which he said to me, 'I regret that I took from a young lady in a travelling carriage a little bead purse, with a small sum of money in it. Will you restore it for me as you are on the road, and are likely to see them?' Upon which I took it, and here it is. There are some very bad characters high up the road by Shepherd's Bush, so if you please I will ride by the side of your carriage and escort you; I am well armed."

"Pray, sir, who are you?" said Cicely.

"I am an officer in the army, madam, but you see me in plain clothes, as I am at present what we call unattached."

The old lady had heard something of this colloquy and at once proposed her thanks for the offer of the officer's protection to town, and after she had said that, Cicely did not very well know how to say anything to the contrary, although from the conduct of Claude Duval, she had no fear of a second attack from him, and moreover, he had given her a pass-word against other depredators, in the efficacy of which she somehow or another placed implicit reliance, although coming from so suspicious a quarter as it did.

The officer took now for granted that he had full power to consider himself the escort of the ladies, for he ordered the postillion to go on at an easy pace, and with his hand resting upon the window sill of the carriage, he accommodated his footsteps to those in the vehicle, and so was able to converse.

"And so you have been stopped," he said, "by the celebrated—perhaps I ought to say notorious Claude Duval?"

"Yes," said Cicely. "He told us that was his name."

"And of course then you met with much politeness. He is well known to be specially gallant to women—nay I have been credibly informed in London, that some ladies who have been quite enchanted with the anecdotes told of the youthful, gallant highwayman, have actually gone to Ealing common for the sake of the chance of being stopped by him, and so achieving an interview with so celebrated a personage."

"Can it be possible?" said Cicely.

"Of my own knowledge, I cannot of course say, but I have heard as much."

"'Tis strange indeed," said Cicely. "We on the contrary were in much alarm."

"You should not travel on such roads as this, unattended by a gentleman, permit me to say."

Cicely was about to make some remark about Tom Brereton, but she upon a second thought, corrected herself, and said nothing in reply to the officer, who, after a pause continued,—

"It is perhaps not quite correct of me as a stranger, to press my services upon you, but, there is a frankness in your nature which will excuse me when I say, that I should esteem it a high honour to be of service to you in London in any way. Pray pardon me for saying so much, if you should think it in the least impertinent."

"Nothing can be impertinent that is meant to be kind," said Cicely, "but we—must decline making any acquaintance at present, sir."

"I bow to your decision," said the officer, "and as you will be soon in safety, I will leave you, merely remarking that I shall never forget this night."

"Indeed, sir!" said Cicely, in the most innocent manner in the world, for she was not sufficiently used to flattery to suspect that the stranger was only paving the way to the utterance of some well-turned compliment to her.

"Yes," he continued, "I shall cherish the remembrance of this brief conversation as one of the happiest moments of my life; I shall never forget tones that to my perception carry the sweetest music that my ears ever drank in with delight."

Cicely was silent—she felt hurt at this sudden freedom of the stranger's manner, and yet she did not know very well how to rebuke it, and he, probably fancying from her silence that he had a sort of license to go on, added—

"We may never meet again, but be assured, that not the most vivid scenes of a chequered existence can ever obliterate an image that now lies enshrined in my heart."

At this moment a troop of about eight horsemen came along the road from London, and the foremost of them called out to the officer—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but have you come far up the road with your friends in the coach?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, have you had a tussle with any highwayman? We have come out to see if we can capture the celebrated Claude Duval. Our horses are good, and so is our will."

"It's a great pity you should be disappointed then, gentlemen, of a little sport.—Ladies, I have the honour of bidding you good night.—Gentlemen, I'm Claude Duval, and this is my horse Sue. Have you a mind for aanter to Wormwood Scrubs? If so, come on, and the devil take the hindmost!"

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE RACE, AND WONDERFUL ESCAPE OF CLAUDE DUVAL.

For a few moments, as might well be supposed, the horsemen who had so frankly announced their intention of capturing the highwayman, if they could, were so perfectly astounded at the cool assurance of the object of their attack, that he had got a considerable start before they could among them settle the question of pursuit or no pursuit.

One of the party, however, who was apt to be more prompt in his proceedings than the others, cried in a loud voice as he spurred his horse—

"Forward! Do you want to be the laughing stock of all London?"

In most critical circumstances there requires but some one to give an impulse, and in this case, as it does in almost all cases, it fully succeeded, for one and all dashed after him who had spoken, at the greatest speed their steeds could compass.



But if the horsemen were astonished at finding the gentlemanly looking man, whose occupation appeared to be that of escorting some ladies into town, turn out to be the celebrated Claude Duval, how much greater was the bewilderment and surprise of Cicely Brereton and her mother? They were recalled, however to a consciousness of the necessity of immediately proceeding, by the violent weeping of May, who sobbed with such a convulsive energy that Cicely could not imagine how the occasion should be deemed sufficient to call forth such a gush of feeling, for, after all, singular as the adventure was, Cicely could find nothing affecting in it.

"My dear May," she said, "you have commonly so bold and firm a demeanour that I am surprised and grieved to find you thus afflicted."

"Then do not speak to me," said the young girl. "Do not speak to me just now, Miss Cicely, at another time perhaps I can tell you, but I implore you to ask me nothing."

This appeal uttered in almost frantic accents, was more puzzling still, and it was something of a relief when the postillion cried out—

"Shall I drive on? I thought it was him, for I seed a bit of a red coat peeping out from the top cloak he had on. Oh, I thought it was him, all the while, but I dare n't say nothing or he'd pretty soon have settled me. Shall I go on now?"

"Yes, yes," said Cicely, "and as quickly as you can."

The carriage rattled onwards, but, as it will be far more interesting for us to follow our acquaintance Claude Duval down the western road, we will leave the ladies Brereton to take their way unmolested into London, and once more place ourselves upon the track of the highwayman.

Although Claude, with his usual daring recklessness had, as we have seen, invited a pursuit, he yet seemed to be doubtful if the challenge would, under the circumstances be accepted by the horsemen, and as he was by no means inclined to be so absurd as to take a long gallop with no object, he reined in his horse, after going half a mile, and paused to listen.

All was still around him. It seemed as if at that moment the very genius of silence had taken up its abode upon that spot of earth, and this solemn repose of nature would have had an effect upon the warm and not unsuperstitious mind of Duval, had he not been much more intensely occupied by listening for any sound indicative of pursuit.

And soon it came. He heard the heavy tread of horses' hoofs in full gallop.

"Ah, my Sue!" he said, patting the neck of the beautiful animal he rode. "We shall be put upon our mettle. You must show them what blood can do with a light weight; and we must have no incumbrances, my lass."

As he spoke, he undid a clasp which held the cloak around his neck, that had so effectually disguised him from the recognition of the ladies in the carriage, and slung the garment over the front of his saddle. He then shifted his hat round about, for he had changed it likewise for disguise, the hind part before, and then, with a low chirping whistle he urged the horse forward, and off it went like the wind.

"My darling Sue!" he muttered, "we could beat them on a fifty mile chase, but why should we trouble ourselves so to do. We will bid them good-bye shortly, and if we can send them on a wild goose canter, we will."

Again he held his head aside to listen, and his practised ear told him how much he gained upon his pursuers, and how easy a thing it would be to distance them completely, and then take a route across the country, instead of by the high road, and so baffle them all—but as these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, he heard a horse approaching from the other direction at a sharp canter, which would soon bring its rider face to face with him. This was not exactly what he wished, and yet it did not follow that the approaching horseman would take any notice of him, so he rode on, but at less speed, for he did not wish to seem to be a fugitive.

"Hold!" cried the horseman, as he came nearly up to Duval. "Hold, whoever you are, and answer me a question."

"What question?" said Duval, reining in Sue so suddenly, that she reared, and would have thrown a less practised rider.

"Is your horse fresh?"

"As a daisy in April."

"Then you must exchange with me, I'm a king's messenger, and my horse is tired; I can convince you I am what I say I am by showing you the badge of my office, a silver hound. Come, dismount at once, or I must enforce my demand. If you attempt to escape, I shall send a pistol shot after you."

The king's messenger, for such he really was, spoke in such a tone of decided and firm authority, that would have awed many a man into compliance with his wishes, especially as it was well known that ample remuneration was always given in such cases, but if ever a bold man met his match, the messenger had when he encountered Claude Duval.

"Its very kind of you," said Claude, as the messenger flung himself off his horse, and came towards him with the bridle in his hand, "to tell me who you are, and I cannot think of being otherwise than equally candid."

"Pho! pho! dismount, sir."

"I am, Claude Duval, the highwayman."

"The devil!"

"No, only one of his messengers. Good night."

As he uttered these words, Claude twitched the bridle of the messenger's horse out of his hand, and giving the rein to Sue, he was off with the other steed dashing on by his side, at the full stretch of the bridle which he held it by. This transaction had occupied far less space in the enacting than in the telling, and the galled and bewildered messenger found himself in the middle of the road, nearly five miles from London, and without a horse at all, in addition to which his own horse when it plunged off in obedience to the impulse given it by Claude Duval's, had saluted its former master with a kick, which, although not very serious, made him glad to sit down on the side of the road, feeling a little sick and uncomfortable.

In another moment the troop of horsemen in pursuit of Duval, swept past him at full speed, paying no attention to the cry he raised for aid.

On dashed Claude, and the horse without a rider, being relieved from its load, kept up the speed well which Sue enforced; but yet amused, as he was by this little extra adventure, Claude began to think he had better get rid of his captured steed, and he was upon the point of casting the bridle from him, when he heard a voice cry,—

"Murder! Murder! Will no Christian help me. Oh murder! murder! I'm all alone, I've been robbed by a highwayman. My name's Ted Breerton—murder! Help! Help!"

This was the very spot at which he, Duval, had first stopped the carriage, and he at once knew that the person who called so energetically for assistance, was the young man whom he dragged out of the vehicle by the collar. His fertile imagination and love of fresh adventures suggested to him a plan of baffling his pursuers without fatiguing Sue, which he immediately resolved to put into practice.

"Oh, sir," he cried; "have you been robbed by a highwayman?"

"Yes, yes. Oh, dear; yes, and ill-treated, too."

"Well, I can tell you that there is on this road to-night, a regular gang of highwaymen, who are determined to rob and murder everybody they meet. This is my master's horse I am leading, mount it, and gallop, on keeping the high road, mind, till you meet a party of dragoons who are coming from Brentford, and then you will be safe, but if you or I remain longer here our throats will be cut."

"Oh, indeed, you don't say so."

"Indeed I do though. Come, quick, mount. I'll help you. Hold on any way,

by his ears and his mane, for if you fall off you are lost. There, take this cloak round you, I'll clasp it—no thanks—all's right, off with you. Don't leave the high road. Good God, I hear them coming! Don't say a word, of course we ought all to help each other at a pinch."

"Oh, dear—oh, dear. I can't ride."

"Hold on anyhow, I tell you, and fancy all the while you feel a knife sawing away at your throat."

"Gracious goodness. Murder!"

Claude Duval gave the horse a slashing blow with a riding whip, and off it went, nearly maddened by pain and excitement, carrying Tom Brereton at a most respectable pace, while the cloak that was clasped round his neck floated behind him like some victorious banner.

"Now, my Sue," said Duval, and springing into the saddle again, he turned the creature's head towards a hedge by the road side, which Sue, fully understanding what was required now of her, cleared beautifully, alighting softly in a meadow on the opposite side, when Claude again immediately dismounted.

"Down, girl, down," he said, and the horse crouched to its knees, and then lay upon its side as quiet as possible, while Claude crouched likewise to the ground, for there was behind them a patch of light coloured sky against which he and the horse might perchance, have been seen. It was well that not a moment had been lost, for scarcely had these precautions for concealment been made when the pursuing party came up and actually paused a moment on that spot.

"He has taken to the meadows, I think," said one.

"No, no," shouted he who was heading the pursuit. "I saw his cloak fluttering behind him on the brow of the hill there, just as you get into Acton, by Berry-mead Priory. Come on. Come, we shall have him yet. Come on."

Away they went again, and were soon lost to sound as well as to sight.

"So you think you will have him, do you," laughed Claude Duval. "No, no. My time has not come yet. Well, well, I have not had much luck to-night, so I will to London, and look over this pocket of that cowardly fellow, who, I suppose, will not stop until his horse falls with him. I can't yet get that girl Cicely out of my head. How came May with them?"

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE "OLD MOON" IN GATE STREET.—A CHANCE SHOT.—A VISITOR TO CLAUDE.

IN Gate-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields, there was a public-house called the "Old Moon." It has been long swept away, and nothing even to indicate the site of it now remains. At the period of our story, however, it was in a flourishing condition, and was kept by a man whom no one ever knew by any other name than that of Anthony. He was a tall, lank, straight-haired, methodistical looking fellow, was Anthony, and he had a way of turning up his eyes, and uttering pious ejaculations, as if he were the most religious person in the whole neighbourhood; and truly, if attending a meeting-house in little Queens-street, and being about as hypocritical a rascal as ever stepped, gave him any claims to that character, he certainly fulfilled it.

At two o'clock on the morning preceding the night, some of the particulars of which we have brought before the reader, Anthony sat dozing in his bar. To be sure, his house was shut to all appearances, but at its back there was a long, low roofed room, to which there was an entrance by the flap of a cellar down a stable yard, and there Anthony had still some customers, although the hour was rather a late, or rather we ought perhaps to say, an early one.

These customers of Anthony's were of a peculiar description, for at one end of the long room, sat a man behind a kind of counter, and almost everybody who came into the room, went up to him, and placed some article before him, at which he invariably shook his head in disapproval and contempt, and then handed out some money, often accompanied by a declaration to the effect that he was ruining himself by degrees—always by degrees.

The articles so bought, were then placed in a basket projecting from the wall behind him, and whenever he had a small lot collected, he gave some sort of a signal, and the basket disappeared, being connected with a turnabout, similar to what may be seen in many convent gates on the Continent, after which it was sent back again empty by the same means.

At the other entrance to the room, two men and two dogs kept watch and ward, and no one was permitted to enter who was unknown to one or the other of the men, so that the place was pretty well guarded from intrusion.

"I shall be ruined by degrees," said the man at the counter; "what do you mean by this?"

The question was addressed to a mere lad, who had laid before him a bunch of gold seals attached to a piece of watch chain.

"I don't know," laughed the lad. "I made a grab at a ticker, and that was all I got, besides a hue and cry through the Dials."

"It's an insult—I shall be ruined—by degrees. There's five shillings for you, be off. Ah, Poll is that you? bless your pretty eyes, if I were not ruined now—by degrees, you should have a glass of the best wine in Anthony's cellar."

"Yes," said a young girl, attired in flaunting apparel, "by degrees I suppose. Where's Claude to-night?"

"Ah, my dear, that's what I have been asking, but business has fallen off dreadfully. We have very few gentlemen of the road come here now. Why I have known the time when Sixteen-string Jack would bring me in twelve or fourteen watches of a night, and a half pint measure full of rings, brooches, and shoe-buckles, and now—"

"He is in Newgate, where we shall all go in time."

"Ahem! by degrees. He is in Newgate."

"Yes, and he will go to Tyburn to-morrow."

"By degrees, I suppose, he will. Upon my life it's a pity—a great pity, when you come to think of it—by degrees, don't you think it is, Poll?"

"Don't bother! I want to see Claude. Don't you know he promised Jack that he would meet him on his road to Tyburn, and shake hands with him, in spite of all the officers."

"Why a—yes—by degrees."

"Well, I've seen Jack, and he tells me that there will be such an attempt to take Claude if he shews himself to-morrow, that he had better not do so. Jack says, he'll excuse him, and begs me to ask him in the name of their old friendship not to try it. I thought to have found him here. I'll go and speak to Anthony, perhaps he knows where he is. They say that six officers to-morrow are to share £200 among them if they take Claude."

The girl seemed well acquainted with the place, for after this brief dialogue with the man at the counter, she opened a door at one corner of the room, which disclosed a small flight of dark stairs; but while she is seeking Anthony, we will attend to something of rather an interesting nature which is going on just outside the entrance to the stable-yard from whence opened the cellar entrance of the Old Moon.

Two men were standing in the deep shadow of a small doorway opening into one of the stables which happened to be untenanted, and they were conversing in whispers.

"It was all very well," said one of them, "to draw lots in the governor's house at Newgate, as to which six of the lot of us should take Claude Duval to-morrow, if he ventures upon coming to shake hands with Sixteen-string Jack, and share

'he £200 among them, but as we were not lucky enough to belong to the lot, it aint so pleasant to see one's £30 a piece go by us, is it now?"

"Sartinly not, but what a do it will be if we grabs him to-night, wont it?"

"Rather, I should say. Do you think the girl Lucy's information is to be depended on, that he gets here at half past two or so, and sleeps tiil next evening?"

"Yes, I do. Claude has neglected her, and a spiteful woman, you know, will do anything."

"Very good, now you know how we are to do. If he comes, I am to get behind him and fling my arms round him, while you, under threat of blowing his brains out, pop on the darbies."

"All's right. I don't see the trouble of taking him. He's only one after all. It's people giving him an advantage by being afraid, that does the business."

"Yes, that's it. Well, you remain where you are, and I'll get on the other side of the gateway. Don't you move till you see my arms round him, and now as we are in a queer neighbourhood, the less we say the better."

While this conversation was taking place, a figure, muffled up very much about the face, came at a rapid pace down Queen-street, and just as it was about to cross towards Gate-street, a girl rushed out of a doorway and flung herself at its feet.

"Claude, Claude!" she said. "Is it you, Claude?"

"Lucy, my girl!" said Claude Duval, for it was indeed he. "What ails you?"

"Kill me—oh, kill me, Claude, you ought to kill me."

"I kill you, Lucy? Why, are you dreaming, or have you taken leave of your senses?"

"I don't know, Claude, but you—you neglected me, and I thought you no longer loved me—I—I have betrayed you! Now kill me, Claude, and I shall die happy, but don't go to the Old Moon to-night."

"This from you, Lucy! from my own girl whom I have always loved. If I have not come near you much of late, it was only owing to poor Jack's troubles. I was getting money and friends for him, and yet it appears he suffers to-morrow; and you want me to swing at Tyburn, too, Lucy?"

"No, no. Oh, God! Claude, unkind words from you are sharper than knives. Oh, no—no—no. Cut my heart out of my bosom, Claude, and you will see then how I love you!"

"I never doubted it until to-night, Lucy. What have you done that should prevent me going to-night to the Old Moon? Come into this deep doorway and tell me."

"In a fit of madness, Claude—dear Claude, in a moment of despair, and jealousy, and rage, I told an officer named Morgan, that you came to the Old Moon about two, dear Claude. Kill me now, and I will not blame you, Claude—Claude, you cannot forgive me."

"Easily, my girl, and the more easily because I know that this will be a lesson to you, and you will never listen to the voice of passion and jealousy again. Come, come, don't cry, Lucy; you have made amends, you see, by warning me in time, so no harm's done. Forget it, my girl—I know this Morgan you mention. He is tolerably harmless."

"Oh, Claude you are too good—generous to me. But where will you go to now?"

"Now? Why to the Old Moon, to be sure."

"No—no—oh no.—Who knows what danger there may be. You must not—shall not."

"Nay, Lucy, your fears run away with you, I do not encounter more danger by going to the Old Moon, than I encounter almost every day of my life; and to tell the truth, I am a little curious to know how Morgan will manage this affair; I will tell you Lucy, in what my principal safety consists.—It is in the cupidity of the officers."

"How Claude?"

"They won't combine to take me, because there would be such a sharing of the reward, that each man's portion would not pay him for the danger; so be under no alarm. Go, home, and believe your Claude to be as true as ever, to you."

"Then you really have seen another that you love better than your poor Lucy, Claude?"

"Seen another? Where are there such eyes to see?"

The girl smiled, clung gently to his arm.

"Ah, Claude, when I am with you, I forget everything and am happy. It is when I am alone, that sad and gloomy thoughts of what I once was, rise up like spectres to drive me nearly mad."

"You should laugh them away."

"I cannot Claude, I cannot. They never come to me when you are with me; I seem then as if I were safe against anything in the world, and so I am. Oh, Claude, you will not go to the Old Moon, to-night?"

"I must Lucy. Go home, and be quite sure that all will be right. Perhaps I will come to you before the morning yet, for I have something to do for Jack, to-morrow, and have not quite settled in my mind, how to do it; so I think you may fairly expect me, within a few hours."

"In that hope, Claude, I shall live."

She affected to leave him, but her fear for his safety would not permit her; and she followed him at a short distance, so that he was not aware of her presence, in the darkness of the ill-lighted street, as he now walked rapidly on, towards the Old Moon; being however, quite prepared for any sudden attack that might be made upon him, by Morgan the officer

Of course it was not an attempt upon his life, he had to fear, but his liberty, and that consideration it was doubtless, that gave him a kind of fearlessness, which if his destruction had been aimed at, he could not possibly have possessed, for then he would not have known a moment when a pistol shot might put an end to his career. As it was, however, he passed on with an appearance of composure, to the gateway leading to the stables, where his two enemies were posted.

He wisely kept in the middle of the entry, and he had passed on some few steps, when according to his plan, which was no bad one, Morgan dashed out, and clasped him from behind, round the body, missing the arms, however, which it had been his great object to secure.

"Now Bill," he cried, "now for the darbies! We have him. It's a hundred pounds a-piece."

"Perhaps a small part of an ounce will do for one of you," said Claude, as snatching a pistol from his belt, he fired it at the open doorway in front of him; where he had just seen the glance of the other officer's eyes, as he was preparing to spring out.

A shriek mingled itself with the report of the pistol, and at the same moment, by a dexterous twist of one of his legs, Claude flung the officer who had hold of him on his back; but he would not loose his hold, and Claude went with him, but uppermost of course, so that while the officer got a blow upon the back of his head on the curb stones, he, Claude, was quite uninjured, and finding that his opponent was knocked insensible, he rose in a moment.

"So, so," he said. "That was the plan, was it? Not a bad one either, Master Morgan, it only wants that one condition of success to be entitled to great praise.—Ha! who comes here! Stand, or you die!"

"'Tis I, Claude," said Lucy, "I could not leave you."

"Eh? what's all this?" said old Anthony, the publican, who had been roused by the report of the pistol, and guessed that some of his customers were in trouble. "The Lord look down upon us, amen. What's the row. Eh? my rummy one?"

"Nothing particular," said Claude.

"Eh? What? Why it's you, Duvai. Let us pray—I mean come in, my

tulip. Have the grabs been at you? Come along, my daffy-down-dilly, come along."

"No!" said Claude, "I only want to know if you have any news for me, Anthony?"

"Yes, I have: here's Poll has just come from Sixteen-string Jack, and he says you had better leave him alone to-morrow, for the Philistines will be mighty, and are determined, the Lord willing, to have you."

"Oh, is that all?"

"Yes, and enough too. But who fired the shot I heard just now?"

"No matter about that. When I am gone, bring out a lantern, and look about you; but tell Poll to say to Jack, when she sees him in the morning, that I'll shake hands with him, according to my promise, come what may of it. I have said it, and Claude Duval never broke his word yet."

"Amen!" said Anthony, "I shall go in to prayers; good night Claude, and luck go with you, for you are as fine a fellow as ever stepped, only I never could awaken you to a proper sense of religion. I'll come out with a lantern, and look about, as you say; I suppose somebody is in trouble."

"Not at all," said Claude, "somebody's troubles are over probably. Good night. Now Lucy if you will give me house room until the morning, I shall be obliged to you, my girl, and you see as I told you the danger has recoiled upon the heads of those who got it up for me. It was a chance shot, and no malice in it, so whoever has got it ought to blame himself, not me."

"I was so terrified, Claude."

"You always are. You ain't fit for a highwaymen's lass, Lucy."

"Don't say that, Claude, for you know I love you, and when you are taken from me, if ever you should be, I will not live long after you; but we will not talk in this way. You must be tired, come, come Claude, and I will get you some supper. Oh, how long it is since you have visited me, my brave Claude. I am happy now."

Claude Duval laughed as Lucy ran on talking as she walked by his side; and he from a little pouch that he had, carefully reloaded the small pistol he had discharged at the officer, for it was a favourite weapon, inasmuch, as it had not once missed fire since he had it, and certainly upon this occasion, he owed his liberty and life to it.

"I don't like these adventures, Lucy," he said. "But if they will interfere with me roughly, they must take the consequences."

"Yes Claude, yes. But what did I hear about your shaking hands with Sixteen-string Jack to-morrow. Is he not going to Tyburn?"

"He is. When I was friendless and homeless, Jack was kind to me, and I then said in answer to a remark of his that some day he should swing at Tyburn, that let that day, which I hoped would be far distant, come when it would, I would meet him on the road there, and clasp his hand in mine, and call him my friend."

"But the danger, Claude."

"If it were certain death, I'd do it."

"Claude, Claude!"

"My Lucy, you need not try to dissuade me from this, my word has been passed, and I will keep it. Even you, with all your love, would despise me, if because there was danger to be apprehended, I shrunk from keeping a solemn promise. It must, and it shall be done."

"But even Jack himself sent word for you not to do it."

"That makes no difference. Let me beg of you to say no more about it, Lucy. We are good friends now, my girl, and I would fain remain so. The danger is not so great as you think. I will, of course, take all the precautions I can, and in a life like mine, daring has such a charm about it that it saves me from a thousand little risks which would swarm about me, if once they thought I feared."

## CHAPTER. VII.

CLAUDE DUVAL FULFILLS HIS PROMISE.—SIXTEEN-STRING JACK'S ROUTE TO TYBURN.

A DRIZZLY misty rain fell upon London, and wrapped up the whole city as it were in a dense mantle of damp fog, on the morning after the occurrences we have just related. By day break the only difference from the night was, that the wet mist which had before looked black, had a dingy white aspect, through which the few only passengers that were abroad, looked like spectres, being much magnified by the vapour.

Occasionally too, from amidst the halo cast around him by his breath, a horse might be seen snorting and struggling through the misty streets, while the watchmen, with their heads bound round by handkerchiefs, and ensconced in their blankets like great coats, looked out from their boxes, after their night's repose with lack-lustre eyes.

The rain streamed down the front of Newgate, in long black streaks, taking the channels of old streams, and falling with a dull pattering sound upon the pavement beneath; a sound which amid the stillness of the night, had reached the ears of a man, who was to be hanged at Tyburn, at twelve the next day.

That man was Sixteen-string Jack.

He had passed rather a wakeful night, but as he washed his face the next morning, he whistled an air in a clear and loud key, while he looked at the turnkey, who had brought him the means wherewithal to perform his abolutions.

"How do you feel, Jack, this morning," said the turnkey.

"With my hands I suppose, as I have always done," replied Jack.

"There's a fellow," said the turnkey, calling to another who was outside the condemned cell. "Lor! bless you, he'll die game. He's just made a joke, now, he has."

"And why not?" said Jack, "Life's a joke."

"But is hanging a joke, Jack?"

"Yes, if you have the pluck to laugh at it, certainly."

"Ain't he a rum un?" said the turnkey, in evident intense admiration of Jack's mode of carrying off his certainly rather ticklest position. "We have had a few rum un's here Jack, but you is the *rummestest*. Howsomedever here's the chaplain, Jack."

"Very good."

"Unhappy man," said the chaplain, with a pious snuffle, "I hope you have endeavoured to make your peace hereafter?"

"All's right," said Jack.

"I trust that you look back with horror on your past life?"

"Horror!" cried Jack. "Oh, dear no."

There's no life like a life on the road,

Hurrah!

There's no life like a life on the road.

You stick to your trade, sir, and let me stick to mine. I am a highwayman! well I know the penalty of being caught and committed, and it has come to that at last. Tyburn tree is waiting for me, but I don't see why I should go out of the world snivelling; its enough to come into it in such a sort of way, when you can't help it. No, sir, I dare say you mean well, but I flatter myself though I am going to be scragged, I aint much worse than many of my neighbours."

"He's a rum un, aint he, sir?" said the turnkey.



"Silence!" cried the reverend ordinary. "How dare you use the low words 'rum un' to me, I shall have you discharged."

"Do, sir," said Jack. "It will be a christian like act, that will—mind you don't forget it, and when you are on your last legs, and giving a kick for another breath, may you feel as well as I do now, for I never yet did a wanton act of cruelty, and I never took a poor man's bread away from him for nothing."

"I perceive," said the chaplain, "that you are obdurate, I tremble to think what will be your fate in the world to come, you hardened sinner."

"Don't be absurd," said Jack. "But its always the way with you. I never met with anybody who pretended to much religion, who had any temper or charity. What's o'clock?"

"Nearly nine," said the turnkey. "Would you like anything, Jack?"

"Yes, I should. Get us a lot of stewed oysters. They always make me ill in a few hours after taking them, but I shall be dancing on nothing at twelve o'clock, and then it won't matter, and I say—has Poll been again this morning? I want to see her."

"No, Jack, she hasn't been. I knows what you wants to see her for. Its to ask her if she has told Claude Duval not to try to shake hands with you in the cart. You may depend she has ferretted him out, and he's not so mad as to try it on, surely, when he knows that there's £200 issued out agin him."

Jack shook his head.

"I'm afraid," he said, "I'm very much afraid he'll try it. Claude don't look at danger before hand, and when it comes he stares it out of countenance. If there were £2000 against his name he would not mind. He gave his hand to me upon the promise a year ago, and he'll keep his word. Its the only thing that gives me an uncomfortable feel to-day. They will nab poor Claude as safe as possible; I'm afraid of that, and nothing else."

"Perhaps he won't try it on, after all, Jack."

"I'm afraid he will. But, however, as the old song says, 'What's the use o' grieving.' I will hope for the best, if I think the worst. I suppose we shall start soon—what noise is that?"

"The cart, Jack, that's all. There's a thousand people outside Newgate now, and they are pouring in by all the thoroughfares as fast as nothing. I don't think the parson will say much more to you, he has gone off in a huff, Jack."

"Let him go—all's right. I wish Poll would come. Where can she be? I suppose they will let her past the gate. It's very odd she aint here, and nine o'clock, too—Who's that coming?"

"Mr. Needles the sheriff, Jack."

Mr. Needles was the most bandily shaped man that the imagination could picture, for being just about as broad as he was long, he might have been set up in any way without detriment to his appearance, always providing that his sheriff's gown and chain were disposed accordingly. He was very near sighted too, so that when he wished to see anybody, he had to come within an inch of their nose. Mr. Needles was a kind hearted man, and whenever there was an execution, his feelings used to put him into such a state of perspiration that he shone all over is face and round, bald head, like a double dip in July. It was his duty now to let the prisoner know that he would soon have to bid the world adieu.

"Ahem!" he said. "Mr. a—a—really, I don't know your right name—Mr. a—a—a."

"Call me Jack, sir, call me Jack. You have done several kind things since I have been here, and I thank you with all my heart."

"Oh, don't mention that," said Mr. Needles getting more shiny than before.

"Dear me, I often wish I was not a sheriff, but my time will soon be out, that's one comfort. Well, Jack, since that's what I'm to call you, I have only to say that we start at ten you know from here. Bless me, what's that?"

"Something among the crowd outside, sir," said an official. "Hillio! Davis, what's all that shouting for outside?"

"Only a mad bull, sir, among the people," said Davis.

"Poll not come," said Jack. "Poll not come!"

"You won't see her this morning, Jack," said the turnkey. "A man on a *hellephant*, and in armour, couldn't get through such a crowd as there is now outside of Newgate, so it's quite out of the question."

"Well," said Jack, with a sigh. "I suppose it can't be helped. Mr. Needles, it won't be fair at all to interfere with Claude Duval to-day, when, if he comes at all to the cart side, it will only be to make an old friend's heart lighter by shaking hands with him, as he goes to death. It will be a dastardly thing to interfere with him then, sir."

"Dear me," said the little fat sheriff, "you know I have no more to do with that, than the man in the moon, Jack, I can't help it. It's uncommonly absurd of him to come, if he don't want to be caught."

"It is, but Claude is the man to do it for all that, and glory in it. I'm sorry Poll can't get to tell me if she took him my message. 'Ah!'"

The great bell of Newgate had begun to toll. The sheriff took out an amazing handkerchief, and wiped his head and face, which process took some of the shine off it for a time, and then he bustled out of the cell just as a turnkey ran in with some stewed oysters to Jack, according to the request he had made for that article.

It was not any personal fear of his approaching death at Tyburn, that made Jack turn aside, and shake his head at the stewed oysters; but it was his dread, lest Claude Duval should be taken in his chivalrous attempt to shake hands with him, that unmanned him.

"No, no," he said, "I thank you all the same; it was kind of you, and while I live I am not likely to forget it.—Good bye, old fellow. You, are among the few that I would have liked to stay among yet awhile, but as it can't be, why it can't and there's an end of it. I'm wanted, I suppose."

"Yes, Jack. They are waiting to knock your irons off."

"Very good, I'm ready."

A sort of procession escorted Jack to the lobby, where the process of knocking off his irons was adroitly performed, and then while a strange murmur arose from the crowd, partly of sympathy, and partly of excitement, the condemned man was placed in the cart that was ready to convey him to the place of execution.

Jack was bare-headed, and his face was pale, while his eyes roved among that sea of faces, as if with intense anxiety, looking for some one whom he wished to recognise. The chaplain got into the cart, and shook his head, in a manner which he intended should be impressive, and strike the crowd with a solemn awe, but the only effect it had, was to elicit an inquiry from one of the nearest spectators if he shook his head because he thought there was anything in it.

This produced a laugh, but that soon passed off as the pale anxious countenance of Sixteen-string Jack, and his roving eyes met their gaze.

Just as the cart was about to start, and at least a couple of dozen of persons, who had pressed forward eagerly to offer drink or to shake hands with the culprit, had been thrust back by the officers, the Governor of Newgate stepped up to the cart with an open letter in his hand, and leaning forward to Jack, he said—

"A quaker gentleman, of the name of Luke Houlditch, living at Tottenham, and who was robbed on the highway by some one near Finchley, about three months ago has writtēz to say that if you will say if it was you or not, probably it will ward off suspicion from another person who is somewhat suspected. Have you any objection?"

"Surely not at such a time as this," said the chaplain.

"None in the least," said Jack, "Can't he come and identify me, I can hardly take upon myself, with any certainty, to say yes or no."

"He says he thinks he should know you, but that he dreads a crowd, however he will make an endeavour to see you as you proceed up Oxford-street, when he hopes you will satisfy him, and I see no harm in your doing so."



CLAUDE DUVAL THROWING THE SPY THROUGH THE WINDOW.

"Be it so," said Jack, "let him come and look at me if he likes. I care for no man's scrutiny now." The governor gave orders that no one should oppose the approach of Mr. Houlditch, he drew back, and the cart started.

As the mournful cavalcade moved slowly down Oxford street, a man dressed in the garb of a quaker was seen sitting on the back of a black horse. The clothing of the horseman was of a grey serge of the true quaker's cut, and he wore a broad brimmed, felt hat.

"I tell thee friends," he said in a nasal voice, "that I have travelled even from Tottenham High Cross, to see this sinner and man of violence, for have I not suspected my own man Choppings, of waylaying me, and did I not likewise suspect the slaughterer of animals commonly called a butcher, Dobbs, who resideth at Tottenham, likewise of being the culprit, and have I not with the strong arm of the law persecuted him?"

"What will you take for your hat, friend," cried a voice in tolerable imitation of the quaker."

"Something of more weight than thy wit, friend," replied the man of peace.

A roar of laughter followed this retort, and another man cried—

"Can't you let the poor fellow go to Tyburn in peace?"

"Yea, friend, truly I do not wish otherwise, but if I recognise in him the son of Belial who robbed me upon the highway, and he confeseth so much upon seeing me, verily you see, I shall cease from suspecting and prosecuting innocent people, but should he say unto me, truly, friend Houlditch, I did not rob thee and strike thee upon the nose —"

Another scream of laughter drowned the quaker's voice.

"Yea and verily, friends," added Mr. Houlditch, "I say unto ye, that my nose swelled exceedingly from the blow stricken thereon.

"Serve you right, too," cried a fellow.

"Thou mayest possibly be right, friend. The only bad thing is that thou art not served right by divers strokes on thy back at the cart's tail, as thou hast more than once already experienced."

It was quite clear that the mob was no match in wit for the quaker, so no one tried any more attacks upon him. Moreover, the procession was now close at hand, and that concentrated all the interest of the scene.

"Come out, broad-brim," said one. "Here's Jack coming."

"Yea and so am I friend. I only placed myself under this balcony, lest my outward man should get wet by the rain which is even now coming down. I fear that I shall not be able to get to him, as I am a man of peace, and little used to pushing and shouting, verily."

"Make way for the quaker!" cried several. "Make a passage for old broad-brim and no whiskers."

"I thank thee, friend, but if thou hadst no whiskers, thy wife, who is strong in the flesh, could not pull them."

"Confound the fellow," muttered the man. "He has his answers always ready."

The exclamations of the mob, and the odd figure of the quaker on horseback attracted the attention of the officers who were surrounding the cart, and they judged at once that he was the Mr. Houlditch who had been spoken of by the governor of Newgate, and as he was upon the near side of the way there was no great difficulty in inclining the cart towards the pavement so that he might ask his question of Sixteen-string Jack.

The demeanour of Jack now filled every one with surprise, for he betrayed much agitation of manner. His colour went and come, and he opened and shut his hands, while he muttered some words to himself, the only one of which could be caught was "reckless."

The cart was stopped within half a dozen paces of the pavement, and with great difficulty through the throng of people, the quaker made his way on his horse towards it, while Sixteen-string Jack looked eagerly at him.

"Now, sir," cried one of the officers, "ask your questions, and have done with it."

"What a throat thou hast got, friend," said the quaker, "keep thy mouth shut, I pray thee."

"Hoorah! Hoorah!" shouted the crowd, and various expressions indicative of a growing admiration for friend Houlditch, were freely uttered, while the officer who had spoken so roughly, bit his lips with vexation.

"And so," said Houlditch, to the condemned man, "thou art Sixteen-string Jack?"

"Yes," said Jack, and his voice faltered, as he spoke, "yes, and it's come to this at last."

"Well, friend, now I look thee in the face, I declare thou did'st never wrong me."

"Bravo, bravo!" cried a great blacksmith, who was close at hand. "Bravo! This here quaker is a trump!"

"Give me thy hand Sixteen-string Jack," added Houlditch, "God bless thee, my poor fellow, God bless thee."

"God bless you," said Jack, and tears gushed to his eyes.

"By G—— I suspect," cried a mounted officer, making a grasp at the quaker.

"What?" said Houlditch, as with one blow of the heavy loaded end of his riding whip, he knocked the officer senseless from his horse. "Suspect what, fool? Not more than I am quite willing to avow."

"He threw off the broad brimmed hat as he spoke, and Jack cried—

"Fly, fly. Oh, fly."

"Claude Duval!" cried a hundred voices.

"Yes," shouted the sham quaker, in a voice that made itself loudly and clearly heard above all other sounds. "Yes, I am Claude Duval, and I have redeemed my promise, of taking a kind farewell of my old, kind friend, and bidding God bless him."

The officers made a dash at Claude, but the people with a war of determination closed around him, and the great blacksmith shouted—

"Don't let them have him. The bloodhounds! Claude Duval never took a sixpence from a poor man in all his life, though he has given many a one."

"Fly, fly!" again cried Jack. A shower of stones saluted the officers, and the chaplain fell down flat in the bottom of the cart, to get out of the danger of the missiles. Everything seemed to promise that a severe contest between the officers would ensue, and the former drew their staves, but they were greeted by a laugh of derision, and pistols were produced.

"We will have him, dead or alive!" said one.

"Take him then," said Claude. "Farewell Jack, I have kept my word."

"Nobly, nobly," said Jack, "and—and Poll?"

"Shall never want while Claude has a crust to share with her, Jack. Make your mind easy about her. Good bye."

Some of the crowd had passed Claude's horse on to the pavement, and a lane was made for him, while the officers were so seriously obstructed that they could not move an inch; but two of the horsemen had cutlasses, and they began to use them upon the heads of the people so furiously that the mob gave way a little, and unfortunately for Claude, he just arrived opposite the opening of a street, from which a dense mass of people were rushing, to know what had happened, so that he was completely fixed, while the officers were now gradually nearing him.

The corner of the street was a shop of some sort, but it had been closed to avoid danger to the windows, and above the shop was a large balcony in front of the windows of the first floor. Suddenly one of the windows opened, and a girl of great beauty, rushed into the balcony.

"Claude, Claude," she cried "it is Claude. Oh, God, 'tis he."

Claude Duval glanced at the window, and the words, "My sister May," escaped his lips. The mob too heard the young girl's exclamation, and the blacksmith shouted—

"Can you take him in at the window, Miss? If you don't he'll swing at Tyburn, this day week."

"Yes, yes, anything; Claude, Claude!"

Duval himself saw this was now his only chance of escape, and with surprising agility, he rose in the saddle and stood on the back of the horse, by which he

was enabled to clutch the lower rails of the balcony, and in another moment he drew himself up and waving his hand disappeared in at the window of the house, which was put down and the shutters closed immediately. The mob gave three terrific cheers, to express its triumph at the escape of the man, who for the moment, in consequence of a chivalrous act had become its idol.

The victim had escaped, but the confusion was still most serious, and the officers dismounted from their horses, for the purpose of breaking in the door of the house in which Duval had taken refuge; but that turned out to be a foolish proceeding, for being now on foot they were much more on an equality with the mob, and it was only by abandoning the siege of the house, that they regained the streets once more.

They held a short consultation among themselves.

"What's to be done," cried one, "are we to lose the money?"

"Certainly not. But you see we shall get pulled to pieces by the mob now if we make any attack upon the house. We must go on to Tyburn now."

"And do you think that such a devil as Claude Duval will wait for us until we get back. That's a likely thing."

"No. I never expected any such thing, but I propose that we go on a little as if we had completely given up all idea of taking him, and then that two of us with a little observation as possible, detach ourselves from the cavalcade, and go back to watch the house he has taken refuge in, so that if he does go from it, at all events he can be dogged."

"It's the only thing that can be done. Come along."

When the people saw the officers were consulting, and casting angry glances up at the house where Claude had found an asylum, they perfectly expected that some immediate and violent attack would be made upon it, but when the procession moved on to Tyburn, and no further notice of the affair was taken, the populace raised a great shout of derision, and the blacksmith cried out—

"Three cheers for Claude Duval," which were given most heartily.

We need not pursue the catastrophe at Tyburn, further than to say that Sixteen-string Jack, with all his faults, failings, crimes, and ventures, suffered the dreadful death that had been inflicted on so many—innocent we conscientiously believe as well as guilty—at that fatal spot, which even now when its name is mentioned rings upon the imagination as being redolent of fearful recollections of the past.

The lifeless body hung its hour, and was then removed by two females, who brought a hackney coach to take the sad remains, and their talk, for talk they did even amid their tears as they went away, was as much of the chivalrous Claude Duval and his ultimate fate, as of him whom in silence for ever, they had with them as a horrible and ghastly companion.

The officers did not forget their scheme of separating two of their number from the main body, secretly to watch the house in Oxford Road, where Claude had so very opportunely found shelter, and so intent were the multitude upon the last moments of Sixteen-string Jack, that the manœuvre was executed without exciting observation.

It would, however, have taken more wit and more courage than belonged to all the officers put together, to have circumvented Claude Duval. His time had not yet come, and he was doomed to be the hero of yet more striking adventures than had hitherto fallen to his lot.

We will take a glance at him.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE BROTHER AND SISTER.—THE TITLE DEEDS.—  
CLAUDE'S DESPAIR.

It was indeed no other than poor May Duval, of whom the reader has latterly had but a transient glimpse, who assisted her brother Claude in at the window of the house in the Oxford Road.

For the first time during two years, he felt the pressure of her hand in his, and as the rapidly closed casement and shutters stilled the roar of the multitude without, he could hear the sobs that came from her agonized heart.

All was darkness, however, now in the room, for the shutters were hastily barred by May, and fitting closely as they did, scarcely a ray of daylight found its way into the apartment. How complete—how total was the change from the shout of the multitude without, and the glare of mid-day, to the silence and darkness of that room!

Claude was sensibly affected by it, and his voice shook as he spoke to his sister.

"You have saved me, May," he cried.

"Hush. Oh, hush," she cried. "This way—this way."

She opened a door, and a gleam of light came again into the room. He followed her into an apartment at the back of the house, and then she tried to look at him—she took his hand and tried to speak, but the effort was too great, and bursting into tears, she flung herself upon a couch in an agony of grief.

Claude shook a little, and he paced the room several times before he spoke. Then pausing opposite to May, he strove to speak in a calm and composed voice, as he said again,—

"May, you have saved my life."

"And you, Claude," she sobbed, "have broken my heart."

"Is this kind, May, at such a time as this?"

"Kind! Oh, Claude—Claude, can you utter a reproach? What are you? Dare I answer my own question. You were poor, forlorn, dejected; what are you now?"

"None of those, May."

"Worse, worse, a thousand times worse, for you then stood upon a rock of adamant, you sat upon a throne, to which angels might bow down in reverence."

"You speak in riddles, May, I must confess my inability to understand you."

"The rock you stood upon, and the throne upon which nature had placed you, have both one name. That name is innocence."

"Let other's upbraid me for my life," he said, "from you, May, I did expect reproaches."

"They are not reproaches, Claude. Witness these tears, that I speak in all the sadness of grief, and not in anger. Hark! Do you understand those shouts?"

"I do not."

"The mob congratulates itself upon the escape of a criminal, and even I am from this moment involved in your guilt and your shame. I who by word or deed have wronged no one, I am at last betrayed even by my bitter feelings, to be the partner of iniquity. Your guilt is now my guilt, for I have received and continue to shelter the guilty man, against whom the hand of justice is raised. Thus Claude, no man can err, but he brings sin and sorrow upon others as well as himself."

"This state of things can soon be altered," said Claude, bitterly. "The

balcony by which you but a few moments since admitted me, is close at hand. I will relieve you from the weight of my presence, by leaving this house in the manner that I entered it, and the first declaration I make to my captors, shall be one exculpatory of you, for I will declare that instead of affording an asylum to the highwayman, you refused him one with the bitterest reproaches. Farewell."

"Claude, Claude."

He waved his hand, and strode into the dark room.

With a cry of dismay May rushed after him, and while his hand was upon the shutters, she flung herself into his arms.

"Claude. Brother. Take my heart from my bosom and see how yet you dwell in its inmost recesses. Oh, Claude—Claude, if I could but die for you!"

"Let me go, May, I know I am unworthy of your affections. I know you did all you could to turn me from the course of life I have adopted, but I would not take your counsel, and therefore, it is unfair of me now to involve you in any difficulty for my sake. I am lost, I know, and the steps in life that I have taken I cannot now recede from. I do not now speak in anger, May."

"No—no, Claude. You shall not go."

"Nay, I pray you let me. It was the thoughtlessness of a moment that made me accept an asylum here. When I saw you, of all houses in this great city, I ought to have avoided this."

May clung to him still, and he could not without absolute violence have extricated himself from her embrace, and that of course, he was loth to use, so that she succeeded in detaining him until the procession of the doomed man, and the roar of the multitude of people that accompanied it were past, and but a confused murmur came upon their ears; Claude listened attentively, and then turning to May, he said,—

"Sister, it is rather sad to meet thus. How have you fared since last we parted? I have thought of you day and night, and sought you, and employed others to seek you, but all in vain. My eyes never rested upon your face, until I stopped the coach at Ealing Common, in which, to my surprise, I found you seated. I nearly fell from my horse in the suddenness of the recognition. I knew your voice, and yet could scarce believe it was you. I thought some resemblance of tones might have cheated me, but when I came to look at the little bead purse you handed to me, and knew it had been our mother's, I could no longer doubt."

"Yes, Claude, it was our mother's, and it is the only relic I have of her,—I thought it might arouse dormant feelings within your breast, and make virtue once more an inmate of your heart—did you not feel something, when you looked upon it?"

"There is a gulf, May, now between me and what the world calls virtue, that I may never hope to pass. You got back that purse with my tears and kisses upon it."

"Oh, Claude, you are not lost."

"You know not what you say."

"Yes Claude. Indeed, indeed I do. There is—there always is, even in this life, a future for those who have the courage to dedicate it to virtue. Do not delude yourself with the vain and specious argument, that because you have sinned, you must still sin."

"But May, would you have me from some romantic notion of repentance, voluntarily give myself up to the hangman?"

"No, no, no—I—oh, no. That would not follow. Your better nature would so show itself, that for once an attribute of heaven—mercy, would be borrowed, by those who hold the scales of human justice, and you would be spared."

"Alas! my May, you speak more, much more like the heroine of some romance, than as one, who, in this matter-of-fact world, has known what sorrow is. I tell you sister that having chosen, and so far proceeded in my present course of life, I have no hope, no chance of any other. I must now, like the forlorn hope of an army push on, at the only chance of preserving, for yet awhile my existence."



I must fall at last, and I can but protract the arrival of that day. Do not urge me more upon this impossible point."

"You speak desparingly, Claude."

"Not so, May. Hopefully I speak. It is true that I am a highwayman, and that society is up in arms against me. I stop a rich man upon the highway, and by force, I take some of his money, but what I do I do boldly. I am not a lawyer—a member of parliament, so that even if people in their indignation at my proceedings were to go so far as to call me a thief, I am not a sneaking thief, such as those I have mentioned; nor am I a tradesman who will go to church regularly every Sunday, and yet all the week be fattening and guzzling upon the products of the hard earnings of others, whose boots, in point of fact, he is perhaps scarcely worthy to polish. No May, I deceive nobody, and when I stop a traveller with a well lined purse, and cry, 'stand and deliver!' I think myself a worthier man than many, who are most specially commended to Providence, and held up as patterns of everything that is good."

"You do not mean what you say, Claude."

"Do I not. I can hold up my right hand, and take my oath of it."

The sound of carriage wheels suddenly pausing in the street below, now attracted the attention of both brother and sister, and May trembled as she said—

"It is Mrs. Brereton and—and——"

"She whom I heard named Cicely," exclaimed Claude, "I bless the danger that has once more taught me there is a chance of gazing on that lovely face."

"Are you mad, Claude? What can you mean? If they should find you here, what can I say? I am lost, lost."

"How sister. I am not ugly enough to frighten them, am I?"

"Can you jest at such a time as this. Oh, Claude, what shall I do? When I was friendless and destitute in the streets of London, chance, or the goodness of Heaven, brought me in contact with these ladies. I told them that I had no home, but I concealed my real name, and instead of May Duval, I called myself May Russel. Since then they have afforded me an asylum. Oh, if they should now find they had been deceived, and that I was sister to a—a——"

"Highwayman you would say."

A sharp tat tat at the street door interrupted the conversation, and May glanced about her, in a distracted manner.

"You must hide, Claude," she said, "you must hide."

"Wherever you please," he replied. "Only place me somewhere where I shall have a chance of seeing the young lady, named Cicely, that is all I ask, and I shall be patient, if I am forced to remain twelvemonths, wherever you place me."

There was a large cupboard in the room, close to the fire place, and into that May hastily pushed Claude, and closed the door upon him, just as the street door closed again, after admitting the ladies Brereton to the house, and May had only just time to open the shutters of the front room, before they ascended the stairs.

## CHAPTER X.

A SURPRISE.—CLAUDE'S ESCAPE.—A DRIVE TO NEWGATE.—THE ROAD AGAIN.

It is true that a servant girl who was in the kitchen of the house, at the time Claude Duval had taken refuge in it, might have been cognisant of the fact, but when the riot began, and the whole street was in an uproar, she had prudently got into the coal cellar, nor did she emerge therefrom until the ladies Brereton

who upon their arrival in London, had taken for a short time that house furnished as it was, knocked at the door.

Thus it was that not only was Claude's presence unknown to the ladies, but May had had the opportunity of holding the brief and agitated conversation with him, which we have recorded, and which as is usual enough with such arguments concerned neither party, while it certainly had the effect of paining both.

"Oh, mum," said the girl to Miss Brereton, there's been such a riotation in the streets, mum. They have been taking Thirty-two-string Jack to be hung mum, leastways I ain't quite sure that's the number of strings, but it's something like that mum."

"How alarmed you look, Ann," said Cicely.

"Yes miss, I is all that. Will you walk up. There's a good fire in the drawing-room. Oh, you would have been scarified, if you had been here, Miss, when the riotation was. I got in the cellar, and so heard it all over my own head, though I couldn't see much of it, in consequence you see miss, of the roof."

Cicely was evidently in a dejected state, but the peculiar phraseology of Ann, extorted even a smile from her, as she ascended the staircase. May was in hope that the ladies would go into the front room, but to her chagrin, for she was not very mindful of Claude's request, that he might be placed somewhere where he could command a view of Cicely, they sat down in the back room, and old Mrs. Brereton, after a few remarks, looked closely at May, and said—

"Why, child you have been crying."

"Have I, madam?" said May, scarcely knowing in her confusion what she replied to the most inopportune, but yet kind enquiry.

"Your eyes tell that you have. Look at her Cicely. Ah! my dear, what have you to cry for? You are not as I am, full of grief and uncertainty regarding a son."

"Or I am regarding a brother," said Cicely.

May could hardly retain her tears from flowing afresh at this, by a great effort she did put on a show of outward composure, as she said—

"Then all enquiry regarding Mr. Markham Brereton is fruitless?"

"Quite so," said Cicely. "It is quite clear my brother has not arrived in London, or he would have gone to Mr. Hughes, the lawyer, to ascertain where we were staying. How strange it is that we should hear nothing of him since he trotted on to see that the road was clear as we come to town. Do you recollect, May—I do not, but my mother thinks the highwayman who stopped the carriage said something to intimate that he had met Markham."

"He did," said May, in a half stifled tone.

"But what was it, my dear?" said the old lady.

"It was only an intimation that he had been informed that there was an invalid in the carriage, and who else but Mr. Brereton could so have informed him?"

"But, Markham is repulsive to strangers, rather than communicative," said Cicely.

"Certainly he is," added Mrs. Brereton. "Alas! alas! all these things will bring me to my grave, I can see that."

The old lady's tears began to flow, and May blamed herself for not asking explicitly of Claude if he had had any encounter with Mr. Mark Brereton. There was a painful silence for a few moments duration, which was interrupted by a slight exclamation from Cicely, who picked up from the floor close to her feet a small piece of folded paper.

"What is it?" cried May.

"I know not," replied Cicely. "It seemed to fall at my feet only just now."

She opened the paper, and to the surprise of herself and her mother, read the following words.

"Mr. Brereton did meet Claude Duval, but he is not hurt, and will soon be with you."

"Gracious Heavens!" cried Mrs. Brereton, "who wrote that?"

"Are we in a land of enchantment?" cried Cicely.



May turned of an ashy paleness, but uttered not a word.

Fortunately for all parties, even Claude himself, who had been guilty of this indiscretion, there was a loud and quick succession of knocks at the street door, which for the moment effectually took their attention from the mysterious note found on the floor. The perpetrator of these knocks proved to be Markham Brereton, who had opportunely arrived, to the no small joy of his mother and sister.

The first greetings were scarcely over, when an exclamation from Cicely directed all eyes to the street on which the room they were sitting in looked, where, plain

enough, they saw the victimised Tom, and on the impulse of the moment, Markham threw open the window, and called aloud to him.

"Good God! is that you, Tom Breerton?"

At the voice Tom looked up, and uttered a hideous groan—relaxing his hold, of the horse, he rolled off it, close to the threshold of the house. Cicely looked all amazement, and Markham ran down stairs to the street door, to know what on earth could have reduced Tom to so miserable a plight, for his feelings towards him were much more those of contempt than any thing else, while none of the family were so unjust as to blame him for claiming what was his own. The only objections they urged to his proceeding, was, that he made his claim roughly, and carried it beyond their means of restoration.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Markham, when he had dragged Tom into the passage.

"Oh! oh! oh!"

"Well, you can say something besides 'oh!' I suppose?"

"No I can't."

"Why, you are covered with mud. Have you been riding a steeple chase?"

"I don't know, but I dare say I have as I came along. Oh dear! oh dear! They soon caught me, and wasn't I thankful; then they upset me, and wasn't I glad; then they collared me after rolling me in the mud, and then what do you think?"

"I really don't know what to think."

"They said I was Claude Duval, the great highwayman."

"You Claude Duval?"

"Yes, to be sure, that's why they run after me, crying, 'Stop him!' Ah, I have had such a job! they soon found out I wasn't the highwayman, however; but I'll tell you all about it soon. Only let me lie down, somewhere, for a little while, and get off these horrid muddy clothes."

"I don't know, cousin Tom," said Markham, "that we are particularly called upon to show you any courtesy, for you were rather scant of that article with us, but it is not my disposition to return evil for evil, and as this is for the time being our home, you can come in, and I will see that you are accommodated with a bed."

"Oh, thank you. You haven't seen anything of my black pocket-book, have you?"

"How should I know anything of it?"

"Ah, well! dear me. All my bones ache, they do indeed. Oh, oh, oh! Stop him—stop him. There goes the horse! Well, I thought at last, I would keep that as a set off against what I had lost; but I am certainly the most un lucky fellow. Oh, dear!"

Markham assisted him up stairs to a bed-room, where he left him, to get rid, by himself, of some of the dirty apparel in which he was enveloped, before he questioned him any further, regarding the manner in which he came to be so situated.

May, who had been most anxiously revolving the best means of getting the party out of the room in which Claude was concealed, had ordered Ann to lay a lunch in the parlour, so that now it was announced, and they all descended to it, May promising to join them immediately, but her object was to speak to Claude, so the moment the room was clear, she opened the cupboard, and with a face as pale as death itself, she confronted him.

"Fly, oh fly," she said, "fly at once, or all will be discovered, and after the deceit I have practised, I can hope for no further friendship from those who have been so kind to me."

"Fear nothing, May, I may yet be able to protect you."

"It is not the loss of their protection, but it would be the loss of their good opinion, that would cut me to the very heart."

"Nay you will not lose the good opinion of any one, whose good opinion is worth the having; but I know this is no place for me."

"Then fly from it at once."

"Into the arms of the officers, do you mean? Did you not hear Mr. Brereton say that men were watching the house? For whom do they watch, but for Claude Duval?"

"Alas! alas! What can be done?"

"I scarcely know, yet. But while I am thinking about it, take this pocket-book; it did belong to the young man called Tom, who was in the carriage with you all. It contains various documents connected with his property as well as the proofs of his personal identity, I wish you to give it to Mr. Brereton."

"How am I to do that, Claude?"

"Place it somewhere in such a position that he cannot fail to see it, and now tell me is there any possibility of getting on the top of the house?"

"Yes, I think there is."

"Then do you go down to your lunch and leave me to manage my own escape. What's that noise and shouting in the street?"

May ran to the window and looked.

"It is the cavalcade returning from the execution of Sixteen-String Jack," she said,—

"Ah poor Jack," said Claude. "Well, well, that's past now."

"Claude, Claude, they stop here. The officers dismount.—They advance to the house.—Oh Claude—you are lost—lost."

"All are not lost in danger, May. Go down stairs, and whatever may happen express no surprise or apprehension. Even if you should see me taken, I charge you by the affection I know you still bear to me, to say nothing."

He dashed up the staircase, as he spoke, towards the bed-rooms of the house, and as he did so he heard a clamorous knocking at the door. Now, Claude had had not the most distant idea that Tom Brereton had been brought into the house, and when he went hurriedly into the first room, he came to in order to see what its capabilities of concealment was, he was not a little surprised to find a man in bed, looking the picture of fright.

"Murder, murder!" said Tom, "what's that?"

"Why, who are you," said Claude.

"Eh?"

They confronted each other for a few moments in silence, the thoughts of each being busy in very different ways.

Claude was considering how he could turn this meeting in the way of his escape, and Tom was wondering to see a man in quaker garments by his bedside, with anything but the manner and countenance of a quaker.

"Oh, dear, who are you," added Tom.

"Are you the fellow that was robbed by Claude Duval," said Claude, "and made to gallop away upon a horse, with six men after you?"

"Yes—oh dear yes."

"Then your life is not worth two minutes purchase. I would not give a farthing for it; you will be a dead man in five minutes notice."

## CHAPTER. XI

### THE SECOND ADVENTURE OF TOM BRERETON.—CLAUDE'S ESCAPE.

WHEN Claude Duval uttered these words, to the terrified and already nearly distracted Tom Brereton he glared at him with such a comical expression of face, that he Claude, had not been seriously bent upon mischief, he must have laughed. As it was, however, he did continue to keep something like a grave countenance, as he repeated—

"Yes, you are even now in fact a dead man."

"A—dead—man? Oh, oh! Mur——"

"Hush! Such exclamations can only hasten a catastrophe which I would willingly prevent, if possible. Listen to me. It will be some satisfaction to you to know in your last moments, why it is you are sacrificed. Listen."

Tom only glared at Claude with a bewildered look, and trembled so that he shook the whole bed, and set the rings by which the hangings were suspended, ginging furiously.

"You are aware," added Claude, "that you were robbed by that celebrated highwayman, Claude Duval, who took away your black pocket-book, and who afterwards to avoid pursuit from himself, got you mounted on a horse, and set you off at full gallop with half a dozen men after you, who thought they were pursuing him."

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Well, Claude is taken, and it is believed by all the highwaymen and cracksmen in London, that you were at the bottom of a deep laid scheme for his capture, and have in fact been successful in effecting it, the consequence of which is that dreading your power and finesse, they have come to the determination to destroy you."

"But it ain't true. I have got no power—no finesse, Oh, dear, oh, dear."

"That's likely enough, but you won't make them believe it."

"Then what am I to do?"

"I am the chief of the Bow-street runners, and will save you if I can; only you must obey me implicitly."

"I will, I will. Hark! do you hear that?"

"Yes, they have forced open the street door."

While he was speaking to Tom Brereton, Claude had cast his eyes anxiously about the room, and in one corner he had espied a large chest, to which he now pointed significantly, saying—

"I suppose you have no particular objection to get in there?"

"In where?"

"In that chest. It strikes me that by so doing you may save yourself; I can just at present see no other way of aiding you. The thieves who are looking for you, expressly to take vengeance upon you, while not probably thinking of looking there, while, I with some of my fellow officers, will come and take the chest away to a place of safety with you in it."

"Well, but——"

"As you please, your fate be upon your own head. All I have to do is to go and make oath before the magistrate of Bow-street, that I offered you a mode of escape which you thought proper to reject. I have the honour of bidding you good day, sir."

"Oh, no, no. Stop, I—I will do it. Oh, dear, what a sad thing to be so knocked about to be sure. I have only just escaped from the back of a wild horse, and now I am forced to get into a great box."

"It is the failure of war."

"Is it? But I don't want to be at war with anybody, I only want to be quiet, that's all. The idea now of anybody thinking that I laid a deep scheme for anybody, I wish I could lay one to get home again, and be in peace and comfort, that I do. I know all this will be the death of me."

With groans and sighs, Tom got out of bed, and with no little difficulty stowed himself away in the chest, which having the key in the lock, Claude securely fastened, and then just as he heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs, he darted into the bed, and covered all but his face up with the abundant clothing that was on it."

The door of the room was dashed open in another moment, and eight or ten officers entered it. They were well armed, for they evidently expected some resistance, in the capture of such a man as Claude Duval. They looked rather

disappointed, when they only found a bed room, and a man lying in bed with a languid aspect, which Claude put on very consistently.

"Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen!" he said. "Who are you? Oh! tell me who are you?"

"Who are you?" cried one of the officers.

"I hardly know, for I can't exactly say whether I'm asleep or awake, gentlemen, I was asleep, but—that is to say, I think I was asleep, and then my name was Mr. Brereton, but just now a fellow came bang into the room with a pistol in his hand."

"A pistol. That must be our man. Was it Claude Duval?"

"Who?"

"Claude Duval, the great highwayman."

"Lord how should I know? I'm a respectable man, and have got no such acquaintance."

"Where did he go?"

"I was telling you, but you are so impatient. He held the pistol against my head, and says he 'say one word and you are a dead man,' says he, for may my mare Sue lose her wind, if I don't blow your brains out."

"Its our man," cried the officers. "There can be no mistake now, where did he go?"

"Well, I'm a telling you, but you get so furious. You must be a sad fellow at home, that you must—my father's a wool stapler, and he often used to say to me, 'Tom,' say he, 'whenever you———'"

"Confound your father. We want to know where Claud Duval went."

"Well, I'm a telling you. He didn't wait for me to say anything, but after he had threatened my life in a manner of speaking, he popped into that great box there."

The officers raised a shout of exultation, and three or four of them rushed towards the chest, and sat down on the lid.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed he who had carried on the brief conversation with Claude. "Ha, ha, ha! I rather think we have the fox in a trap now."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of his getting out," said Claude. "I forgot to tell you that he asked me to lock it up, and take the key, and say my cloathes were in it, that's all, and I did lock it, and here's the key, gentlemen."

There was at this moment some half stifled cry from the box, but it was not sufficiently clear to be understood, and the officers felt then that assurance was doubly sure.

"What say you, comrades," said one. "We know that our prisoner is a troublesome fellow, suppose we take him off to Newgate just as he is, box and all?"

"That's an uncommonly good idea," said Claude.

"So it is," said the others, for they all seemed to shrink from a personal encounter with so redoubtable a personage as Claude Duval, and the opportunity of taking him away safely in a chest they considered was by no means to be slighted.

A furious knocking arose from the inside of the box, which convinced Claude that Tom Brereton had heard sufficient of the conversation to find out how he had been imposed upon, but the officers would by no means consent to his release, and the more violently he kicked the panels of the chest, the more intent were they upon getting him away just as he was.

"We are very much obliged to you, sir," said the principal of them to Claude. "Very much obliged, indeed, so now we will take away your troublesome customer, and you may be quite sure you will never be troubled him with any more, for he will be hanged at Tyburn next sessions, as safe as we have him here in the box."

"No doubt of that," said Claude. "I'd take my oath of it, I would, gentlemen, and when he is hung, you may take your oaths I shall be there, and in the best place, too."

The officers took up the chest among them, and staggered down the stairs with

it, while one speeded the others, and called loudly for a cart in which to carry the treasure to Newgate. One was soon pressed into the service, and away the whole party went, most specially delighted with the success that had crowned their efforts, and quite congratulating themselves that there were no more of them to share the £200 reward amongst.

"Well, Mr. Tom Brereton," soliloquised Claude, as he sprung from the bed, when the officers had fairly departed, "you are doomed to be of great service to me. Twice have I owed my escape to your accidentally coming into my way, but the mistake will be discovered as soon as they get to Newgate, and perhaps sooner, so this is no place for me."

He stood at the door and listened for a few moments, and then, not hearing any one stirring in the lower part of the house, he cautiously slipped down and reached the passage in perfect safety. Just, however, as he was passing the parlour door he heard the sounds of weeping in the room, and peeping through the crevice of the door, he saw Cicely Brereton setting at a table absorbed in grief.

"My poor dear mother," she said,—"she is at last no more.—Alas, alas, when will Mark return with the physicians?"

"What can be the meaning of this," thought Claude. "Why the old lady must have died suddenly. How beautiful Cicely is, and yet how absurd it is of me to continue thus looking at her, and drinking in such deep draughts of love. She can never be more to me than a beautiful picture. Oh, would that I had never seen her, for then I should have continued to be the same careless fellow I was, but which now I can never be again, for the thought will at times come over me, that by a different course of life, I might almost have made myself worthy of such a treasure as Cicely Brereton."

He felt that he ought to go at once, and yet while there was still the opportunity of looking at the beautiful girl, he could not make up his mind to tear himself away, but like a worshipper at some shrine, he stood in an attitude of rapt devotion to her charms.

Suddenly she rose, and approached the door. He had not time to leave the passage, and in another moment they were face to face. A slight scream came from the lips of Cicely.

"Be not alarmed," said Claude, "you never in all your life, Cicely Brereton, had less cause."

"Who, and what are you?"

"Pardon me, if I reply to neither question, and likewise pardon, for saying that although there is not, and cannot be, the most distant shadow of a hope in my mind of ever calling you mine, yet I love you as never yet man loved, for it is a love without hope, and yet complete."

Without giving her time to make any reply to this most singular declaration of attachment, he took her hand, and for one moment pressed it to his lips. In the next he was gone, and May who had been in the back parlour, with the corpse of old Mrs. Brereton, who had suddenly expired without a sigh, only just in consequence of hearing voices, made her appearance in time to see the street door shut after him. She did not, however, see that it was her brother Claude.

"Oh, May, May!" said Cicely. "Who has been here?"

"I know not."

"A man in grey clothing, and—and handsome, yet bold. There was something too in the tones of his voice that I seemed to remember. He has just left the house."

"Thank God!" exclaimed May, for she knew that he was in safety, although how he had managed to effect his escape from the officers, she could not tell.

"Yes, thank God?" said Cicely.

"Yes, yes, at such a time as this, surely we want no visitors, Cicely. Oh, that Markham would return."

Markham did return quickly, bringing with him the nearest physician, but all



the skill and all the learning that the world ever saw, could not again have re-kindled the flame of existence, in the now senseless form of Mrs. Brereton.

We must leave the Breretons now, to give what course they may please to the natural grief that was sure to affect them, while we follow the more stirring features of the gallant Claude Duval. Oh, how noble, and admirable a man was spoiled, when by the force of adverse circumstances such an one as he, with all his chivalry of spirit, and high aspirations, took to the road for a subsistence. Surely there is something wrong in the constitutions of a society, in which it is accident and not desert, that places persons in favourable circumstances.

To one man of genius who from some confluence of circumstances over which he has had no control, meets with the proper field for exertion, and the reward of his ability, there are a hundred who go to the grave unknown, unappreciated, and unpitied.

Long—long ago, it was capacity that made a man; but now-a-days Shakspeare might starve in London, with Hamlet in one pocket, and Macbeth in another, if he had not money to push them and to pay for a shoal of puffing advertisements in the newspapers or the reviews. It is capital now that governs all things, and virtue—talent—nobility of soul, if yoked to poverty may go a begging on the highway, or as Claude Duval did, take to the bolder course of robbing travellers with well filled purses.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

THE "REIN DEER" MOORFIELDS.—CLAUDE'S NEW TITLE.—THE BISHOP OF EXETER.

CLAUDE when he reached this street, looked neither to the right nor to the left. In the first case he felt confident that all the officers had departed with Tom Brereton and the box to Newgate, and even if he were wrong, and any one had lingered on the spot, his looking for him would not make the danger of an encounter with him the less; so Claude walked on with as measured an appearance as any chance passenger could wish to have.

He had not gone very far though, before he became conscious that a shabby looking man was creeping after him.

In order to make sure that his imagination was not deceiving him, he turned suddenly and sharply, and a few paces in the contrary direction, when the shabby looking man was so confounded by this unexpected manœuvre, that he ran into a doorway, which proceeding quite convinced Claude that he was right in his first conjecture, and that this man, for some object, was watching him.

This was not a state of things that he was likely to allow to continue, so he slackened his pace just as he arrived opposite to a stand of Hackney coaches, he turned again as abruptly as before, and reaching the man before he could get out of the way, he said—

"What do you want with me?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the man.

"For what?"

"Why—a—a—I—you see I'm no fool, I know what Y know."

"And what's that?"

"You are Claude Duval."

"Well?"

This answer of Claude's took the spy so much by surprise, that he could not tell for a moment or two how to avert it, but then feeling that what he had to

may must be said quietly, he strove to put on an appearance of boldness as he poked.

"I am a police spy," he said. "The officers employ me to ferret out things, sir. They pay me badly; give me a £20 note, and I don't see you at all till the next time. They think they have you, but I did not, so I lingered about the house, and you see I am right. Here you are, sir."

"And why don't you take me. You know there is a reward of £200 to whoever will lodge me in Newgate."

"Yes, sir, but then I—I would rather not try to do such a thing, I'm afraid you would not let me. Ha! ha! You understand, sir."

"Perfectly. You are afraid."

"Well, I—I you may call it so if you like, sir. Twenty pound is not much for a gentleman like you, who gets your money so easy, you know."

"But if I have not got it?"

"Why then, I'm afraid I shall have to stick by you and call for help, and share the reward with some half dozen people who may come to my assistance."

"Well, well," said Claude, with a smile. "You shall have what you so absolutely require of me. Call a coach, will you."

The spy beckoned to a coachman, and a vehicle from the stand came to the curbstones, and the driver, with all his greatcoats, let down the steps and adjusted the straw in the inside, while Claude and the spy stood close to the large windows of a confectioner's shop.

"Well, coachman," said Claude, "you see this gentleman by my side. He is what is called a bum baliff. Take a good look at him."

The coachman stared, and so did the spy, but they had neither of them time for much reflection, for Claude suddenly pounced upon the latter, and seizing him by the back of the neck with one hand, and about the middle with the other, he flung him through the confectioner's window with such tremendous force, that he carried all before him. There was a crash of glass, a yell from the spy, and a scream from the young lady in the shop, who had been reading a novel when she was thus intruded upon.

"My eye!" exclaimed the coachman.

"Drive round two turnings, and then put me down," cried Claude Duval, as he sprang into the coach, "You shall have a guinea for this job."

Never did the coachman spring upon his seat with more activity—never was the old horses so earnestly solicited by voice and whip to show that there was some mettle in them yet, and never had the crazy vehicle gone through the air with such rapidity since it had been invalided from regular family service. The two turnings were soon taken, and then Claude alighted, and giving the coachman the guinea he had promised, he said,—

"Now drive on, and if you are overtaken and questioned, you have only to say it's a mistake, and let them look in and so you have no fear."

"Ah, bless you, sir. You is one after my own heart," said the coachman.

"Good luck to yer, sir, wherever yer goes, and whosomedever yer be."

Claude waved his hand, and then dashed down a narrow court, which led him into the not very salubrious parish of Soho, from whence he made his way by a great number of very obscure turnings, with all of which, however, he seemed wonderfully familiar towards the city, his object being to reach an inn near Moorfields, call the "Reindeer," where he not only knew he should get shelter until night, but where his gallant and docile steed Sue was, for he had not brought that creature upon the perilous expedition of shaking hands with Sixteen-string Jack, on his route to execution. He valued Sue much too highly to risk her loss, and as we have seen, he was forced to abandon the horse he rode upon that occasion, but as it was only borrowed from a livery-stable keeper, it gave him no sort of concern, as he knew the owner would easily get it again.

After about half an hour's rather hard walking, during which Claude's mind was much more full of thoughts of the beautiful Cicely Breton, than of the many

perils that surrounded himself, he reached a narrow street in Moorfields, which is not now in existence, for so many of the houses perished one night in a fire.

About the middle of this street is the Reindeer, opposite which is a little tobacconist's shop. Claude directed his steps to this, and after exchanging a few compliments with an old woman, jumped over the counter, and entered the bar-parlour. He was in the cellars of the Reindeer in time to hear the following—  
 "We talk of him among ourselves. We whisper about him in the street, tell



stories of him in the flash kens, and so we name him, and do mischief continually. As there has been another hundred offered for him by the secretary of state, within these three hours, I propose that we never utter the name of Claude Duval, except when we know all's right, but find out some other name to call him by, that the grabs will be some time finding out."

"Agreed!" cried a dozen voices, and then one deep stentorian voice said—

"Let's call him, as he is so *unkimmon perlite*, Gentleman Jack."

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

"As good a name as could be hit upon," said the former speaker. "Let it be Gentleman Jack. There's such lots of Jacks among us, that the grabs won't know who we mean."

"And we is all gentlemen," said the proposer of the name.

"Certainly. We live upon our means, and do no work, so gentlemen we are, and that's settled then, my pals, so its understood when we talk of Gentleman Jack, we mean——"

"Claude Duval!" cried Claude himself opening the door and suddenly appearing among them, to their astonishment and delight. A cheer arose that brought the dust out of the crevices of the old joints overhead, and the landlord made his appearance in some alarm, to know what was the cause of the uproar.

"What's the row now?" said the landlord.

"Hurrah! for Gentleman Jack. Hip, hip, hip! hurrah!"

"And who the dence is he?"

"A dozen bowls of punch, landlord," said Claude in a clear voice that rose high above the babel-like confusion of sounds around him.

If anything had been wanting to raise Claude's popularity to the very height, this liberal dose of punch would have done it, and all the scruples of the landlord to the uproar, vanished in a moment, as he disappeared to execute the order, and it was by such prodigal liberality that Claude found partizans, go where he would, and friends almost at every turn.

The motley crowd pressed eagerly around him, and no monarch on his throne, ever had such ready slaves, and real admirers as Claude Duval, sitting on a wooden stool in a cellar at the Reindeer. There was not a word that fell from him, that was not treasured up to be repeated, and his looks were studied with quite a perplexing perseverance.

"Well, landlord," he said, to that individual, as the first bowl of punch was by him produced. "Is Sue all right?"

"As fresh as a daisy, Claude."

"Stop!" cried one. "We call Claude, Gentleman Jack now, so mind your eye."

"And well you may call him gentleman anything," said the landlord, "for in all my blessed life, I never comed near such a gentleman, he's a out and outer, he is, bless him. I always feels as if I could cry for a week, when he comes here and spends all his tin like a brick, I does. Oh, he's one of the right sort, he is a regular kidney."

"Drink, my pals," said Claude, "I m going to borrow a trifle to-night of the Bishop of Exeter as he comes from his country house to town."

"You don't mean that Gentleman Jack," cried one, but the evident marks of gratification upon his face showed how much he hoped Claude did mean it.

"I have said it," added Claude, "it is not so troublesome a job as to shake hands with an old friend this morning while two hundred pounds went begging for my head; I will do it, for I want to have a look at the bishop's young wife, who report says is the beauty of the age."

"Bravo, Claude! bravo, Claude!" said one.

"Take that," cried one, and then planting a blow upon his nose that brought forth the blood in a ruddy stream, "take that, don't you know we all agreed to call him Gentleman Jack?"

A quarrel was now upon the point of taking place, but Claude Duval rose and got a hearing, upon which he said,—

"Gentlemen all, I have to remark that I have no objections to a fight, but if we are to make that a portion of the evening's amusement, mind you don't any of you apset the punch, that's all."

This restored good humour, the belligerents shook hands and at ten o'clock that night Claude Duval was on the road.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## A DANCE ON THE COMMON.—THE BISHOP POSED.—A SONG AND ITS EFFECTS.

The then Bishop of Exeter was notoriously one of the vainest, proudest prelates on the bench; of course he was a follower and disciple of the meek and humble precepts of Christianity, and therefore he was insolent, and overbearing to those who were not so great in the eyes of the stupid world as himself, while to the magistrates of the land, particularly to the monarchy, the bishop was all smiles and sweetness.

This was the man whom Claude Duval announced his intention of robbing, being probably incited to do the deed from the notoriety which it would bring upon him, as well as by a desire to look at the beautiful young bride of the meek and humble man of God.

The bishop was past the middle of life, and he had taken unto himself a young damsel of eighteen, as a wife, whom he had purchased of her friends, and we may likewise say of herself, by a settlement of two thousand pounds per annum, payable from the date of the ceremony that made her the helpmate of the pious and abstemious individual who, of course, was wholly devoted to the cause of religion.

How could he think in common justice of anything else but the gospel when he was paid twelve thousand pounds a year for doing so?

But we prefer after all the highwayman to the bishop, so we will follow Claude, or Gentleman Jack as his new name was, and at times we shall find it convenient to call him by the latter name a little and at times by the former name alone.

Young Romeo whilst waiting news from his lady-love describes himself as most unusually light hearted and joyful in his feelings, when in reality he was on the eve of the announcement of the most dreadful calamity that could befall him, namely the death of Juliet. He says,—

“My bosom’s lord sits lightly on its throne.”

but with Claude the case was precisely the reverse, for although his thoughts as he left the Reindeer were all with her whom he now loved devotedly, a deep despondency had crept over his spirit.

Never before, during the whole of his short, but most chequered career, had he ever felt such a depression of soul as now afflicted him. He would truly have given his life for a pin’s fee. The bridle hung listlessly upon the neck of his steed, and he gave himself up to bitter thoughts.

Such was his state as he reached the top of the Oxford Road, and saw the light that gleamed from either side of old Tyburn-Gate. The sight of that spot brought, naturally enough, some thoughts of Sixteen-string Jack to his mind.

“Alas! poor Jack!” he said. “There are many who pity you, but you are, after all, much happier than your poor friend, Claude Duval;

“After life’s fitful fever you sleep well,”

while I am now the slave of such sadness, that if the law don’t quickly lay hold of me and finish me, I think I shall almost feel inclined to give in to the first person who opposes me, and please my sister, May, by dying quietly, with a conviction of all my sins upon my head. “Ah, Cicely, Cicely, it is your sweet face that has worked this change in me. To love one like you, and yet to feel that there is for ever an insurmountable barrier between us—a gulf which can never be crossed, is to taste of the bitterest cup of sorrow that evil fortune can ever place to mortal lips. Oh, Cicely, Cicely!”

“Now, sir,” cried the tollman, “do you want to ride over the gate?”

“What is it?” said Claude, rather angrily, for he had been so immersed in his own reflections, that he did not notice how near he was to Tyburn-Gate.

"Why it's the toll, if its all the same to you, spooney," said the man.

"Take it," said Claude, "and lay the amount out in the purchase of better manners. "What ho! my Sue—my gallant Sue!"

As he spoke, he struck the man sprawling to the ground with the handle of his riding-whip, and in another instant the horse leaped the gate with surprising ease and agility, and took its rider at a gentle canter down the road.

"Now that just sarves you right," said the other toll-man, to his prostrate companion, before whose bewildered eyes, there danced a thousand lights. "You hav'nt been long here, to be sure, and you don't know folks as I know 'em. Now who do you suppose that was?"

"Where am I?"

"In a puddle in the Uxbridge Road, to be sure. Where should you be. I seed it all. That gemmen as you offended drops a guinea every now and then at this here gate, and so we never axes him any questions, when he comes through, whether he's a-coming fast or slow, and if you wants to know who it is, I can tell you—it's Claude Duval. So now don't be a fool another time, old fellow."

This was not much consolation to the new toll man, but as by this time Claude was half a mile down the road, he had to pocket the affront and the blow he had received in the best way he was able to do.

In the meantime, Claude, whom this little incident had restored, put Sue to a canter, and soon breasted Craven hill.

"Well, well," he said, "I may make myself miserable as long as I like, and it won't mend matters. She can never be mine, although I think it would almost drive me out of my mind, to hear that she was ever another's, and all I can do is to do her and those belonging to her all the good I can. Bless her sweet eyes, I shall never see their like in this world again."

His thoughts then turned somewhat to his sister, May, and then there was some pleasure in thinking that she was safe from the world's storms, in the society and protection of such a being as Cicely Brereton, for although he, Claude, had certainly heard that the fortune of the Brereton family was not in the most brilliant state, yet he had too little thought of the every day concerns of life, to suppose that such a gloriously fashioned creature as Cicely could ever be the sport of a malignant destiny.

These thoughts lasted him until the last gleaming light of the suburbs of London was left behind him, and the keen air from the fields opposite Holland Park, blew upon his cheek. A distant clock struck eleven, and Claude deliberately counted the sounds, and as the last one died away in faint echoes, he heard a tramp of a horse's feet approaching from the direction of Shepherd's Bush, close to where he now was.

Claude paused, and drew up by the road side.

The horseman approached rapidly, and by the time he was just opposite to where Claude had withdrawn his horse, the highwayman called aloud to him, saying,—

"Sir, if you are a Christian, tell me if the road is safe from highwaymen lower down."

"Oh yes, I suppose it is," was the reply, as the man drew rein.

"I hope you are not deceiving me, sir. They say that Claude Duval, the terrible highway robber, is on this road. I hope you are not he, for they tell me he is up to all sorts of tricks."

"Oh, stuff! I Claude Duval! Rubbish! I am the Bishop of Exeter's outrider, I gallop on before to pay the tolls and prepare a change of horses, when required for the bishop."

"What? Is the bishop on the road?"

"Yes, to be sure he is."

"Then I shall think myself safe, for no highwayman would have the impertinence to show himself under such circumstances. I should say good-night, sir, I thank you."

Claude galloped on towards the country, while the bishop's outrider proceeded

downwards, after remarking to himself that the man who had just spoken to him, was about the greatest goose he had met with for a long time.

"Well," said Claude to himself, "the bishop is on the road, that is one piece of news gained, at all events, which is worth the having, for now I will at once fly at my high game, and let go any meaner prey I may happen to meet."

There were some symptoms now of the moon rising. This was not exactly what Claude wanted, and yet it could not be said that he actually feared it, for he had not unfrequently committed some of his most daring exploits when the silver orb of night was fully in the ascendant.

"Humph," he said, "we shall have a light night after all. Well, well, so be it; it is by boldness and effrontry I do what I do, and not by being befriended by darkness."

This was most literally true, and such was the terror which the very name of Claude Duval frequently inspired that he might be likened to Cæsar, for he came, and saw, and conquered.

There was only one state of things, which in his robberies upon the highway, Claude always wished, and that was to be as far from houses as possible, for in the immediate vicinage of dwelling places he certainly ran the risk of serious interruptions, but give him his prey alone, on the heath for example, and he truly considered himself monarch of all he surveyed.

Acting upon this feeling and from these considerations, his great object was to meet the bishop upon Ealing Common, which was then by no means the fertile and well villa'd, if we may be allowed to coin such a term, place that it is now. On the contrary, it was in every sense of the word a barren spot.

The village of Ealing consisted of one public-house and a few insignificant cottages; while Hanwell, its near neighbour, was more contemptible still, if we may except the fact that there was then a church and an old parsonage house, which gave a sort of importance to a place otherwise of none whatever, save in the eyes of certain admirers of the piscatory art, who were wont to angle in the Brent River, which thereabouts murmurs its gentle way through the meadows.

But Claude Duval was in no very poetical mood, so we, in accordance with his spirit, revert to more stirring scenes.

By the time he reached the common, the moon—a young one—was making a bold struggle to peep from amid the clouds, and see how the world was getting on, and it did so far succeed as to light up the road across the common, in bright contrast to the dark foliage that skirted it. We have before noticed a group of trees that grew to the left of the heath, and which Claude had before taken advantage of as a kind of dark background to the stirring picture he made take place in front of them. He paused again upon that spot.

"Now," he said to himself, "if this bishop should prove the man of courage he is represented, there may be a nice little case of church patronage for the government to dispose of to-morrow morning. We shall see, we shall see."

Claude applied all his attention to listening for the approach of the bishop's carriage, so much so indeed, that he hardly noticed the sound of horses' feet coming in the direction whence he had so recently trotted, but just as he began to think the bishop was long in coming, he had the vexation of seeing by the dim light from the again slightly clouded moon a figure on horseback arrive upon the common.

"Confound you," muttered Claude, "whoever you are, I only hope you will pass on without observing me, and that, unless your eyes are tolerably keen, or rather intolerably keen you may well do, for the moon is luckily behind me and throws where I stand into absolute gloom."

The horseman was coming on at a slow pace, and yet to the perception of Claude, as he anxiously watched his progress, it seemed as if either from intoxication, or exhaustion, or perchance sudden illness, it was with the greatest difficulty he kept his seat on the saddle, reeling about as he was, and grasping the neck of the horse.

"What on earth can be the matter with the fellow?" thought Claude. "Now if the fool cannot get past here, he may be most confoundedly in my way."

It seemed as if the horseman however, was as anxious to get on as Claude could have possibly wished him, and that it was from some special reason to the contrary, that he made no quicker progress. Soon he arrived nearly opposite to where Claude Duval was concealed, and then the horse made a rather hasty movement, which nearly precipitated his rider from his back, and convinced Claude that it was not the animal, but he who rode him, that controlled what might have been a good pace.

The moon too at this moment, looked through a crevice in the murky sky, shining down with slant rays from behind the clump of trees, in whose deep shadow Claude was stationed, full upon the figure of the horseman.

As if surprised then, at the sudden gust of moonlight, the stranger turned his horses head towards it, and lifting off his hat, gave a deep groan. That groan was echoed by a sharp cry of astonishment and dismay, from the lips of Claude, for in the cold pale face before him, and upon which the moonbeams fell so clearly, as to make mistake impossible, he saw the features of Sixteen-string Jack!

#### CHAPTER XIV.

CLAUDE IS A LITTLE UNNERVED AT THE APPARITION.—A SONG, AND A DANCE.

THE sharp cry of alarm that had come from the lips of Claude Duval, when he recognised the pale and partially convulsed features of the man, who was hanged only that morning at Tyburn, was a sound so unusual to the ears of Sue, that for the first time since she had been in the possession of her present master, she took fright.

With a snort of alarm, the animal reared and turned completely round. Then bringing down its fore feet with great violence to the ground, it dashed at headlong speed among the trees.

Claude Duval it is true was astonished, unnerved, and terrified, but not to a sufficient extent to lose all self-command over himself, or power over his steed. If he had not exercised some sort of immediate controul, he and Sue both would no doubt, have met with some tragical end among those trees, some of the overhanging branches of which would have dashed their brains out, but Claude gently drew rein, calling to the horse in his own familiar voice—

"What ho, my Sue? Gently lass, gently!"

So habituated was she to obey the slightest signal given by him, either by rein or voice, that almost in a moment she paused, but Claude either trembled himself, or the horse shook from fear, and made him think so."

Perhaps it was a little of both.

For the space of about five minutes, however, he sat on his saddle, without making the least exertion to go back to his former place upon the heath, and during that time he was in such a state of utter bewilderment, that it could scarcely be said he had his proper senses about him.

"I am not superstitious," he said, at length, "but I have seen the ghost of Sixteen-string Jack to-night, as I am myself a living man! Yes, I saw him."

So confident was Claude of the identity of the apparition, that he would have had no hesitation in the world, to risk his life upon the statement, and now as he drew a long breath, and wiped away the drops of moisture upon his brow, he unconsciously muttered these words

"Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer cloud,  
Without our special wonder?"



"Yes," he added. "It was Jack, I cannot be mistaken. What can such an appearance portend to me. Is this to be my last adventure? Am I to-night to bid the world adieu? I have heard, but ever treated such tales as the invention of brain-stricken idiots, that before a man is snatched from life by violent means, he is subject to such visitations as these. Can all that I have hitherto scouted and laughed at be really true?"

Claude felt terribly embarrassed. If he admitted to himself the fact of the appearance of Sixteen-string Jack's apparition, he felt he must likewise open his mind to the reception of a thousand things which his better reason had hitherto treated with disdain.

"By Heaven!" he cried, "I do much regret that in my alarm I fled. Oh, if I had but staid and watched it I should then be certain; but am I uncertain? No—no, I certainly saw it. Aye as plainly as ever I saw aught living."

Slowly he turned his horse's head in the direction of the common again, and if such a state of feeling can be understood, we may say, that he both hoped and feared still to find the apparition on the spot where he had left it. At all events, his short progress back was marked by more nervous agitation than in all his life he had ever exhibited.

When he reached the precise spot, however, from whence he had caught a view of the appearance, although the moon was still shining clearly, the place was free from all intruders, and a silence as of the very grave reigned upon the common.

"'Tis gone," he said. "Gone, and for the remainder of my life, I shall be involved in a sea of doubt and conjecture regarding this affair, unless I see it once again, and if I do I will follow it, aye, if it lead me to the gates of the infernal regions. So ho! my Sue, are you all right, my lass?"

He accompanied these words by a caress of his steed, who, by pawing the turf, and arching its neck, acknowledged the attention of the only one from whom it cared for such a kindness. Claude now rapidly recovered his usual devil-may-care style of thought, and his great fear was, that while he was away, although the time was brief, the bishop's carriage had passed, and so he had been cheated of all his time and trouble in waiting for its arrival.

"No—no, I can hardly think that," he said, at length, with a half laugh, which did not sound very mirthful. "Jack would never serve me such a trick I am confident, either alive or dead."

He glanced around him as he uttered these words, as if he almost feared this recklessness might again awake the apparition.

All was, however, profoundly still, not a vestige of anything in the shape of the appearance of that which had terrified Claude Duval could be seen, and yet he hardly knew whether to consider that to be a relief or not, for he would fain have made assurance doubly sure, by once gain looking upon that face, which he thought he had seen his last of in Oxford-street, and then again encountered so strangely on Ealing Common.

But all these thoughts and feelings soon gave way before the new idea that took possession of him, as he now heard the sound of rapidly approaching carriage wheels.

"He comes," said Claude. "That must be my friend, the bishop."

He advanced some short distance to reconnoitre, and then he felt quite positive that his eyes had not deceived him, and in a few moments more, too, he saw the flashing of lights through the dim and murky air.

"All's right! All's right! He comes, he comes, and I shall soon see now whether or not this appearance to me upon the common was prophetic or not of coming evil."

It will be seen that Claude did not doubt the reality of the apparition that he had seen upon the heath. He could have taken his oath, so strangely was the whole affair hedged round by circumstances of proof, that it was a supernatural appearance.

The bishop's carriage was rather a large and unwieldy machine. The bishop

like bishops in general, knew what comfort was, and accordingly his carriage was more like a small house upon wheels, so full of all sorts of conveniences was it, than anything else, and he was lolling in it, little suspecting any one would have the audacity to attack so very great a personage.

Claude put Sue into a quiet sort of canter, and just as the carriage was passing him, he fired a shot over one of the postillions' heads, and then cried,—

“Stand!”

The horse upon which the postillion rode reared, but the man drew rein, and the carriage was stopped accordingly.

“Mark me, postillion,” said Claude, “if you move on another step, as sure as I am a living man, and my name is Claude Duval, I will blow your brains out, and leave them on the common to be picked up by crows at daybreak.”

At the dreaded and well-known name of Claude Duval, the postillion covered down in alarm, and took the utmost care that his horses should remain quiet, while Claude trotted up to the door of the carriage, from which the bishop was now looking with a face nearly purple with rage.

“The Bishop of Exeter, I presume,” said Claude.

“Well, fellow, who are you?”

“Claude Duval, the highwayman.”

“Drive on postillion—drive on—drive over the rascal.”

“The postillion,” said Claude, “has more brains, and more politeness than his master. Civility, my lord bishop, may perhaps be policy upon the present occasion.”

“Take that,” said the bishop, suddenly producing a pistol, but Claude's hand was in a moment upon the barrel of it, and turned it aside, so that some of the contents, when the bishop pulled the trigger, passed within dangerous proximity to his lordship's wig.

“Murder! Fire!” said the bishop.

“It is well, sir, that my temper,” said Claude, as he snatched the pistol from his grasp, and flung it into the road, “is better than yours, or there would be a vacancy in the see of Exeter to-night.”

“Do you want to murder me?”

“Why do you ask? If I wished to do so, I should hardly stand to parley with you. Remove your head, sir, out of my way.”

The bishop drew in his head, and then Claude as he looked into the carriage, saw by the aid of a small lamp hanging from the roof, in the interior, a young and beautiful female, who betrayed much alarm.

“Is this your lady sir?” cried Claude Duval. “Introduce me, if it be.”

“I—I—really—Lady Exeter, this is—ahem! Claude Duval.”

“You won't kill us,” said the lady.

“No madam, although I suffer a most cruel death, from the fire of your eyes. My lord bishop, I will trouble you for your trinkets, and watch. Of you madam, I only require some souvenir as a remembrance, not of your beauty, for that I cannot banish from my heart, but of this happy meeting.”

“No, no, no!” cried the bishop. “What impertinence.”

“I'm sure he's rather polite,” said the lady.

“Polite? How, madam?”

“Be quiet, sir,” said Claude. “Is it true madam, that you are an exquisite dancer of the minuet de la cour?”

“Ah, I was before me —”

“Sacrifice you would say. Now my lord bishop, I will trouble you for your money, and valuables. Sir, I thank you. You have handed them out promptly, although not with the most polished air in the world. From your intercourse with courts, you ought to know better, and as for you madam, will you condescend to alight, and upon this dry and verdant sward, dance the minuet with me?”

“Death and fury,” said the bishop.



The lady offered no objection but the want of music, which Claude told her should be supplied by the bishop. Claude whistled the tune over, so that the bishop might follow him. After many protestations of incapability and unwillingness, the Right Rev. Father in God, wanted to know the sum that would cause Claude to forego his freak, when he was informed that twenty years of his revenues would not be a sufficient temptation, as his mind was fixed upon it.

"My dear," said the bishop's lady, "do try the tune. It's very easy."

"Yes," said Jack. "Easier almost than preaching."

"Ah, do!" added the lady.

"What do you, too, take part with a highwayman against me? Oh, good gracious! Do I live to hear this. Upon my soul, madam, I believe you would rather dance with him than not."

"It will soon be over," sighed the lady.

"Well, well," said Claude, "we will not trouble his lordship, but manage the tune ourselves."

"As you please, sir," said the lady. "I have heard that you are now named Gentleman Jack."

"I hope at all events that in this brief interview, which I shall never forget to my dying day, I shall merit the appellation of gentleman."

"Oh, dear yes."

"No, no!" roared the bishop.

"Really, my lord," said the lady, "I must say your conduct is not what one ought to expect from a dignitary of the church. If your lordship is so very averse to my saving your life by a mere dance by moonlight, I advise your lordship to lean back in the carriage, and shut your eyes for the next quarter of an hour."

"Shut my eyes!"

"Yes," said Claude, "it is good advice."

"Is it? Confound me if I think I can be too wide awake just now, that's my opinion."

"Come," laughed Jack. "If we wait all night, I am afraid we shall not induce his lordship to appreciate this little joke. We had better have the dance at once."

The lady made no objection, and as Claude whistled the tune, they both exerted the measure with great grace. The lady panted slightly as Claude handed her back to the carriage, and either by design, or accident, a gold bracelet she wore fell to the ground.

"Your bracelet, madam," said Claude, lifting it up.

"No—it is your's."

Claude bowed, and thrust it into the bosom of his apparel. The bishop now would not say a word, although Claude bade him rather an elaborate good-night, but the lady was by no means so obdurate, replying with seeming sweetness of voice, to the salutation of the highwayman.

"Drive on, postillion," cried Claude.

The lights of the carriage dashed before his eyes, and in another moment the vehicle was gone.

A mass of dark clouds had been creeping for the last ten minutes, slowly up from the south, and now they just touched the edge of the moon's disc.

Claude glanced upwards, as he said,—

"No more moon to-night."

Scarcely had the words escaped his lips, than he heard the sound of feet coming at a quick pace down the road, and he drew close to the pathway to listen. In a few moments a female, as he knew by the voice, paused, being apparently quite unable to proceed further, and cried frantically,—

"Oh spare me, spare me!"

There was another rapid sound of feet, and then a hoarse voice full of brutality cried,—

"Where are you?"

"Here. Here. But spare my life. You shall have all the money I have. Why should you threaten to kill me?"

"Oh, you are there, are you?" said the man. "Why did you run away. Come, come, its of no use trying to escape from me. It's your money or your life always, and at times when I think proper it's both."

"But you will spare me?"

"I don't know that. Who do you think I am, now? I'm the well-known highwayman, Claude Duval, so you had better make no resistance to me. You can say you were robbed on Ealing common by Claude Duval."

Gentleman Jack before the conversation had got thus far, had quietly alighted from his horse and crept towards the speakers.

"Come," added the fellow, "I have a lantern here, and we'll see if you deliver up all the money you have or not. Have you any rings on your fingers?"

"Oh no, sir. Oh, no."

"Nor in your ears?"

"Not one, sir. Oh, spare me."

"Ah, we shall see. We shall see."

There was a sharp crackling noise, and the fellow had ignited a match, by which he set light to a small piece of wax candle in a lantern, which shed a dexterous ray around it.

"Now," he said. "As sure as I am Claude Duval the celebrated highwayman, I will have all your money."

"But," said Claude, suddenly grasping the fellow by the collar, and twisting him round, "I thought Claude Duval never robbed defenceless women."

"Oh, murder! murder! Oh, dear!" cried the footpad.

"Go your way," said Claude to the poor woman, who was upon her knees trembling, "go home. It is better that I and this gentleman should settle our accounts alone. Good-night."

The terrified woman did not wait for a second bidding to begone, but started off across the common at a great rate, leaving Claude to fight her battle in her absence.

"Now," said Claude, "I want to know who you really are."

"Hands off. Keep your hands off me," cried the fellow, "or I shall lose my temper. I am one you will be afraid to hear mentioned."

"Well, let me hear."

"I am the famous Claude Duval."

"Really. There must be two of the name, then, for folks have been in the habit of calling me Claude Duval, and you may see my horse there, by the light of your lantern, waiting for me somewhat impatiently."

The fellow shook in every limb.

"Have mercy upon me," he said. "Oh, have mercy upon me."

"Did you ever show mercy? Now, mark you. I have forgiven many a man for aiming at my life—I have forgiven a few for doing me other injuries, but I never yet had an opportunity of asking myself, until to-night, if I could forgive a man for taking my name, and committing a dastardly action under cover of it."

"Oh, dear—oh, dear. "What will become of me?"

"I don't know, just yet. I think I will give you a run upon the common for your life."

"A—a run, sir?"

"Yes. What conditions do you require?"

"If you will let me have it in the dark, sir, I—I think, that is, I hope, you will be so good as to let me go, sir. Oh, dear."

"You think the darkness will be in your favour, do you?"

"Perhaps a little, sir."

"Very well, then I will put out the lantern you have. Turn its beams a little to your left, and you will see a stagnant ditch, the delight of frogs and ducks. Do you observe it?"

"Ye—yes, sir."

"Then in that I will extinguish your like."

Claude was but a slight looking man, but upon more than one occasion he had shown what amazing personal strength he possessed, as well as what astonishing tact he possessed in the management of it, but never upon any occasion had he so exhibited both that strength and that dexterity as upon this. He by a sudden movement, caught the fellow up by the middle, and fairly flung him forward, nearly fifteen feet into the black, stagnant ditch, which he had just alluded to.

A cry of despair and agony, came from the lips of the footpad. Then there was a tremendous splash, after which all was still.

Claude walked calmly back to where his horse was standing, slowly to himself whistling the tune, to which he had danced with the bishop's lady, and giving him-

self not the smallest concern about the footpad ; indeed, when he had mounted, and trotted off, the only remark he made, was—

“ That fellow being born to be hanged, is of course proof against any death of a watery character.”

Claude did not seem much to care in what direction he went, and as he was for some time under the shadow of trees, he did not feel that there was a great change taking place in the weather. After he emerged, however, which was soon the case, to a more open part of the heath, he became aware of that fact.

At about a quarter of a mile ahead of him, he saw a dim flickering kind of light, and as the wind began to sigh and moan among the large trees that skirted the heath, he made his way at rather a swift canter in that direction.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE GREYHOUND INN.—AN ADVENTURE.

THE rain came pattering down, and Claude paused immediately at some short distance from the light that he descried. He could not quite make up his mind, whether to wait for a time, or to take further chances upon the road.

Under these circumstances, a simple piece of arithmetic, always with him decided the question ; he began to reckon up how many hours his horse had been on foot.

“ Yes,” he said, “ it is time you should have a rest, my Sue, so girl we will go to this house, which if I mistake not is the Greyhound, and has been mentioned to me, as a place where I can be safe.”

He soon reached the door of the hostel, which, however, was closed upon the sound of his horse’s feet ; it seemed as if some man who was on the watch got curious, for he looked out at a window, nearly level with the road, saying—

“ Who are you, old fellow ?”

“ Are you the landlord,” said Claude.

“ Yes, I am. What then. We don’t take in travellers here so late.”

“ A word in your ear my friend. Folks call me Claude Duval, who know me. Hush ! I hear you have company. My horse and I only want one hour’s rest. Do not mention me to any one.”

The landlord was all obsequiousness directly, and Claude had soon got into the corner of a long room, in which were many persons, and one had just began to speak, as follows—

“ Fill your glasses, gentlemen, fill your glasses, and don’t be afraid of seeing the bottom—you wont see a worse reflection there than that of yourselves. Maids have their glasses, and why not men. They are often as intoxicated with what they see as ever knight of the road could feel when under the inspiring influence of the choicest vintage.”

“ That is true,” replied a tall grim-looking individual, who sat in one corner, and who lifted up a large well-filled glass. “ I have seen many things, and had some narrow escapes, but that which I account the luckiest of all, was an escape from matrimony.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! Escaped from matrimony, were you ever menaced ?”

“ Aye, aye, I have, but I escaped, and you see me here free, aye, as free as man can desire to be, and I will yet drink the lasses, though I would turn down my glass at ‘ matrimony.’”

“ You are wise,” resumed the first speaker, “ but if you will drink the lasses, so let it be, and when you have replenished both glass and pipe, I will find you in

a little food for the mind, by recounting a matter that happened some few years back, that will pass the time, and show you how a few things have been done."

This proposition was acceded to by acclamation, and glasses were lifted high, and the toast drunk by the boon companions, who changed their postures, and when the silence which had been so loudly invaded was restored, the first speaker began.

"It is now five-and-twenty years since what I am going to tell you took place, and will show you that the cause of many a deed is not that which appears upon the face of it as the most immediate and the most probable.

"There was a dashing blade, called Overbury Tom, from the name of the place of his birth, and sometimes Coventry Tom, or Dashing Tom of Coventry, because he was well known in those parts, and feared, for Tom was really a desperate man. He had been in the army for a short time, and had, I believe, served a short time abroad, but upon his return he found himself with only his commission, and no patrimony.

"This was especially distasteful to Tom, because he had rather a luxurious taste and extravagant habits, which were much promoted by the habits of his brother officers, and yet still more by the fact that in addition to his being an especial favourite among women, he had fallen deeply in love with the daughter of one of his superior officers, and it was necessary that he should maintain a good appearance, and have a well-filled purse.

"Under the circumstances, however, he could not very well do the latter, because there were no means of obtaining a supply, save at the gaming table, but Tom Overbury was not the man to thrive at the gaming-table, because there was too much of the reckless elevation of spirit about him, that made him restless, and the bottle had more charms for him than play, though he used to lose money that way, but never made any money there.

"Things being in that state, he passed along, one thoughtful evening, and Tom's evenings were generally joyous and riotous—he was passing down a lane near Coventry, when he entered the yard of a rural public-house, not far from the main road, but yet so far that it was somewhat surprising that it should find custom enough to support it, and neither would Tom have alighted there, but he had ridden many miles, and a storm began to rage with great fury, and being unwilling to encounter it, as he had no particular object in so doing, besides as I said this was a thoughtful evening with Tom, and he sought shelter in the small roadside house.

"'There,' said he, to the horse-keeper, 'take care of the animal. I will come and see to him by-and-bye, and if you do your duty your fee wont be any the less.'

"'All right, your honour,' said the stableman, or boy rather, for the young fellow had not arrived at the years of manhood, who acted as horse keeper, 'you shall not complain of me.'

"'Have you any visitors here?'

"'A few.'

"Tom turned and entered the large kitchen, which appeared to be the only place at the disposal of guests, but there was a large fire, beside which was seated two, who bore the appearance of being travellers like himself.

"He took his seat before the fire, and called for the best the house afforded, and entered into conversation with the two strangers who were there before him, and endeavoured to throw off the gloom that had for once overtaken him.

"'Have you travelled far,' inquired one of the strangers?

"'Not far, yet far enough to be fatigued,' replied Tom, 'you seem somewhat travel-worn yourself, though the weather, however, has made me turn in.'

"'Aye, you are fortunate to have no worse motive to seek shelter for the night,' replied the stranger, 'I have had a much more urgent motive.'

"'May I inquire what that may be?' continued Tom, since you openly allude to it.'

"'You may sir. I was stopped and robbed, and my horse wounded. I feared

going any further, and I feared staying in a place, so dismal and distant from other habitations as this, and yet now I do not regret it.

“You have seen enough to make you satisfied with your host, I presume?”

“Exactly—I have—I am more at ease, rest and a good draught of ale—the only things they have here, have restored my senses, for I was well nigh unable to judge which was my right hand, or which was my left.”

“You must have been sorely beset.”

“I was,” replied the stranger, “and I ran some danger of losing my life. I was armed with a brace of pistols.”

“You were stopped by more than one man then?”

“Oh, dear no. I was riding, when I was overtaken by a man, whom I had met at an inn I had left, and he entered into conversation, for half a mile or more, and then suddenly he put a pistol to my breast, and demanded my money.”

“And you complied,” said Tom?

“Not at once, for I fired my pistols, but the fellow only laughed, as though he had been bullet proof, and then I was at his mercy, and he struck me on the head—felled and wounded my horse by firing at it, but very slightly to prevent my giving chase, I suppose, robbed me of all he could find about me, and then left me stunned on the ground.”

“And when you got up he was gone?”

“Yes, he was, but I was not hurt much, or my horse either, so we found our way hither, and I hope in safety, but the rogue did not deprive me of my money, save what he found loose on my person, and as that appeared large enough to satisfy his wants, why he searched no further, and I escaped with the most considerable part of my money.”

“You were fortunate sir,” replied Tom, “pray how could you contrive to evade the search of a knight of the road. I thought their scrutiny was rigid, and long practice had rendered them so expert, that they were seldom foiled.”

“You are correct in that supposition, I believe, but I have very nearly three hundred guineas in a belt round my person, and that is unusual, and thus I have saved my money, though I have lost over forty guineas.”

“Ah, that was a clever trick,” said Tom.

“I would recommend you to employ it, sir, if ever you travel with a considerable sum of money about you.”

“I will, replied Tom, ‘though I must say, I do not need the stratagem, since I am always armed, and my regimentals are enough, to cause my person to be respected, they cannot expect of a soldier, who has seen a field of battle to surrender.’

“And have you been in the wars,” inquired the stranger.

“Indeed I have, but I must not boast but I am armed and do not fear one or two men, since I am in some measure used to deadly weapons, but I never had occasion to defend myself on the road yet.”

“Do you intend to remain here for the night,” inquired the stranger.

“I shall, if I be obliged, and yet if the storm holds up, I should prefer riding on to the next market town, where I can be entertained more suitably.”

“Well,” said the stranger, “a king’s officer is always welcome company, and if you really go to-night, and will permit me to travel as your companion, I will defray all charges, and consider myself as greatly your debtor.”

“I will accept your company, though I don’t know that I can accept your other offer, but I will see my horse baited at once,” replied Tom.

“Overbury Tom went out and saw the horse fed, and looked at the strangers horse and saw the wound was but slight, and then ordered his own to be fed, which being done he once more returned to the kitchen, where he sat, and had some refreshment.

“An idea had entered Tom’s mind for the first time, which kept its ground, despite his determination at first to resist the impulse, which was to rob his intended companion upon their journey, and thus procure a round sum.

“Tom had been very short of late, he had got into debt among some of his



fellow officers, and he feared being asked for it, and unable to satisfy the demand, and he greatly feared it being at any time wisened that his means were limited, because it would tend to interfere with his amour with the daughter of his superior officer.

"However, after much thought, he determined that he would at an unguarded moment deprive him of his money, and then change his route, and thus escape detection, and should the worst happen, he would at all events place himself far above suspicion; but there was no fear of his being detected, and his wants were so pressing, and all his resources were dried up, and none for the future would be open to him, save the produce of his commission, which was mortgaged for some time to come, and would not been enough to support him in his mode of life, being scarce a fourth of his wants in the way of money.

"Things went on very well. They had some ale, for it was all they could get, and then when the storm abated, which it did in about an hour, they both quitted the hostel, and proceeded towards the next town in company, and travelled along for a mile or two as very good friends, until they came to a very lonely spot, when Tom said—

"I should not much like to meet any highwayman here. It is so very lonely a spot."

"Nor should I," replied his companion. "It was just such a place as that, I was so lately stopped in—"

"And if you were again, you would not probably get off so cleverly."

"That's true," replied the other, "but then you see, I should have much faith in my belt, and that you know is a secret not divulged to any one."

"Yes, there was another man in the room where we met."

"There was so, but he's not here, and it is unlikely I shall be again caught out with so much money about me—it will be a warning to me, and I shall never be found such a goose as to do the like again."

"Then those who desire to rob you, had better do so at once."

"Ah! ah! you are right, but it would take more than one or two to stop me now with you by my side."

"True, but yet now I think of it, I am terribly in want of money.—I should very much like to borrow a small sum of money—say three hundred pounds, eh?"

"Eh?—What?—I beg your pardon," stammered the traveller.

"Why you can have no objection to take the word of honour of a king's officer for so paltry a sum as that, surely you don't hesitate?"

"Oh dear no, but you see I can't spare the money, indeed I have'nt got it."

"Your belt."

"Oh dear! oh yes!—but I can't lend it—because—because I want it."

"Exactly," replied Tom, "and I must borrow because I want it. So what am I to do? Must you or I go without, eh?" said Tom, in an angry voice.

"But to lend—I don't know you, and my own wants—. What security? You are joking. Oh dear, aye, I know, you only intend to joke."

"The devil a bit," said Tom, who could hardly forbear laughing at the fellow's amazement and fears. "I must tell you, you must lend me your belt. If you doubt my honour, you must give me satisfaction. I shall take upon myself to chastise you at once, and do not know but what I ought to shoot you at once, and prevent any further trouble."

"But good heavens! you, an officer, don't intent to commit robbery!"

"No, I merely intend to borrow three hundred guineas of you, which as you have objected to, I must insist upon as a matter of honour. Lend me that sum at once, or you may depend upon it you will inhabit a coffin."

"Oh my God!" exclaimed the traveller. "What shall I do?"

"Hand over your money, my friend," said Tom, pulling out his pistol, which he presented to the other's head, "and it over I say, and let this tell you how much in jest I am, a single attempt at resistance will be fatal to you."

"The poor devil knew not what to think, save indeed, that he was unable to resist, and had indeed, no power to do so, so with a rueful countenance, and a sorrowing heart, he undid his belt, and reluctantly handed it over, saying,—

"There it is. I am a ruined man. Return me enough to pay my way home—nay do not take all from me."

"There are some guineas to carry you back—but I must prevent you going anywhere on horseback, so I will just borrow your bridle, and I will leave it on the first gate after I have passed two miles up yonder road, you will find it there if you walk as far. Good-night."

"So saying, he put the belt into his pocket, and slung the bridle on his arm, and rode along at a rapid rate, left the bridle at the place he mentioned, and then galloped across country, and in another hour and a half stopped at a small inn, a distance of five and twenty or thirty miles from the scene of action.

"He soon after came to London, and paid his debts, or some of them, and flourished with the remainder of the money. But light come, lightly go, says the adage, and so it was with Tom, who no sooner got to the end of his money, than he bethought himself of turning out upon the road and obtaining a supply.

"This was natural enough. He had once benefitted by laying contributions, and his necessities were of that character, that he preferred chancing a halter. Life's a game of chance, he would say, and if the game was well played who could grudge the stake."

"And he was right," said one of the company.

"Entirely so," added another. "I propose the memory of Overbury Tom."

"Overbury Tom" was echoed from every mouth, and deep draughts were quaffed to the memory of the hero of the tale.

To proceed; you see he was no chicken, a big, but not a clumsy man, of great strength and activity, of undoubted courage, and was more than a match for any one whom he might chance to meet with. He did turn out and again was successful. He returned with a well filled purse, and became the idol of his companions.

"He was proceeding very fast in the amour with the young lady I spoke of, but he had gone so far, that it became the duty of her parents to inquire into the state of our friend's income, which was somewhat inconvenient. He fenced about for some time, and evaded it, but there was no avoiding it, and he declared he had no property, and all he had to depend upon was the pay he received, and the voluntary contributions of his relatives, which he expected would increase rather than diminish after marriage.

"There's no disguising the fact, but he was not very urgent in pressing the marriage, conscious I suppose of the precarious life she would be compelled to lead, and yet he had gone too far to withdraw; the result was the seduction of the young lady and a regular scene in the family, who took the girl away and secreted her, so that Tom never afterward saw her, or even heard of her. I believe he shed tears in memory of her, but yet after all they had done whatever under the circumstances was best for her.

"With Tom, however, they determined not to part, and he was called to account by the father, and Tom was obliged to meet his superior officer, whom he conceived he had injured.

"They met. Tom received his adversary's fire, but refused to fire in return, but after much remonstrance, he was compelled to discharge his weapon, and then a second fire was demanded, and as the first had been nearly fatal to Tom, he felt exasperated, that so much rancour should be shewn towards him, and an evident desire to destroy him manifested by his antagonist, whose enmity appeared deadly.

"The second fire was granted, and it ended in the fall of the girl's father, who was mortally wounded, and Tom himself escaped by a miracle, for a button was shot off his breast, and that was close work.

"However, they said a great deal about murder, and fighting his superior officer, in such a way, that Tom was determined to quit the army to save himself from a

court-martial, and perhaps from being shot; for there was a great influence at work against him. He once more took to the road, and had the good fortune to meet with a man who carried much money about him. After many years of various fortunes, he one day came upon a travelling party on the main road from London to York. There were in the carriage two gentlemen, three ladies, besides the driver, a man servant, and a woman behind. He darted down a small lane, and as the carriage ascended a sharp hill, he rode up and commanded the postilion to stop.

“Your money or your life,” said Tom. ‘You are a bold man to attack so many,’ said an elderly gentleman. ‘No more words—money!’ said Tom. A young gentleman who was in the carriage, and about being married to a beautiful



young girl by his side, gave orders for the men to make use of their arms. A servant, while in the act of levelling his gun, was shot by Tom. The young man rising to seize him, was fired at, but the bullet missing him, entered the young lady's breast; she jumped up, but instantly fell back again with a faint scream, and died. The destined husband blindly threw himself upon Tom, who cleft his skull in two with his sword, which he ever retained by his side. ‘Enough,’ said the elderly gentleman, who was afflicted beyond measure, and barely able to understand his position, for the other two ladies had fainted, and were covered with blood: ‘take what you want, man, and go hence—you have done what you cannot undo—more blood may be shed, but money will not buy back the lives of these.’

"Away flew Tom to the nearest market town, where he sold his horse, and obtained another, for his own was scarcely fit for such hard service as was required of him, for he justly thought this last affair would cause a terrible commotion among travellers, and he should be hunted from place to place, and the best thing he could do was to place himself in a situation to baffle them, and escape by his fleetness, perhaps to Scotland, and if that would not do, to go to Wales, and thence to the south of England, and perhaps to London itself.

"It was no bad idea, and on went worthy Tom, but it was a long journey, and attended by difficulty and danger, but he was equal to that.

"However, he had but little time to spend, here he rested one night, and finding the hue and cry out after him, he took flight and proceeded to York. Here he rested a day or two, but finding he was sought, he started for Darlington, and then to Morpeth, and after a day or two got near Edinboro', where he found himself headed by the Londoners, who were let loose after him, and he was recognised, and a capture attempted.

"But he was not the man to surrender at any odds, for he said neither Tyburn nor York would ever see his funeral procession, or execution, he fought, and killing one, and mortally wounding the other, the third fled for Edinboro'.

"Tom now headed back, sought refuge in Durham, but he knew he was not safe, and quitted that place by daybreak, being determined to get away by flight, but resolved to die at bay, and have no last dying speech and confession.

"He was a good man—a brave man, and he continued his journey for a day or two till he got to Derby, where he resolved to stay for a few hours, and then set out for Coventry, Gloucester, and Bristol, and then pursue what road he thought proper; but he never got to any of these places, the pursuit was hotter than he had any notion of, and men had been sent from London in another direction, upon hearing he had been turned from Scotland, and they came up with him—or I should say they met with him a few miles on the London side of Derby, in a lone spot, where there was no escape save by fleetness back again, but he came upon them too suddenly at the turn in the road near a wood, which obstructed his view, and he was fairly caught.

"Surrender, or you are a dead man!" said the first.

"I am a dead man if I do," said Tom, "so I have no encouragement to do so," and as he spoke he shot the man down, and drawing his sword soon charged them military fashion, which so disconcerted them from the strange mode of resistance, and his being in the midst of them, that he nearly escaped, though pistol shots were flying about in abundance, till one shot him through the back; he lingered but a few hours and then died; peace be with him, he was a brave and daring man."

"And that's all, is it," said one, who had listened attentively to the recital.

"Yes, and enough too," said another, "but I have something to say. There is a stranger in the corner of the room there, who has heard all and says nothing. He takes his drink in silence. We don't know him, and as we consider ourselves bricks here, and good fellows, I intend to have him out."

All eyes were now turned upon Claude Duval, as he sat in silence in the corner of the room to which he had retired. His thoughts were at that moment full of her whom he loved, and bitter imaginings were chasing each other like a hideous brooding phantom through his brain.

And often amid all other considerations, and painful reflections, the remembrance of the appearance of Sixteen-string Jack upon Ealing Common would obtrude itself, giving, when it did so come across his memory, a powerful and almost electric shock to his nerves.

For a moment or two he was not conscious of having become the object of so much attention, but when with a wink at his comrades, the man who had talked of bringing him out walked up to the table, and gave it a blow with his hand, Claude looked up.

"Hilloa! my friend," said the fellow. "Is this your brandy?"

"Yes," said Claude.

"Very well, then I will show you what good fellowship is by drinking it off for you, since you have been nursing it so long."

As he spoke he finished Claude's glass.

"Landlord," said Claude, "another glass of brandy-and-water."

The steaming beverage was brought to him, and then taking it in one hand, he rose, saying,—

"You have just drank one glass of liquor belonging to me, to please yourself. You shall now drink another to please me."

Before then any one could interfere, he dashed the fellow's mouth open with a blow of his disengaged hand, and poured the whole glass of hot spirits and water into it.

A general scene of confusion ensued. The man was within an ace of being choked, and several voices cried out to know who the stranger was.

"I am Claude Duval," he said. "Good-night, gentlemen."

The effect of the pronunciation of the name was quite electric. They all crowded round him now, as though he had been some hero, and the unfortunate "brick" who wanted to bring him out looked panic-stricken. Again Claude said, "Good-night!" and then one of them cried,—

"What are you for the road, captain, again to-night?"

"I am," said Claude, "I am."

"A storm is brewing."

"No matter. My vocation is on the road, and there can be no storms of the elements equal to the storm that will at times rage in a man's heart. I do not feel at ease to-night."

At this moment a man entered the room, and whispered to Claude that there was a young lad without, who had a note for him. A cold sensation somehow crept over Claude's heart, and he could not but tell himself at once that there were such things as omens in this world.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE LETTER FROM LONDON.—THE FALSE CHARGE.

ALL who were present and saw the effect which was produced upon the redoubtable Claude Duval by the mere reception of a letter, could scarcely think it possible that in him they beheld the man who was so proverbially careless of life that a pistol shot was considered as but an ordinary occurrence. They could scarcely comprehend the proposition that there might be the greatest possible amount of physical courage, and yet a large share of what is called nervous feeling.

Duval, or Gentleman Jack, as it will be now more convenient, as well as more proper to call him, heeded not whether his conduct created surprise, censure, applause, or any other feeling. He was completely absorbed in reading the letter which had been placed in his hands.

It was as follows, and was from his sister May.

"CLAUDE,

"Dear Claude, for you are still dear to me, notwithstanding the past, you are called upon solemnly to do an act of justice. Mr. Mark Brereton is falsely accused by Tom Brereton of robbing and attacking him on the highway, and in fact your deeds on Ealing Common, when you stopped the carriage, are sought by Tom Brereton to be fixed upon the innocent Mr. Mark. Remember that Mark is Cicely's brother.

"This is from one who still calls herself

"MAY DUVAL."

"My horse," cried Claude, "my horse!"

"In a moment, captain," cried one, "in a moment; and when you come this way again, don't forget to call here."

"I will not, you may be assured. I am one who forgets and forgives many injuries, but a kind word sinks deeply into my heart, and is never forgotten. Good night to you all, and good fortune."

"Three cheers," shouted one, "three cheers for Gentleman Jack!"

"No, no—oh, no," said the landlord. "Remember that quietness is security. Don't do it, though if time and place were fitting, there is no one who would stretch his lungs more than I should in such a cause."

"You are right," said Jack. "Let us have no cheering. I am well pleased to know that I leave friends behind me here."

"Your horse is ready, captain," said a man, coming that moment into the room; "but there are two horsemen haunting about the road."

"Do you know them?"

"No, captain; but they look woundy suspicious, that they do. If you take the path by the coppice at the back of the house, though, you will avoid them."

"No," said Claude, "I would not run the chance of avoiding a friend, for fear I should happen to meet an enemy."

He waved his hand to those who were assembled, and strode to the door. There was a look of gloom upon his brow, although his words had been light and careless, but the sight of his gallant steed pawing the earth with impatience to be off, roused him, and he patted the creature's neck, as he said,—

"Ah! my Sue, you are as fond of the road as your master!"

"She never had such a master until she knew you, captain," said the landlord.

"And she shall never have another," responded Claude, as he sprang lightly into the saddle.

"Remember what my man told you about the horsemen," whispered the landlord. "They bode you no good, you may depend."

"Thanks, thanks. All is right."

In another moment Claude darted into the darkness, but when he had got some distance from the public-house, he pulled rein and dismounted, laying his ear flat against the ground, and then he distinctly heard the sound of horses' feet at a gentle walk; and having ascertained that they were coming towards where he was, from the direction of London, he mounted again, and at a gentle canter went on his way to meet them.

In the course of a few minutes, the sound of the advancing horses' feet was quite plainly to be heard without anything in the shape of extraordinary vigilance, and then, through the dusky night air, Claude saw those whom he had good reason to suppose his foes, advancing.

They, too, must have observed him about the same moment, for, putting their horses to a trot, they came rapidly up to him; and one cried,—

"Stand, in the king's name!"

"Well, what then?" said Claude.

"Who are you?"

"A gentleman. Has the king turned highwayman by deputy, and are you about to attempt to rob me?"

"You are my prisoner!" said one of the men, suddenly making a catch at the bridle of Claude's horse.

"Paws off, Pompey," said Claude, as with the heavily silver-mounted butt end of one of his pistols he struck the man on the back of the hand, putting him to the most exquisite pain.

The other immediately fired a pistol full in Claude's face, and the bullet actually took up the skin by his cheek so finely, that it looked more like as if he had received a very slight graze than anything else. In fact, at the moment he was

perfectly unconscious of having been touched at all, and could hardly in any way account for the bullet missing him.

"Confound the fellow," cried he who had fired the pistol, when he saw that Claude still maintained his seat in the saddle. "He is certainly made of cast iron!"

"Perhaps I am," said Claude, as he fired at him; "are you?"

The man fell from his horse with a deep groan; and the other cried, in loud accents,—

"Villain, you have murdered the man!"

"Fortune," said Claude. "If ever there was in this world an unprovoked attack, it was that made upon me. I only acted upon the defensive. Take care that you don't fall into the same condition as your friend. I would fain spare you, if I can."

"You spare me!"

"Yes. Beware, I say! Are you drunk or mad that you bar my path, and so tempt me to lay you prostrate? I am not in my usual mood."

"I know you. You are the highwayman, Claude Duval. I am John Jeffries, the officer; and I have made up my mind to take you."

"You are a gallant fellow!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I do not believe there is another officer in England who would say so much to me alone upon a country road. I never take a life, or commit an injury upon any one if I can avoid it. Get out of my path, I conjure you, for the sake of yourself and any whom you love."

"No, dead or alive, I will have you! Take that."

During this brief dialogue the officer had been quietly pointing a pistol at Claude, and now, as he spoke, he pulled the trigger, but the weapon only flashed in the pan, upon which he turned his horse's head, and tried to escape at full gallop.

"Indeed," said Claude Duval, as he set his teeth. "So you are for a race, my friend; so be it. Now, Sue, girl, now."

A touch of the heel of his boot on the flank of the mare, and a slight movement of the rein was all that it required to put Sue to her metal, and off she was like the wind.

No doubt the man who had thus made so violent an attack upon the life of Claude heard the noise behind him of his pursuer, for his speed evidently increased, and he went on at a break-neck pace, while Sue, although gaining upon him, by no means seemed to be doing too much work.

It was a fearful race that which was now taking place between those two men; the one was actuated by the most abject fear for his life, and the other with something of a spirit of revenge.

And yet neither of those passions really belonged to them. In the first place, the officer was a man of decided courage, but when he found that, after making an absolute attempt upon the life of Claude Duval, he was unarmed, he fully expected nothing short of destruction; and the fear of present death will often unman the stoutest heart.

Then, again, as we well know, Claude Duval was not, by any means, a man of revengeful spirit; but who, in the moment of excited feeling, contingent upon an attack of the nature we have recorded, could help feeling some degree of irritation?

We do not represent Claude as other than human, and there are few indeed who would have even commenced the chase as he commenced it, and fewer still who would have ended it as we shall see he ended it—nobly and chivalrously.

Claude had arms, with which, probably, he might have brought the affair to a rapid conclusion, for his aim was almost unerring, but he sufficiently controlled himself not to use them; but with the frightful speed that Sue was capable so easily of making, gained each moment upon the desperate officer.

The only hope which the latter now had of escape consisted in the fact that there was a turnpike gate about a half a mile a-head of him, and he thought that if he could but gain that before he was overtaken by Claude Duval, that the highwayman would hesitate before he committed any deed of blood in the presence of a witness.

Claude well knew of the existence of that gate, and revolved in his mind what he should do upon reaching it. Although there was little enough time for reflection upon the subject, for in the course of half a minute more, he heard the officer shouting in a loud voice—

“Open the gate—open the gate.”

“Hilloa!” cried the man, who had charge of the highway obstruction, “hilloa—who are you?”

“Open the gate at once! I am an officer—open the gate for God’s sake—there is some one behind me.”

A light flashed amid the darkness, and Claude, as Sue flew on like the wind, could see the white rails of the turnpike gate flashing in the dim gloom.

The officer now drew rein, and cried again—

“For God’s sake let me through the gate, and then close it again against Claude Duval, or I am a dead man.

The turnpike-man flung the gate open, exclaiming as he did so—

“You can pass on; but if you think that my gate can keep out Claude Duval, you are much mistaken. What the deuce is he coming after you for?”

The officer darted through the gate, and the man flung it shut again at the moment, and then held up his lantern to see who was really in pursuit of the alarmed officer.

“Now Sue!” cried Jack.

In another moment she was over the turnpike gate, as lightly as though she had been a feather wafted by the wind!

The officer’s horse was exhausted. He reared, and then making a fearful plunge threw its rider on the road, and galloped off full of fright, for it had not been accustomed to the violent manner in which it had been urged to such desperate flight by its rider.

The turnpike-man looked aghast and terrified, and he could not, in the hurry and excitement of the moment, interfere one way or the other, and if Claude Duval had been actuated by the sanguinary feelings which the officer in his own mind had attributed to him, he might easily have taken his life.

A touch to the rein of Sue brought the faithful and obedient creature to a stand, and Claude dismounted leisurely.

“A short chase,” he said.

“W—w—what do you mean, sir?” stammered the turnpike man.

“Nothing particular.”

“Mercy—have mercy upon me,” said the officer, as stunned and half disabled by his fall, he assumed a crouching position on the ground. I did but try to do my duty. You would have done as much if you had been in my place. Have mercy upon me, as I would upon you.

“Permit me to doubt that,” said Claude. “Your mercy upon me would have consisted of a bullet in my brains.”

“Oh, no—no—”

“Hush! For your own sake, at such an awful moment as this, do not lie!”

As he spoke, Claude took a pistol from his pocket, and approached the officer, who uttered a cry of terror, while the turnpike-man, turning very pale, said—

“You will not murder him on my threshold?”

“You have said it,” replied Claude.

And he still approached the officer, until he was near enough to grasp him by the collar, and then, while the trembling wretch was gasping in all the agony of the immediate expectation of death, Claude spoke, in a firm clear voice—



"You have made a dastardly attempt upon my life, and now you expect me to spare you."

"Mercy—mercy!"

"Did you show any? Prepare yourself for——"

"Death—death!" cried the officer, "death at last!"

"If your pistol had not missed fire, I should have been a dead man now, and, therefore, having caught you, I have but a few words to say to you."

The officer fell back and closed his eyes as he thought, no doubt, upon the world for ever. Heaven and his own heart can only know how fearful were his sufferings during that short space of time. No doubt if he had committed any evil deeds, they crowded to his recollection, and he suffered much more than the pangs of death could possibly have amounted to.

Claude Duval placed his mouth to his ear, and whispered,—

"When next you meet me take care your powder is dry."

Rising then from his stooping attitude, Duval sprung upon his horse again, and waving his hand to the petrified turnpike man, he went off towards London at a sharp trot.

For a few moments after he had left them, neither the officer nor the man in charge of the toll gate moved, but the latter called out,—

"Why he hasn't killed you."

The officer lay quite motionless upon the ground and made no reply, and when the toll-keeper reached up to him, and examined him by the aid of his lantern, he was astonished and terrified to find his eyes having a fixed appearance, while a pallid hue of death was on his face.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE INTERVIEW WITH THE ATTORNEY. THE ATTEMPTED ARREST.

WE will follow Claude to London, where he was doomed to pass through some adventures of most unparalleled audacity and risk.

The chase of the officer had extended far enough up the London road, to shorten the distance that Claude had been from the metropolis considerably, and the first faint grey light of dawn was making its appearance in the east when he entered Oxford-street.

Then he slightly drew rein, so as to reduce the pace of Sue to a walk, instead of the easy canter she had begun at. A shade of care was upon the face of Claude.

"What am I going to do?" he asked himself. "Am I upon the point of making a sacrifice of myself for another, or am I after all doing an act of common justice, which at all risks all men who have any principle of honour at their hearts are bound to do? Ah, Cicely, Cicely, were it not for you, I think ere now a feeling of despair would come across my heart, and I should fancy the world and all its uses not for me. What shall I do?"

He paused a moment, and it was doubtful just then, whether or not he would persevere in his intention of making an effort to save Markham Brereton; but then he suddenly told himself, that it was not as Markham Brereton that he would try to save him, but as the brother of Cicely, and the mere pronounciation of her name was a spell so potent that in a moment it banished all his scruples.

"It shall be done," he cried. "It shall be done, at whatever risks, it shall be done."

The dawn came creeping slowly on as he paced down Oxford-street, and as he gazed before him, he saw the night-clouds in the east gradually opening to the beams of the great luminary that as yet had not reached the horizon, but sent his

rays like the advance guard of an army, to clear the way for the main body and dislodge all minor enemies—then by little and little the shadowy east became lit up by a faint glow of colour, at first a grey—then the grey deepened—and here and there a warmer tint crept over the edge of the clouds, many of which soon after assumed a purple tint, while a fiery glow shot along the parallel of clouds, and when the space opened, a golden light streamed forth.

Claude Duval gazed upon the beauties of the east, they were no less marked than those of the west, which come like the illumined cover of a great book to close upon the day; now the cover was turning—the giver of all things was opening the book to commence the day—and from it streamed light, and all that brings good to man.

The houses came irregular and at intervals, no sign of life could he see save that here and there a coach-dog opened its deep-toned throat and bayed at the passing stranger, and the cocks from the roost gave clear and shrill notice of the break of day.

He looked upon the dark forms of the houses, many of them much alike, but yet he could not well distinguish them quickly, for the light not yet being strong, he could see those best whose forms soared high and stood in relief against the sky, which was each moment becoming stronger.

Claude Duval had a tolerably fair recollection of the house, in at the window of which he had been received by his sister, on that most eventful morning when he had been so daring as to shake hands with Sixteen-string Jack, and he looked out sharply for it.

Still there were so many houses alike that he might have been rather puzzled but for one circumstance, and that was his observing fluttering from one of the windows of a house a white handkerchief.

“That is it,” he said, “May has adopted such a mode of making her house known to me without fear of mistake, and that white emblem is significatory of the innocence and purity of the dwellers in that house. Yes, I will at any risk do what is right.”

He halted at the door of the house and as he cast his eyes up to the window he saw the handkerchief suddenly removed.

“May sees me,” he said, “the poor girl has been upon the watch.”

Then as some new thought came across his mind, he knit his brows, and muttered.

“Does she love this Markham Brereton?”

He then strove to recollect every look and every tone of hers while she had been speaking of the brother of Cicely, in order to see if he could come to a conclusion with regard to this new idea of his, but he could not take upon himself to say that absolutely he had seen or heard anything that gave a colour to it.

“I will say nothing to her upon the subject,” he thought, “until I know more than I do now concerning it.”

At this moment the door of the house opened, and May, covered up in a grey cloak so that no one not very intimate with her appearance could have known her made her appearance.

“Dear Claude,” she said, “you have obeyed my summons.”

“I have, May, but how you found me I am at a loss to imagine.—It is not every one who can pounce upon my whereabouts as your messenger contrived to do.”

“No matter, Claude, no matter. There is ample time for me to explain all that to you, but at present things of far greater moment call for your attention. You must save Markham Brereton.”

“Why must I, May?”

He looked as sharply into her face as he propounded this question as the dim light enabled him to do, but he could not trace any deepening colour, or other symptom of a more than just interest in Brereton’s fate.

“Because it is just to do so,” replied May.

“Am I always treated justly?”

"Perhaps not, Claude, but are you to be wicked because all the world is not righteous? No, no, I know your nature better, Claude. You would not have come here at all, if you had not meant to do all there was to do. There is an attorney of the name of Hammerston, and you must come with me to him, to tell him confidentially how innocent Markham is." "An attorney?" "Yes, but an honest, honourable man, strange as it may appear. Come, Claude, I will walk by the side of your horse." "Not so," said Claude, "I will lead Sue by the bridle, and walk with you. Is the distance far?" "Oh, no. It is but a street or two. Oh, Claude, you will not play us false? You will snatch from destruction one whom you know to be innocent?" "Yes," said Claude, "I will save him if I can. Heaven will not see an innocent man thus perish." "No, no, it will not," cried May. "Ah, Claude, something of your better nature still clings to you." "Did you think it all gone, May?" "No, no," she sobbed, "I always hoped—always thought that the day would



come, when you would forsake your present mode of life and——" "No more of that—no more of that, May," cried Claude. "What I am I must remain, but you ought to believe the same that I am still human. Why do you pause?" "We are now," said May, "at the door of Mr. Hammerston's house."

#### CHAPTER XIX.

##### CLAUDE'S PROMISE.—THE ESCAPE.

CLAUDE might well pause for a few moments ere, even now, he committed himself so far as to walk into what might still be a snare made for him. The street was a solitary and deserted one at all times, and at that early hour of the morning most particularly so, for not a soul was to be seen, although Claude looked both to the right and to the left, anxiously and scrutinizingly. He then, while May knocked timidly and with a degree of uncertainty at the door of the house, fastened the bridle of his gallant steed to the large iron railings in front of it, and calmly awaited

the issue of an adventure which was so fraught with peril, that few in his situation, would have placed themselves in the way to encounter.

May had to repeat her summons several times before a head was projected from one of the windows, and a gruff voice demanded who was there.

"That is you, Mr. Hammerston, I am certain it is you, I know your voice, sir, and I know likewise, that it will give you pleasure to hear that I can bring you proof of the innocence of Markham Brereton."

"If you can do that," said the attorney, from the window, "I shall not regret having my rest disturbed."

The window was closed, and the head was withdrawn; nothing was spoken between the brother and sister for the next five minutes, after which the attorney opened the door himself, hastily dressed, to welcome his known and unknown visitors.

"Come in, come in," he said, "probably you think you have discovered something which convinces you of his innocence, but which won't convince the laws."

"Oh, do not say so, Mr. Hammerston, do not say so," added May, "even you would be convinced. I bring with me a fearful proof."

The attorney led the way to a small room upon the ground-floor, closely followed by Claude and his sister May. The door was closed, and the highwayman flung himself into a seat which May pointed to him, and the words she seemed disposed to utter died away on her lips.

The window of the apartment looked towards the east, and there was sufficient light already in the glowing morning to enable each of the persons in that small apartment to see each other distinctly, so that there was no need for artificial light, and as Claude sat immediately facing the window, the attorney had an extremely good view of him.

"Why do you not speak?" said Hammerston. "Who is this person you have brought with you?"

"The proof, the proof," gasped May, and she could say no more.

"Hold," said Claude. "Suffer me to speak. Let me ask you, sir, is Mr. Markham Brereton accused by his cousin, Mr. Tom Brereton, of any crime?"

"Yes," said the attorney, "a highway robbery, and the whole affair has placed me in a most embarrassing position, being as I am, the attorney for the family, all parties come to me, and now that the Breretons may be considered as a house divided against itself, I really don't know what to do among them."

"I do not ask, sir," added Claude, "from idle curiosity, but I would fain know upon what grounds Mr. Markham Brereton is accused by his cousin?"

"Simply these. Tom Brereton states that the first arrangement was for the whole family, consisting of himself, Markham Brereton, the old lady, and Cicely, to come to town together in the family coach, but that Markham Brereton for no ostensible reason in the world, must needs go on in advance on horseback, and that he, Tom, having in his pocket all the necessary documents to prove who and what he was, felt naturally anxious concerning them, but important as the possession of those documents were to Markham Brereton, he little suspected any attempt from that quarter to deprive him of them."

"Nor was there any," exclaimed May.

"Allow Mr. Hammerston to proceed," said Claude.

"Tom Brereton then goes on to state," continued the lawyer, "that somewhere about Ealing Common, the carriage was stopped by a disguised horseman, and those very papers stolen from him, he having every reason to suspect such disguised horseman was no other than Markham Brereton, and that the terror of Mrs. Brereton and Cicely was only affected."

"And the result of all this," said Claude.

"The result is that Markham Brereton is now in Newgate."

"Impossible!"

"True, nevertheless, and if his cousin chooses to swear to his identity, he will find it an extremely difficult matter to escape the accusation."

"And yet," said May, "he is innocent."

"Completely innocent," echoed Claude, "this accusation is the most monstrous thing I ever heard of."

"An assertion of his innocence is of little moment," said Mr. Hammerston, "have you proof?"

May looked anxiously at her brother, and after a few moments' silence, Claude spoke.

"Sir," he said, "I have proof, such a proof that I think even you will admit to be irrefragable. I am about to place a confidence in you which may appear to be indiscreet, but I am solemnly called upon to save an innocent man, and I am here to respond to the appeal. Tom Brereton was stopped and robbed near Ealing Common upon the occasion to which he refers, and documents of importance were taken from him, but not by Mr. Markham Brereton."

"By whom then, that is the question?"

"A question easily answered. I was his assailant."

"You—and is it possible you come here, exposing yourself to frightful danger,—"

"No sir, I never expose myself to frightful danger; neither you nor I need suffer a momentary pang of disquietude. I can protect myself, and the same feelings that brought me to this house, will save me from becoming the easy prey of treachery."

The attorney drew a long breath, as he looked anxiously at Claude, and added in a low tone,—

"Have you any objection to tell me who you are?"

"Not in the least. I am Claude Duval."

The attorney's chair ran upon castors, and at the mention of the well-known name of Claude Duval he backed it precipitately until he reached the wall.

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed "I see before me the—the—the—notorious highwayman."

"Yes," said Claude, "I am he. I was on Ealing Common on the night in question, and you may come to a safe conclusion as to whether I or Mr. Markham Brereton stopped the carriage. I see sir, that you bend looks of surprise and distrust upon this young lady, you know her by the name of May Russel, and as the companion of Cicely Brereton; her real name is Duval, she is my sister, and remember sir, that that is a secret confided to your honour."

"I am all amazement," said Mr. Hammerston "and in the wildest suppositions, even in my dreams, I could never have expected to see Claude Duval in this apartment,"

At this moment a door, but not the one through which the attorney had brought his guests, suddenly flew open, precipitating some one who had been incautiously leaning against it to listen, into the apartment, Claude sprang from his seat in an instant, and seized the intruder by the collar, exclaiming as he did so—

"Do you keep spies, sir, on your premises?"

"In faith no," said the attorney, "but this is my articulated clerk, and I assure you I had no more idea that he was without, than you had. Samuel Spark, how came you to leave your bed at such an hour? It's a hard case to get you up in anything like reasonable time when you are required for actual business."

"Have mercy upon me," said Samuel Spark, "I was passing the door as aforesaid, and accidentally touching the panel, it gave way as herein before stated; I have heard nothing, and know nothing, in as whereby and nevertheless, and notwithstanding—"

"Let me beg him off," said Mr. Hammerston, "he is harmless enough."

"As you please, sir," said Claude, and he released the affrighted clerk, "such persons, however, are full of mischief; at your intercession I release him, but I anticipate danger."

Samuel made his way from the room, looking heartily rejoiced at his escape,

and the attorney again assured Claude that he need be under no sort of apprehension.

The latter however, did not appear to share the confidence of the attorney, but kept a wary eye around him, during the continuance of the interview.

"In what way, sir," he said, "can I save this falsely-accused gentleman, and at the same time preserve myself from the hangman's hands?"

"I own myself puzzled," said Hammerston, "it is a question that deserves and requires serious consideration, and I must not give a precipitate answer; you have doubtless established some mode of communication between yourself and your sister, so that without your endangering your safety by coming here again, I can through her communicate with you."

"Be it so," said Claude, rising, "and if this is to be my last exploit, it will not be a dishonourable one; I shall not have in vain preserved what you, my sister, I presume will call a remnant of virtue."

"Oh Claude, Claude."

May burst into tears, and flung herself upon her brother's neck, sobbing with a convulsive energy that sufficiently shewed how highly wrought must have been her feelings. Mr. Hammerston was affected, and took a huge pinch of snuff, which he pretended made him sneeze ferociously.

"Calm yourself," said Claude, "calm yourself."

"Can you ask me?"

"Yes, and wish it too. Why you were once one of the most courageous of girls."

"I was, but that was when I felt no shame in——"

"Let me complete the sentence for you—in your brother."

"Well, really," put in Mr. Hammerston, "this is a most distressing affair. I must say that it has altogether taken me so much by surprise, that it seems more like a dream to me than anything else. Could you not make it convenient, Mr. Duval, to alter your mode of life?"

"Oh yes, yes," cried May, with frantic energy, "urge him upon that point, sir, and may the eloquence of an angel hang upon your words."

"No, no—forebear!" said Claude, "forebear!"

"Do not forbear," cried May, "to urge him upon such a point.—Claude, Claude! you know not who are your best friends. Do you fancy there is no room for reformation, because you have hitherto carried on a reckless career?—Oh, sir, speak to him, your voice may be more potent than mine."

Claude Duval waved his hand to bespeak silence, and then, in a voice which commanded attention, he said—

"Hear me once and for all. I cannot, and do not for one moment deny but that I am pursuing a desperate course—a course which must end in my destruction—nor am I disposed to doubt the purity of the intentions of those who would dissuade me from it; but I have learned a truth in my intercourse with the world, which both of you seem to be ignorant of, and that is, if you make one deviation from the ordinary routine of correct living, you are lost.—Do you think that I, the notorious Claude Duval, a man whose name has become a terror and a by-word, could ever be received among the smooth-tongued hypocrites of society on a footing with themselves? No; I say, emphatically, it is too late, by far too late. I have taken a step from which there is no redemption, and although I might humiliate myself, I cannot save myself."

"These words are terrible," said May.

"Truth frequently partakes of that character," added Claude.

There was a slight pause, and then, before any one could make another remark, the highwayman sprang to his feet, and assumed an attitude of listening.

## CHAPTER XX.

## AN ALARM, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

THE listening attitude assumed by Claude soon found imitators in May and Mr. Hammerston, the attorney; they heard nothing, but, as their eyes were directed towards Duval for an explanation, he spoke—

“My ears,” he said, “are accustomed to catch slight sounds; it may or may not be a matter of any moment, but I distinctly heard the creeping of footsteps in the passage, and wherever I have found secrecy and caution, I have likewise generally found danger.”

“You surprise me,” said the lawyer, “indeed, I am convinced that no one is up in the house but myself.”

“You forget your clerk, and as yet we know not what he may have listened to.”

“That is true; and yet I hardly think he would dare—he’s one of the most timid of men——”

“And therefore,” said Claude, “one of the most dangerous. I tell you frankly, sir, that my impression is, that he has overheard most of what has passed in this room, and, among the rest, the all important fact of whom I am. I regret this, as it may produce confusion and bloodshed in your house,”

“Bloodshed?”

“Yes. Do you think I am going to be taken while I have arms in my possession? No, sir; woe be to those who have temerity sufficient to stop my progress.”

“What is to be done—what is to be done,” cried May. “I did not bring you here, Claude, to expose you to danger. Mr. Hammerston, I call upon you to protect him; it is in some measure your duty so to do. He has come under your roof trustfully, and it is your duty, sir, to see him depart unharmed.”

The attorney stood irresolute, and seemed somewhat confounded by what was passing around him. After a few moments, however, he recovered himself.

“Hush—hush!” he said, “for God’s sake don’t speak so loud. I will soon ascertain if there be any danger—remain here in peace, and expect my return in a few moments, and above all things, do not harbour the remotest idea of my playing you false. I should detest myself if I were to do so, as well as considering I should rightly earn the detestation of every honest man.”

With these words, he left the apartment, and during his brief absence not a word passed between Claude and May—they were both too far intent upon listening for the attorney’s return, to indulge in any conversation which might have the effect of preventing them from hearing of the first indication of his approach. At length he came into the room, and his pale face showed that something must have happened to discompose him greatly. He trembled as he closed the door hastily behind him, and turned the key in the lock.

“You are right—you are right,” he said, “and probably in an emergency like this you can best say what it will be desirable to do.”

“I guessed as much,” said Claude. “Now, sir, tell me the precise danger.”

“Back and front, the house is guarded by men who are no doubt anxious to claim the reward for your apprehension.

“And your clerk?”

“Is on the step of the front door, rubbing his hands in glee, in anticipation of his share of the profits.”

“On the step,” mused Claude, “on the step.—Is he close to the door—could a hand stretched out grasp him, think you?”

"Unquestionably it might, as I saw him. There is a small window, as you must have observed when you first came here, on each side of the door, and through one of those it was that I saw him."

"It is necessary," said Claude, calmly, "that I should speak to him, probably I shall be able to make terms with him—wait for me one moment, the attempt is worth the making."

"Oh, no, Claude," cried May, "you will not be so mad as to venture into the street; recollect, that although you may succeed in taking several lives, that fresh enemies will momentarily crowd around you, and you cannot resist a multitude—be merciful to me, and rush not into too great danger—Claude, Claude, I pray you be not over reckless—"

"Time is precious, sister, each moment is of more vast importance than its predecessor. You are desirous of but one thing, and that is, I should save myself. Permit me, from my more extended experience to judge, what is the best mode of accomplishing that object. Be tranquil for the present."

There was such a tone of command about Claude, as he uttered these words, that May did not dream of resisting them, and as for Mr. Hammerston he looked on with the air of a man, who was so bewildered by the rapidity of passing events, as to find it alike impossible to stem the current, or thoroughly to comprehend all that it was significant of.

Claude then did not hesitate another moment, but leaving the room, walked rapidly to the street door, where he made it his first business to inspect the fastenings, and having satisfied himself that they might have been securely put up within the smallest possible space of time—he no longer hesitated about what he meant to do. Opening the door a short distance, he said in a whisper—

"Hist, Hist! are you there?"

"Yes, yes," cried the clerk, who was so anxious to serve him so scurvy a trick, and rushing forward he presented himself at the aperture with eagerness.

To stretch out his arm and grasp him by the collar, and drag him into the passage, as though he had come suddenly under the influence of tremendous velocity, was to Claude the work of a moment, and then the street door was closed again, and a chain and bar appended to it, before the bewildered individual exactly knew where he was.

"Murder, murder!" he cried, but Claude clapped his hand upon his mouth, with an energy that loosened all his teeth, as he said—

"I would strongly recommend silence."

Hurrying him then along the passage he passed in another moment to the astonishment of Mr. Hammerston, into the apartment which he, Claude, had so recently quitted.

"Gracious Heavens!" said the attorney, "is that you, Samuel?"

"Yes," said Samuel, "and I'm a dead man. Oh, sir, I didn't mean to do anything. I've not the least idea that you are Claude Duval, the great high-man, and as for catching you, sir, that never came into my mind."

"And yet," said Claude, "you have caught something, if it's only a Tartar."

"Spare him," said Mr. Hammerston, he is three parts a fool."

"And the fourth a rogue," said Claude, "but it is no business of mine to care what he is, and as to putting out the small light of his existence, I should take shame to myself for the attempt."

"Thank you, sir, oh, thank you," said Samuel. "I'm too contemptible, sir, and always was. I've been kicked five times, and pumped upon twice, if you please, and I have quite lost count of how many times my nose has been pulled."

Claude Duval looked at the animal before him, for some moments with an expression of undisguised contempt; and even May, gentle and indulgent as she was to all the faults of humanity, shrunk with something like contempt, from the contemplation of such a specimen of human nature.

"Ah," said Mr. Hammerston. "I certainly had not the very highest opinion of your courage, but what you state of yourself now, transcends what ever I should



have imagined. Is it possible you can be so debased; at the same time, Mr. Duval, I hope," added the attorney, turning to Claude, "I hope that you will not put yourself out of the way to exercise any vengeance upon such a person this."

"Not in the least, not in the least," said Claude, "I thank God I cannot accuse myself of having taken vengeance on any one, but I can truly say that I have had forbearance where few would have had it; and where attacks have been made on my very existence, I passed them over lightly, as though they were nothing, conceiving as I did that the line of life I was leading specially called upon me to run such risks; be under no apprehension, therefore, sir, that I shall exceed moderation in dealing with such a man as this."

"In spite of my reason," said the attorney, "in spite of my profession, in spite of all my prejudices, you win upon me, Claude Duval. I am sorry for it, but I cannot help it."

"Say no more," interrupted Claude, "time is precious."

"Then you ain't a-going to do anything to me," whined Samuel, "then you ain't a-going to do anything to me?"

"Upon one condition," said Claude, "you are safe."

"Oh, sir, name it—name it, what am I to do? Am I to tell you who is waiting for you, and how to get the better of them—only say what I am to do, and I'll do it in a moment."

"And so betray the very people," interposed Mr. Hammerston, "you have given notice to of Claude Duval's presence here."

"I do not ask him so much," said Claude, "my question is a simple one, if he answer it not the consequences be upon his own head."

"Oh, speak—speak, sir," cried Samuel. "I'll answer it as if I were on my death-bed, and a respectable clergyman was called to hear my last dying-speech and confession, only speak, sir, and I'll answer you in a moment."

"You'll have little trouble," said Claude, with a sneer of contempt. "Where's my horse, that is the only question I have to ask?"

There was a silence for a moment, and then the clerk in a whining tone, replied,—

"He was taken to a livery stable on the other side of the way, and they were told not to give him up unless a gentleman of the name of Park came for him."

"And who is Park?"

"A constable, he lives in the next street, and when I heard that you were here, I thought I'd run and get him."

"I'm obliged truly, and now, Samuel, I wish you to stand up, for I wish to see how tall you are. You look a long, shambling, ill put together piece of goods, and I want to see if you are near enough my height, to be for once mistaken for a better man than you are."

Samuel stood up with fear upon his countenance, he was trembling in every limb, but by a significant nod Claude Duval seemed to say that he was satisfied, and turning to the attorney, he said,—

"I believe, sir, you justly consider you are under sufficient durance by my presence here, as not to be able to oppose what I may choose to dictate?"

These words were accompanied by a side glance at Samuel, which sufficiently informed Mr. Hammerston they were intended to provide against any ulterior consequences that might arise from his aiding and assisting him in escaping the fangs of the law, and Mr. Hammerston fairly understood the side glance, replying judiciously at once to it, by saying,—

"I am acting entirely under durance, and therefore cannot be accused of comforting and abetting a felon. What is it you wish, Mr. Duval?"

"A coil of rope, if you have such a thing."

"In the upper part of the house, I think we may accommodate you."

Claude nodded, and then taking a grasp of Samuel's arm, which to that individual felt extremely like as if he had been suddenly caught in a vice, conducted him from the apartment, followed by the attorney, into one of the upper rooms of the place, then taking Mr. Hammerston aside, Claude let him know what were his in-

tentions, and as they will best show themselves in their progress and result, we shall proceed to detail them.

The attorney pointed to a small flight of stairs which led to the roof of the house, and at the same time produced from a cupboard a small coil of rope which at various times had been used for the purpose of cording trunks and other heavy packages.

Claude still kept a firm hold upon the arm of Samuel, and so conducted the trembling coward up the flight of steps, closely followed by May and Mr. Hammerston, who were curious and excited spectators of his proceedings.

By this time it may well be supposed, that the morning had made progress, and indeed a clear and distinct light had broken in upon all surrounding objects—the haze of twilight having completely disappeared, thus it was that Claude knew very well that any object from the roof of the house would become a very clear and distinct point of observation, he took the coil of rope in his hand, and made his way to the parapet, and looked over into the street.

A loud shout from the officer to whom the alarm had been given of his presence in the house, sufficiently testified to the fact that he was seen, and then in that direction his object was accomplished, proceeding then to the back of the house which looked into some mews, he made a similar transient appearance and was greeted by another shout, then he turned to Samuel and spoke in a low but decisive tone.

“I cannot disguise from you but your position is one of danger, that is, provided you but make the smallest resistance to what I require of you; if you do not you are perfectly safe.”

“Save my life,” said Samuel, “save my life, but take all my property. Oh good God, you are surely not going to hang me. Oh Mary Ann, Mary Anne, what will you do on Sunday afternoon.”

This remark about hanging, arose probably from the fact that Claude had made with great rapidity a sort of running noose at the end of the coil of rope; he returned no answer to Samuel, but flung it over him, and drawing it tightly under his arms, and then dragging him to the verge of the parapet of the house, he said,—

“One advantage of a light weight is that a slight cord will suffice as a support; now Samuel by your own confession you are used to being kicked, but probably those operations have been used to be performed upon level ground; circumstances constrain me to introduce a variety in the performance of that operation—I am now about to kick you off the roof of a house.”

Samuel was too much dismayed to answer, and Claude Duval had fairly wrapped round the terrified clerk his coat, and placed upon his head the rakish looking hat, before poor Samuel could come to any conclusion as to what was to be the object of such a transformation.

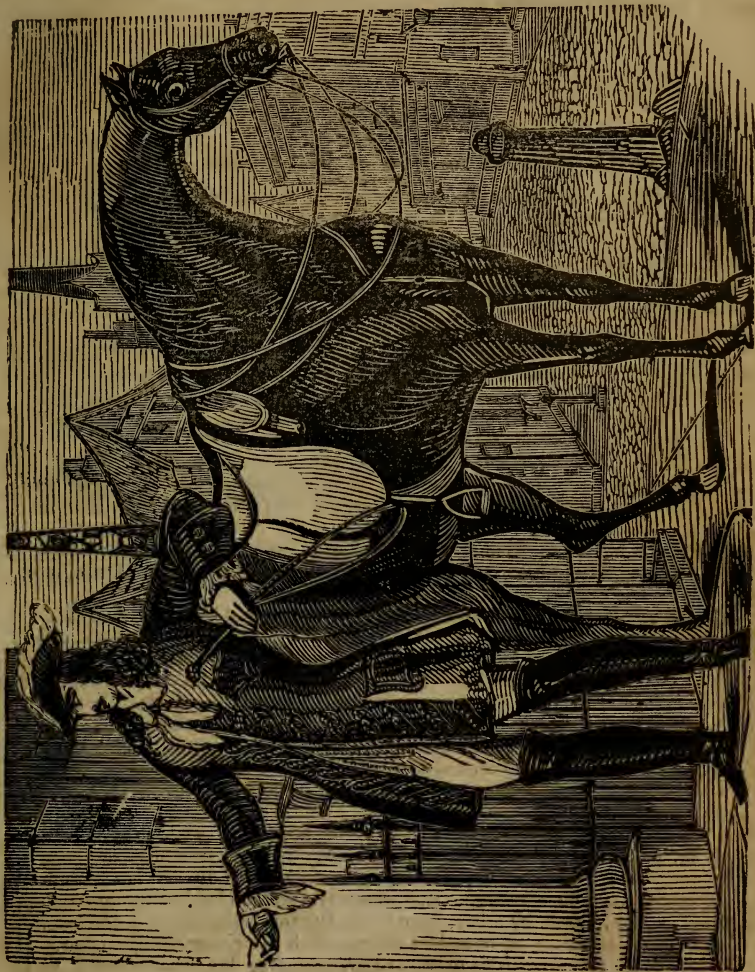
In another moment he was launched over the parapet and dangling by the rope.

“Hurrah! hurrah!” cried the officers, from below, “here he comes, call all the fellows from the front, we’ll have him, hurrah! hurrah!”

Claude continued to let down Samuel until he was about half-way—he then fastened the other end of the rope to some beams that were close at hand, and still preserving his stooping posture, so that he could not be seen from below, he spoke to May and to Mr. Hammerston,

“I do not wish,” he said, “that even such a person as Samuel should run any great risk for my safety’s sake, nor do I think he will by dangling there for a few minutes, during which time if he be mistaken for me, by virtue of my hat and coat, my object will be accomplished, and now May look over the parapet and tell me if the officers are congregating at the back of the house.”

With anxious eagerness May obeyed the trembling behests of her brother, for she began to comprehend exactly how it was he intended to effect his escape, and that he should succeed became to her a chief and prime object of existence.



As soon as she withdrew from the parapet she informed Claude that nine men were assembled at the back of the house, but that the front was quite clear. He instantly bade them a hurried farewell, darted down the staircase, and at once made to the open gate of a livery stable, where he made no doubt he should find his mare. "Mr. Park has sent for the brown mare," he said to a man lounging on the spot. It was brought, and with a sudden movement Claude sprang into the saddle; and then, to the astonishment of the man, on went horse and rider at a pace few would have attempted to rival—the mare seeming to catch a portion of her rider's spirit.

Green fields and tall trees soon met the grateful sight of Claude, and the town, where he never entered but from sheer necessity, and never left but with gladness, gradually disappeared behind him.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A STORM.—THE UXBRIDGE WAGGON.—THE SPECTRE AGAIN.

CLAUDE galloped on, until he had left far behind him the canopy of smoke that hangs like an evil dispensation over London. The morning was advancing—birds went twittering from tree to tree, and there was about the air that wild, fragrant freshness, which is so grateful to the senses of all who have not become actually callous to all that is beautiful and natural.

It was not for some time that Claude began to notice how low the birds were flying, and that, although the morning was evidently advancing, it more resembled the coming on of night, for a deep gloom began to gather over the face of nature, and then when he scanned the heavens, standing as high as he could in the saddle, to stretch his gaze far and near, he saw that masses of heavy clouds had piled themselves up, and a low rumbling sound of thunder, announced to him that some war of the elements was about to ensue.

“A storm—a storm!” he cried. “We must seek some shelter, Sue.”

He had branched off from the western road, considerably to the right, so that the low neighbourhood of Kilburn, Wilsden, and Neason, was close to him.

This district, however, seemed to be pregnant with disagreeable associations, for Claude abruptly turned his horse’s head, and again made for the Uxbridge Road.

By this time, however, the storm had begun to do its worst! Vivid flashes of lightning darted from cloud to cloud, and the thunder, although not remarkable for loudness, was almost incessant. Occasionally too, a deluge of rain would come, and then as suddenly cease; so that the state of external affairs was about as disagreeable as could be for a horseman, who had so little to protect him as Claude. No wonder then, that an anxious desire for shelter soon found a home in his breast, and upon gaining an eminence on the western road, and which commanded a view of it, he glanced around him with a hope of finding some habitation, where with safety he might remain, at all events until the worst fury of the tempest was over.

While thus occupied, he observed a couple of horsemen, well dressed and mounted, but perfectly bedraggled with mud, slowly emerge from a green lane, from the opposite side of the road. Their attention seemed to be directed to something which was following them, and presently a small, closely shut-up coach made its appearance, driven by a boy, from whom the rain was pouring in torrents. One of the horsemen made an impatient gesture with his riding-whip, to hurry on; but the horse appeared to be exhausted by dragging the vehicle, small as it was, through the deep clay of the lane, but would not proceed but at an ordinary jog-trot pace.

Another object was soon added to the group, and that consisted of the Uxbridge wagon creeping slowly on towards its destination, through the mire that lay at least a foot thick in the road.

Claude might well wonder what all this meant, and as from the favourable position he occupied, he was an easy spectator of what was going on, he resolved for a few minutes as he was to notice how the various parties would dispose of themselves.

The two horsemen noticed the wagon, and then after a brief consultation they spoke to the boy who drove the vehicle, after which, dismounting from their horses,

they had their bridles fastened to the tail of the waggon, and then ingloriously took shelter beneath its capacious canopy, and the whole affair proceeded like a procession, the carriage which the boy was driving, bringing up the rear.

Claude's curiosity was strongly excited, he was quick at resolves, and in a few moments made up his mind what to do, as an adventure of any kind under the present circumstances would he thought tend greatly to withdraw his mind from a too keen perception of matters which otherwise pressed heavily upon his spirits. He took a flying gallop along the meadows until he reached a point of the road about half a mile higher than the waggon, and there he awaited its slow arrival beneath the spreading branches of a lime, which in some slight degree saved him from the fury of the now rapidly descending rain.

Slow as was the pace of the waggon, but a very short time had elapsed before it had reached the point of the road at which Claude had stationed himself; he then trotted out, and the driver, seeing a mounted man, stopped his team, when Claude propounded to him a desire for a similar accommodation to that which had been accorded to the two horsemen who had so snugly ensconced themselves in the vehicle.

The only difficulty that presented itself to the carrying out of this request consisted in the attachment of a third horse by its bridle to the tack of the waggon, but that trouble was soon overruled by Claude, who in a few moments more found himself an inmate of the cumbrous machine, which performed its periodical journeys between Uxbridge and London.

The rain continued to descend in torrents, so that every available piece of canvass was so placed as to exclude it, and this had the effect of course of considerably darkening the interior of the vehicle. Indeed it was some minutes before Claude, suddenly coming in out of the daylight, could distinguish one object from another, but at length the forms of the various persons began to be dimly perceptible to him, and ensconcing himself in the straw, as well and as quietly as he could, he listened to a conversation which was pending the moment he entered.

"Highwaymen, madam," said a somewhat affected male voice, "highwaymen—oh, certainly, I have met a highwayman in my time, but I always give them such a warm reception that they don't wish to meet me again."

"Well," said an elderly lady, who was surrounded by an immense number of packages, "well there's one comfort in travelling, at all events, you are not likely to have your throat cut or your pocket picked."

"There, my dear madam," said the former speaker, "you are quite wrong for if any highwayman were to see my horse, which is attached to the tail of this waggon, he would at once guess there was a gentleman who had something to lose, and then there is no knowing what the consequences would be, that is, if it was anybody else but myself, for I make short work of these things."

"Well, that's a comfort," said the old lady.

"Oh, you've no notion, ma'am, how often I've had brushes of this kind. I believe I may truly say that for several months, I drove the well-known Claude Duval off the western marshes."

"You don't say so, sir?"

"Yes, it is a fact. I was travelling on horseback, and heard a cry of distress near midnight. The cry was in a female voice, and of course that was enough for me, I clapped spurs to my horse, and galloped on, when what should I see but two young ladies and an old gentleman being robbed by a mounted highwayman."

"But how could you see, sir, at night?" said the old lady.

"He had his spectacles with him, madam," said Claude.

"Eh? Who dared speak to me in such a way? Who was it that made that dreadfully audacious remark? Of course I saw very well, for the moon just peeped from a cloud at that moment, and enabled me to do so,"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Claude, "pray go on, sir, I long to hear the rest of the story."

"Very goods if anybody begs my pardon, that's enough—otherwise—but no matter. Well, as I was saying, I galloped up, when the fellow called out to me 'Stand off, or take the consequences, I'm Claude Duval.'

"'Are you,' said I, 'what's that to me, when I hear the voice of a female in distress;' that was the way I spoke to him, do you see, when what did he do, but pull out a large horse-pistol, and fired it at me, blowing my left whisker all to atoms. I grappled with him, and down he went, so I made him beg pardon of the old gentleman, and the two young ladies, and likewise of me, which he did upon his knees in the mud, and ever after that he was so afraid of my being upon the road, that he scarcely touched anybody for a month."

"But perhaps it was not the celebrated highwayman," said Claude.

"Oh, yes, it was. I made him write his name upon the fly-leaf of my pocket-book, and I have got it here; besides, my friend here, Mr. Smithers, knows it's all a fact."

"Why, yes," said the boaster's companion, "yes, it's all right enough."

"May I ask, gentlemen," said Claude, "what sort of wild beast you've got in the coach at the back?"

"What's that to you, sir? We are upon duty, charitable duty too, and if you must know, we are conveying an insane young lady into the country."

By the rustling of paper, Claude could well perceive that the fellow was endeavouring to substantiate his story of the meeting with the highwayman, by actually writing the name of Claude Duval.

Claude had now an opportunity, as the weather cleared a little, of seeing exactly how many persons were in the wagon, and he found they consisted of a quiet working man, who had not spoken, three females, who had not yet spoken, and who now admitted to the nature of the contents of the single horse carriage driven by the boy.

He made his determination in a moment, and rising from the corner in which he had ensconced himself, he said,

"I shall never believe that story of the highwayman, unless I really see his name in your pocket-book, sir."

"There it is then," said the fellow, and he handed Claude a leaf which he tore out, and on which was written in great scrawling characters, "Claude Duval."

"A forgery," cried Claude.

"A what? a forgery! how do you know?—that is to say, how dare you?"

"Of my daring, you shall soon have proof, and as regards my means of knowing, I ought to be the best witness in the world; I deliberately declare, I never wrote these words."

"You never wrote——"

"Certainly not, and yet I am Claude Duval, the highwayman!"

The old lady uttered a shriek, the younger ones looked deeply interested, the friend of the gentleman who had told the boasting anecdote, had contrived in a moment to hide himself completely among the straw, while the individual who had committed himself by such open and advised speaking, seemed for a moment paralyzed with terror, then recovering himself, he shouted,—

"Murder! murder! stop the waggon—stop the wagon! Murder! murder!"

"Yes," cried Claude, springing to his feet. "Stop the wagon, and there may be murder too, if you will have it."

She waggoner hearing the confused sounds and cries of alarm from within his vehicle, stopped the horses, upon which Claude called out to him,—

"Hark you, waggoner, you must do as your betters have done under similar circumstances, be quiet for your safety's sake. I am Claude Duval, and whether you've heard the name or not before, matters little, I have but to warn you that your safety lies in submission.

"Oh, help, help!" cried the old lady, "we shall all be dead in two minutes. Fire—fire."

"How interesting," said one of the younger ladies.

"And not at all a bad looking man," said the other.

"Ladies," interposed Claude, "be under no alarm; it is certain I am Claude Duval, and it is equally certain that I feel indignation at the vile fabrication concerning me which has passed the lips of a person in this company. That indignation, however, has its sole foundation in the mistatement that I was attacking two ladies and an elderly gentleman. No such circumstance occurred as my meeting this person on the road, but since he is anxious to have an anecdote of Claude Duval, he will be most abundantly gratified.

"Spare my life," said the man. "Spare my life, it was only a joke; there's my purse; ladies, ladies, give up all you've got quietly, don't make any resistance, or we shall all be murdered. I assure you, sir, it was only a joke."

"Well," said Claude, "we will take it as a joke, and end it as one. I must, however, have my little jest as well as you yours, and now, sir, for fear you should show this little scrap of paper to any one else as the hand-writing of Claude Duval, I will trouble you to swallow it."

"Swallow it? did you say swallow?"

"I did."

"Oh, Lord, but you don't mean it. Why, it's an uncommonly stiff bit of paper. I could not do it. Help, help! Oh, dear. I can't and won't."

"You can and will."

"Oh no, no. Young ladies say a word for me. Good, kind young ladies, don't let me be murdered before your eyes."

"These young ladies," said Claude, "are too beautiful to interest themselves in such a person as you are. Besides, they know very well that the swallowing of a small piece of paper will not be the death of you. If you will not by fair means go through the ceremony you must by foul, and I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of ramming it down your throat with the barrel of a pistol."

As he uttered these words, Claude handed the paper to the vain boaster, and after a little further reluctance, he made it up into a small space as he could, and fairly swallowed it, to the great amusement of the younger ladies, and the great alarm of the elder one, who thought to be sure that choke he must.

"Now," said Claude, "you may pursue your journey. The storm is over, and I no longer require the shelter of the vehicle. But beware how you again trifle with my name, for I may not be always in the humour to make a jest of it, as I have done to-day. Ladies, for any alarm that I may have given you, I beg you ten thousand pardons."

"Oh, we are not at all alarmed," said one.

"Oh, dear no," cried the other.

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so," added Claude, "and now suffer me to bid you good day, and to wish you a pleasant journey."

As he went down the waggon, he purposely trod upon the cowardly passenger, who had bidden himself in the straw, and a howl of pain succeeded.

"I was not aware that any curs were in the waggon," remarked Claude, and then after a hearty kick he left the fellow, and sprung into the road, where Sue was with some degree of impatience, awaiting the arrival of her master, and in her way testified her joy at seeing him.

The value Claude set upon his steed was so great, that pleasure always beamed from his face, when after a brief period of absence, he patted the neck of the beautiful animal.

"My Sue," he said, "we must be away to more stirring adventures, we are not doing the kind of business which will suit us. Come, my noble creature, let us to the road once more.

Claude was about to mount, when he suddenly recollected that he had expressed an intention of seeing who was really the occupant of the one horse-carriage that had been under the escort of the two persons so signally defeated by him in the waggon, and yet he hesitated a moment, for he dreaded lest he might be haunted by some pale spectral looking face, devoid of speculation. It was but the impulse of a moment and he might have been off, but his feelings rur the other way, and he strode to the door of the vehicle.

The boy who drove the carriage, hearing or seeing that something was amiss, was crouching down in an attitude of fear on the driver's seat, the blinds were closely drawn of the vehicle, and the handle of the door seemed to be secured in some way, so that Claude was forced to use force to get it open.

When he did so, the bright light of day shone into the carriage, and there he saw a female form apparently prostrated by grief, for the face was hidden by the hands, and deep sobs burst from the labouring breast.

"Fear nothing," cried Claude, "if you have been persecuted, I am not one of your persecutors."

At this sound of his voice there came a shriek from the lips of the unknown, the hands were withdrawn from before one of the sweetest faces the world ever gazed upon.

It was Cicely Brereton.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ADVENTURES IN A RUIN.—THE HUNT FOR A HIGHWAYMAN.

THIS most sudden and unexpected appearance of Cicely came upon Claude with all the stunning effect of an apparition. Full as were his thoughts now continually of her, he would have as soon expected to see again in life his own father, as at such a time and at such a place, to look upon the face of her who was his best beloved.

Joy, surprise, aye even fear, for at one moment he thought that he must be going mad, and nothing but a deranged fancy could have raised up such an apparition, struggled for mastery in his countenance.

But if surprise during this species of mental excitement were visible upon the countenance of Claude, how acutely were those feelings reflected in the face of Cicely. She too looked for a few moments like one newly awakened from a dream, but yet she was the first to break the spell of silence, which had fallen upon them both.

"Save me—save me, Claude Duval. Save me and protect me," she cried. "Indeed I am not mad."

"Protect you," he shouted, "aye, with my life; tell me who has dared to place you in this position."

"I know not. Except that our cousin Tom Brereton has something to do with it. Save me I implore you, do not let them drag me to a mad-house. As the thought is too—too horrible."

"Be at peace, be at peace Cicely, there is no danger. I am here to protect you."

"But you know not your foes—they are armed with what they call authority to drag me to a civil death. Oh, if you would save me, take me to some place of safety."

Claude Duval knew sufficient of the world to be quite aware that the most frightful and notorious iniquities were enacted under the mask of authorities, and in conformity to the precepts of the law, and although he felt that while Cicely was dependent upon him for protection, he was actuated by a thousand haunts, still he felt that all he could do was to die in her cause, and as to live in it, was a far more blessed condition, he determined upon hastening from the spot and seeking an asylum, where at least he might have the dear felicity of talking to her alone, and perhaps even in those moments of dread and danger, telling her how truly he loved her.

He passed from the vehicle in the direction of the waggon, and then he saw that the two persons, over whom he had obtained so recent and signal a victory,



had clambered up to a steep bank upon the side of the road, and were waving their hats, as though they saw some assistance near at hand.

There was not a moment to be lost, Claude shut the door of the vehicle, and secured it as well as he was able under spur of the moment, and then springing upon the coach-box he took the boy by the collar, and placed him in the road as gently as was consistent with rapidity. Again then reaching terra firma, he sprang upon the back of his own horse, and with his right hand grasping the bridle of the animal that drew the chaise, he went off at a quick pace, forcing it to a speed, which in truth it was seldom in the habit of exerting.

This was a state of things however, which could not last, for not only was it extremely inconvenient both to Sue and to Claude, to be thus yoked, as it were to the animal in the chaise, but it was quite evident the latter could not keep up anything like speed which was failing each moment.

Claude paused, and raising himself in his stirrups took a long view around him. A pang, perhaps the first he had ever felt shot across his heart, as he saw in the distance about a dozen horsemen, headed, he felt convinced, by the two persons he had already so signally discomfited, making after him at a rapid pace.

The chance would have been a short one under its present circumstances, but Claude was both fertile in devising expedients, and rapid in carrying out the suggestions of his ingenious fancy.

"For once my Sue, you must carry double, and you will feel but little apprehension from the light and sylph-like form of her whom you must take in addition to your usual load."

Once again he sought the carriage door, and having opened it, he said in tones of emotion.

"Miss Breton there are many pursuing us, and I am but one. I could die in your defence, but then you would be without an arm to protect you. I think you would rather fly with me to a place of safety, than await the issue of so desperate a conflict."

"Oh, yes—yes!" cried Cicely, "a thousand times over."

For the first time Claude Duval clasped that lovely form to his heart, and even at the moment he could not help asking himself, what he had done to deserve so much happiness—placing her then as gently and tenderly as a mother would her babe, upon his steed, he sprang up behind her, echoing the words of the old romance, he cried in tones of joyous exultation—

"Away, away my love, they'll have fleet steeds who follow."

For a moment Sue gave a curvetting bound, Claude touched the generous creature lightly on the neck, its ears were thrown back, its nostrils expanded, and off it flew with its double burden like the wind.

Fright no doubt, induced poor Cicely to cling closer to Claude Duval, then she otherwise would have done, but he would not have exchanged the joy of that embrace for kingdoms.

At the rate they were proceeding, anything in the shape of conversation was quite out of the question, and yet Claude could not help telling himself, how strange a thing it was that he should be in his present situation, and how oddly fate had made him the defender of her, for whom he would gladly—oh, most gladly, have sacrificed his existence.

There were moments too, in which he could not help asking himself, if it was real, and anything else than some vision of his slumbers, but then again when he felt that she was really with him, his heart bounded with new born exultation, and for once Claude Duval was really happy.

"Hark, hark!" cried Cicely, after a time. "Oh, hark, they come. They come!"

"Fear nothing. Are you not with me?"

"Yes. But you do not know the horrors to which they would drag me. Oh, save me, save me."

"You cut me to the heart, Cicely. Do you think it possible that I could desert you?"

"No, no, and yet—and yet——"

"Yet what?"

"Your enemies are so numerous. Oh, I have much to tell you—very much. You will not believe that I am mad."

"Never, never!"

The clatter of the horses feet of those who were pursuing them now came most distinctly upon their ears, and Claude urged the willing steed he rode to renewed exertion. It was probably fancy, or possibly the fact that Sue was not accustomed to carry double, but Claude certainly thought that he had never found her lag as she now did to his perceptions, and yet the speed she really made, burthened as she was, amounted to something prodigious. It was the imagination of Claude which outstripped her.

"Are we distancing them?" whispered Cicely.

"Yes, yes. You see yon cluster of trees?"

"Yes. It seems a little forest."

"To the eye it is. If we reach them I think I can procure you more safety, than in this headlong flight."

"Those are happy words."

There was a cross road now close to them, and as evil fortune would have it, there issued from the cross road, a man on horseback. Claude saw him, and from the moment that he did so, there was a something about the fellow's countenance which told him that he saw an enemy. A dull, brutalised look was about the stranger's face until he heard the shouts of Claude's pursuers, and then he became more animated, as he cried,—

"Oh, so you are running away, are you?"

"Out of my path," cried Claude.

"Indeed, you don't mean it?"

"By heaven you know not your own danger! Clear the way."

"Not till I have stopped you. There's a reward, perhaps, and I have no sort of objection to a good morning's work. Come on."

Every inch of ground was of importance to Claude, and yet rather than chance an actual collision with the stranger, he swerved from the high road to endeavour to pass him, but that was a manner that the man would not permit of, for drawing a large horse pistol from his saddle he presented it, crying,

"I am never without one of my little bull dogs. Come, resistance is as useless as it is foolish. Stop, I command you."

"You will have it then," said Claude.

"Have what?"

"That!"

As he spoke, Claude drew from his breast the small pistol he always kept there for a last extremity, and upon which he knew he could well rely, and fired at the stranger. Almost at the same moment, the harsh report of the large horse pistol came upon their ears, and Claude felt the ball whistle past his ears. There was a cry though from a human voice at the instant, and when Cicely opened her eyes again, for she had momentarily closed them in terror, she saw that the saddle of the stranger's horse was empty.

"Such is the reward of folly," said Claude.

"What has happened—what has happened?"

"Nothing—nothing, but what was absolutely necessary," said Claude. "I regret such things, but they must be, and now my Sue to your work again."

Once more the gallant animal that had carried Claude through so many dangers, started on in its headlong career. The little wood he had alluded to was still about a mile distant, and his great object was to reach it, and plunge into its recesses.

Short, however, as was the time which had elapsed during the encounter with the imprudent stranger, it had yet sufficed to enable the pursuers of Claude, to gain considerably upon him, and the consequence was, that they now with no doubt the hope of intimidating him, set up shouts of triumph as though their



victory over him was sure. These shouts alarmed Cicely, who urged him still to increase his speed. He endeavoured to re-assure her, when she suddenly exclaimed:—

"Who are those men in scarlet? Why should we be hunted?"

"Hunted!"

"Yes—yes. There are men in red coats, and hark!—what means that cry?"

"Yoicks! yoicks! tantivy!" cried a loud, clear voice, and in an instant Claude's path was crossed by other hunters, who, seeing that he was pursued, endeavoured to stop him. He drew rein, presented a pair of pistols, and said,—

"Now, gentlemen; who among you will give up their lives for the satisfaction

of feeling that the survivors have a chance of stopping me upon the king's highway."

"Oh, come on—come on," said a portly personage.

"Thertainly," said a young gentleman, with a lisp. "I don't come out to be shot, not I."

They one and all turned their horses' heads on one side, and left a free passage for Claude, who as he passed them, said,—

"Gentleman, I thank you, and I think you will none of you repent this act of courtesy towards one who, whatever may be his errors is right for once. Good day, gentlemen."

Cicely was as much astonished at this, as the small-brained gentleman who could find nothing better to do than to scamper after a hare, and before those who had called upon the gentlemen who had been coming to stop the fugitives, Sue was, with her master and Cicely, fairly beneath the umbrageous trees.

"Cheer up, cheer up," cried Claude, "the worst of our danger is past."

"All past?"

"All that need give you any disquietude."

"But what are we to do here?—for how long can such a place as this afford us any shelter? Oh, what will become of us?—into what danger have I led you, who have made such efforts for me, I ought not—indeed I feel I ought not in this manner to have thrown myself upon your hands."

"Fear nothing."

"It is not fear, but regret that I feel."

"Ah, do not regret that you have made me so happy."

"Happy?"

"Yes, most happy in the dear joy of being able to say to you that I have saved you from your enemies, although who they are, who can be the enemies of such as you are, Miss Brereton, I cannot devise.

"I will tell you all."

"Not yet—not yet. Let me first place you in absolute safety before you commence your narration."

"But how can you do so?"

"Hush—hush. We may have listeners."

Claude dismounted, and led the horse by the bridle for a considerable distance, until suddenly they arrived before an ancient residence, that at any other time would have much interested Cicely to look at.

"We are safe—we are safe," cried Claude. "Do not weep, Cicely, I—I should say Miss Brereton."

"Call me what you will," she replied, "so that you complete it with an assurance of my safety."

"I can so complete it," said Claude, "and now let me ask you, can you, and will you entirely trust me?"

"With all my heart."

A glow of pleasure and of pride came over the countenance of Claude, then it was seconded by a look of unutterable woe, as he thought what a chasm his own acts had created between him and Cicely. There was no time, however, just then, for regretful thoughts. Actions were required, and he assisted Cicely to dismount from the horse, at the garden gate of the old mansion, close to which they were.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE RUINED VILLA.—A SEIGE AND A DEFENCE.

THERE was a moment's pause after dismounting, and an uneasy feeling crept over Claude as he held Sue by the bridle—a shade of anxiety passed across his brow as he looked at the beautiful animal, for the thought came uppermost in his mind that his own and Cicely's safety was scarcely more necessary than that of his mare.

"Without you, my Sue," he said, "we should be prisoners here, and with but a poor chance of getting away, and though I have hidden you safely ere now, yet the numbers in chase of us are so great, and the certainty of our whereabouts so great among them, that the search will be more rigid and lasting."

"Shall we be safe here, Claude," inquired Cicely anxiously, as she saw there was a moment's hesitation in his manner. "Can we not fly further?"

"Scarcely, with a chance of getting off clear, Cicely—but my thought was for my horse, because she is necessary to our safety; but I am no longer doubtful, there is no time for that, I will not leave you here for a moment, lest my retreat be cut off to you by any accident."

"No, no," said Cicely, "I will not leave you, Claude. I shall be safer with you than by remaining here even for you."

Claude's only answer was a gentle pressure of his hand upon the waist, around which his arm yet lingered, and they moved away, Cicely supported partially by Claude with one arm, and with the other hand he led Sue.

Instead of entering the old mansion by the main entrance, Claude Duval led the way across what had once been pleasure walks and flower beds, but bed and walks were now alike undistinguishable. No sign remained of the once level gravel, and trim and neatly kept borders, or the smoothly raked beds, where once choice flowers grew and beautified the spot with their fragrance and their colours. Rank vegetation grew and overspread all around, and it was with some difficulty they could force their way through the thick and entangled mass.

Here and there they would indeed feel a hard soil underneath, and that told them they trod on the gravel walks, and again Sue's hoofs would sink in the soft mould, which informed them they were crossing what had once been flower beds, and thus they passed over more than an acre of ground.

How great was the change, and were those to see it as it was at that moment, and as it had been in the days of all its palmy glory, when youth and beauty have graced those walls—when music and feasting added to the gaiety of that place, which had of itself been extremely beautiful, and had all those charms to set it off that nature and art could bestow—could any one have seen the two conditions, then indeed, such could have known and understood the contrast, but the imagination is too faint and feeble to pourtray the contrast.

"Great changes there have been here," muttered Claude "yet sunk as the old mansion is in its estate, it will afford us shelter, and I hope to make it good against those who follow."

Claude came to a wild and desolate spot, it was difficult to tell what it had been used for—but there were many aged willows growing around, and there was a large pool of stagnant water, covered by that species of aquatic herbage called, by some the "green mantle of the pools."

"This has no doubt been at some time a fish pond and fountain—the fountain has long ceased to play, and the water become stagnant and unwholesome, and I have seen dead animals floating upon it—it is a lone spot, but here is a place where I can place Sue with safety."

"In that water," inquired Cicely, looking up in amazement.

"No, indeed, Cicely, but there is some brushwood by that water, it seems as

if it were all surrounded there by water, that they in fact grow out of water ; I must wade to get to them knee deep, but no matter for that, there is a dry spot there, like a cave or chamber, which I suppose has been used in connection with the fountain there is room enough there for Sue. You had better remain here, Miss Brereton for a short time. You will be safe here, but to reach the place of safety for Sue, we must pass through the water."

"Do not be long, Claude," said Cicely, "do not leave me for long, for I am fearful of being alone."

"But a moment," said Claude, who led Sue through the stagnant water, to a spot which rose again, and then entered an unseen excavation in the bank, the entrance of which was quite grown over by rank weeds and creepers, and thus hid the entrance so completely, that none could detect the spot by the eye, and had it been detected there would have been no known entrance, save through the waters of the pond.

The excavation did not appear larger than was necessary to admit the body of the mare, and then having secured her by the bridle, so that she should not push her head out from among the green herbage and thus betray herself. Claude Duval sprang back to the bank, and to the side of Cicely Brereton.

"Now Cicely," he said, "we have no time to lose. I think I can hear their voices among the trees, but yet they are at some distance from us, the wind brings the sound to us, and makes them seem nearer than they are."

Then half supporting the fragile form of Cicely Brereton, he hurried her from the spot across some other flower beds, or rather what had once been such, and then entering at an ornamental shrubbery, he approached the back part of the old villa.

The building was evidently in ruins, and yet there was much in its appearance that denoted solidity and strength, and if it were possible to secure the entrances, it would be possible to hold out successfully against a very formidable force.

Approaching the villa by a terrace, he reached one of the large windows which opened upon it—being glazed—but now every vestige of glass was gone ; scarcely, indeed, did any memento of the glazier's art remain ; through one of these openings he assisted Cicely to enter, and then Claude followed, still giving her the support of his arm.

"Will they not enter by the same means, Claude ?" she inquired, pointing to the open window or door.

"Yes, Cicely—they will. There are shutters, but they are of no use, the hinges have long since become useless, the weather has rusted them, and they have been broken for a long while, but the entrance will be of no use to those who follow—the doors of the room remain yet good."

Claude Duval now left the room he had entered, and shutting the doors after him, he by means of much exertion contrived to turn the massive but rusty lock, and then the door was secure.

"There," he muttered, "that door fits too well, too close, and is too strong, to be easily forced ; no human strength will, I think, accomplish the feat, though if aided by the contrivances of man, it might be done, but they are unprepared for such a thing ; if they get in, it will be from some more assailable point."

Turning away, he entered a small and more secure apartment, there was a seat—an old chair—one that had probably been used in the hall, or garden, for it was a rough piece of workmanship and yet strong.

"There Cicely," he said, "you had better sit there for awhile, you must need rest, and while you remain here, I will go and secure all the approaches that can be secured, against the admission of our enemies ; then I will return to you, and while I live you shall not be torn away from me.

There was a look so full of gratitude and deep confidence in him, that Claude for the moment forgot his purpose to look into the beaming eyes of Cicely—then remembering himself—he hastened away to execute the necessary, but somewhat difficult task, of making good all places of ingress against the enemy without, who would now, he felt convinced, soon be upon them.

"They shall neither take me, or harm her, while I live," he muttered, "to die at such a moment, and in defence of one so beautiful and so injured would be an act that I might well covet, and one I will not shrink from."

There was an air of firm, but melancholy determination about Claude Duval, that bespoke his sense of the danger, and his willingness to meet it, and at the same time sadness sat upon his heart when he recollected that Cicely must share it, and if he fell what would be the result to her.

"My life," he said to himself, "will be forfeited if I fall, or if I am taken, but her's will be too horrible to think of, to be immured in a madhouse for life,—horrible, horrible! My life is sought by every man who knows my name, but her's only by those who call themselves her friends. And if I succeed, I save Cicely; let every other thought be banished—my reward must be in my own approving mind, 'tis hard—but there is a gulf between us—I will not think of it."

Claude Duval now strode to the front door—this was fast and secure against all attempts to force it—at least all such as could be made by the mere bodily strength of those who were coming against it, then he examined the other and less secure doors, and one by one made them as fast as the means at hand enabled him to do.

Turning aside from the hall, he went to the more indefensible portions of the building; that part of the building which had been allotted to the offices and for the domestics were not built so solidly, and much of the wood-work had completely rotted away, and one small door was entirely gone.

"It is an easy entry," he muttered to himself, "but it must be secured, for if they find it, and find it out they are sure to, for there will not be a hole that is not found out when they find they have been barricaded out of the place, and I must have as few places that I am called upon to defend as possible, for being but one, I can scarce defend more than one or two places at one and the same time. Ah! this will do."

This exclamation referred to a large butt that stood in the place, as if it had been once the receptacle for water, but now it was empty, and had long been so, this, he, by some exertion rolled to the empty doorway, and then raising it up, he propped it up, so as to fill up the aperture.

"That," he said, as he looked at it, "would keep them out, if it were heavy enough to resist their efforts, but wanting that, I must try and add something to it."

After a short search about, he found some heavy stones, which he threw into the butt, and bricks—besides piling some old lumber across, and placing it so as to strengthen the position.

Claude was now beneath the surface of the earth, and his practised ear at once told him that the enemy was not far off, he could hear the tread of men and horses at a distance, he could feel the earth move, as if it conveyed the motion by waves. He sprang up.

"I must to Cicely," he said. "I must to Cicely; to live with or die for her is my only hope, and my full determination. Heaven grant I escape this bout, more on her account than my own; but for her my situation would not be so desperate, ad if they press me, their position is as desperate as mine."

He left the place, and sought Cicely, whom he found where he had left her, seated in the dark room.

"Hark! she said, listening. Do you hear nothing, Claude—do you hear no sound as of some one approaching us?"

"Yes, Cicely, yes I do, but do not be alarmed—I have secured the old villa as well as I am able, it will resist some time at least of itself, and it will be my part to assist in making it more difficult of approach."

"Where will you stay, Claude," said Cicely, with a forced calmness, and trying to listen to catch every sound.

"Dear Cicely," said Claude, taking her hand, "I will not tell you falsely that there is no danger, there is, but we may rob it of some of its terrors, and even render it less imminent by courage, and by throwing off the fear that will sometimes cling to us. I will protect you while I have life."

"I know it, Claude, but oh, what a fearful risk have I brought upon you—without me you would not have been sought after thus."

"Say nothing of it," said Claude, and a cloud of sadness passed over his brow, "say nothing of that, danger is welcome to Claude Duval, so that he can save Cicely Brereton; it will be a white page in my life; but let us leave this place, the rooms above afford us a greater security, because if they get in they must come up the stairs, and that gives me an advantage."

They now ascended the stairs carefully, for strong as they were, or had been originally, they had in places become decayed, and it was not upon every spot that appeared to be secure that they dared to place their feet with perfect confidence and security, for some places crumbled beneath them.

"There will be more inaccessible places than this," remarked Claude, as he looked down the flight of stairs that led directly to the hall, "and even here, where we have come up in safety, they rushing up headlong many together, will so damage the place as to endanger their own safety."

"They will get in then, Claude?" said Cicely, enquiringly.

"I hope not, but yet it is possible, but it must all depend upon their efforts and ardour, they are strong in numbers, and yet if they have not much courage, one man may cause more mischief than they would like to encounter—but hark! I think I hear them. I will see what means of observation I can find above here. This will be a safe place for you to remain in," said Claude, as he pointed to the stairs that ran upward, "there you would not be seen and reached, unless any one entered the house, and ascended."

Cicely acquiesced in silence, and while Claude entered the various rooms on the floor, to see what positions he could take for defending the various entrances below, she sat upon one of the stairs, endeavouring to assume as much calmness as her strength enabled her.

Claude Duval saw at a glance that there were ample means for defending the place, had there been enough of men inside to put one or two in each room, but that while he defended one place, another might be assailed, therefore, the chances were much against his prospect of defence.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### THE INVESTURE OF THE OLD VILLA BY THE PURSUERS.

THE pursuers when they came to the wood, paused for a moment, not because they doubted the way which the fugitives had gone, or the propriety of following them, but it was a question whether it would not be a better plan to spread round the place, and thus beat about as they would for game.

"Go after them," said a stout-looking countryman on a grey hack, "go after him, and don't lose time, he's got a devil of a horse that'll go anywhere, and if you give him a minute's time the game's up."

"He's a sly old fox," said another, "and if you go straight after him in cover, he'll double and get behind you."

"He can't do that well, the scent's too warm. I'm for going right in at un at once," said another.

"Why not surround the place?" said a third. "Surround it by all means, and then we all meet in the middle."

"And leave Claude Duval only one man to meet him at a place?" said one of the officers, "no—no, that would never do, you might as well think of his being coaxed into a trap—no—no we must go to him in a body; he's only a man, I know,



but he's got the devil's luck, and that makes a great difference, you know; spread open if you will, but keep in each other's view, if you would be safe."

This proposal was apparently relished by most of the individuals present, who, though valorous enough, and even quite willing to meet anybody on earth who wore two legs, and yet somehow, save one or two countrymen, they all kept close together and did not spread themselves too much apart.

"Dang Claude Duval," said a young farmer, "there be as good men as he, I'll warrant, though he may have killed his man. I've got a pistol, too, and if he fire first, or has a better eye than I have—why he'll not be taken by Sam Hodges, that's all."

"Push on, and don't spend time and breath to no purpose," shouted one of the officers, who were present, "push on, I say, the more time they have the harder it will be to unkennel them."

"They will make for the old villa," shouted one, "and try to make a stand there—follow me, we shall soon be there. See, here are the footmarks of his mare."

They now all pushed forward, following pretty closely the first who led the way, and this was the more necessary when they got in, for the wood was close and tangled, and there was no room to ride about, for the horse and rider could not find room in which to do so.

There was less need either for their doing so, since there was plain and evident traces of Claude's progress through the wood—the open path was one sign, and the footmarks were another, for the soil had been so soddened by the rain that the marks were many and distinct, besides this, there was the sure fore-knowledge that they possessed, that he would make for the old deserted villa, and there make a stand.

The two horsemen who had the charge of Cicely were incessant in their endeavours to urge their companions onwards. They were too fearful themselves that if they separated from the main body, they might again meet Claude, and then what might happen made either shake in his saddle, so that there was great danger of a fall.

They passed through a great portion of the wood, until they came to the grounds which environed the villa, and as the trees were not quite so close and thick, they paused a few moments to allow their whole body to come up, and then hold a council of war.

"Now," said one of the officers who had before spoken, "now we are altogether, let us determine upon our course of action. The man we have to deal with, is a daring and determined fellow, and whoever takes him will be no cur, I can promise; but we must support one another."

"Yes, yes, that is understood."

"Then let us secure our nags here, in the event of our wanting them in a hurry; if we take them closer to the house, why we may endanger their safety, at a time too when some one may most require them. Secure the nags, and then we will walk up to the house—no doubt they are there, and we shall have to search the place."

"No doubt he's there," said one of the pursuers. "I know the place, I have been here before, not lately, but years ago, and I know then I could have made it good against a regiment of soldiers."

"Aye, but the bats can fly in and out now; but we shall soon know now, if he be there or no by the place being secured against us. That will be a good sign, lads. Come, come, let's waste no more time, push on after me, and then remember the reward."

There was some necessity for reminding them of that, as the near approach of hostilities seemed to have quelled the spirits of some of those who were hasty and hot at the entrance of the wood, and yet being all in a body, there was no great want of courage or determination, but the tone was subdued, as they approached the old villa to reconnoitre.

"It's been a fine old place," said one of the horsemen.

"Aye, quite a palace."

"And would be one now, if it were in good order, only they would have to make a mile or two of road to get to it."

They now walked up to the door—the main entrance; the steps were covered with herbage and green moss, which had accumulated and given food and root-room to much vegetation. They surveyed the door, and then tried it, but it resisted their efforts.

"It is useless to try there, that door is sound and strong."

"We may as well wake them at all events," said one or two who had come up, and they began beating the door with their heavy riding whips, and kicking it with their boots.

"We shall not get in here," said one of the officers; "there are other places not so strong behind. Come round this way."

"We had better have one or two on this side, lest he attempt an escape unseen," said another.

"Yes, let two of you stay here, while we go round the angle—one at each corner, so that you can assist each other, and see yet down the sides of the house—give tongue, lads, if you see a mouse stirring."

"Aye, aye; keep a look out at the windows, Bill," said another. I expect every moment to see the muzzle of a pistol popping out somewhere or other, taking a cool aim."

Thus they left two men while the main body turned the sides of the building in search of some more accessible place in the old villa, where they hoped to get in at. They saw, however, that every place had been secured—not a loophole but what had been barricaded.

"He is here, lads, of that there can be no doubt, none at all. The old ruins were never left thus."

"No, no. I have been in here before to day, and I know the place was open; any one who chose might enter it."

"Hurrah! hurrah! then we have earthed the fox at last. Now, my boys, we have only to get in, and then you know the value of Claude Duval's head."

"Aye, we have only to get in—aye, lad, something more than that either. We have to get in first truly, and then we have to take the lion, no easy task, and yet we can do it, or I would not make one in the attempt. We can run him down, and walk over him if we keep together."

"One and all lads," said the officer.

"But where are we to get in," enquired one of the horsemen who had been so defeated by Claude Duval. "I see no opening unless you climb up to some of those windows."

"No, no, that will be the last place to attempt; but see, here are some windows on this terrace that appear most likely to offer us the means of entrance."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE FORCED ENTRY INTO THE OLD VILLA AND ITS CONSEQUENCE

A shout announced that they had found a means of entering the old villa—all rushed to the spot, where it was seen to be the same rooms that Claude Duval himself and Cicely had entered, and had left them in the same condition as he found them, because there was no means of securing large glass doors and windows that opened from the floor, and the shutters of which were decayed, and quite unmanageable for the purpose of defence.

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the foremost. "He must have forgotten this, or at

all events he could not secure it. "Push on, lads, no hanging back now the time's come for action ; we shall soon be at it."

The men soon gained access to what had once been the banquetting hall : they made a rush to the door, but it obstinately resisted their efforts to stir it. When they found themselves thwarted one of their number proposed to smoke them out, but it was objected to, everything being so damp from the previous rains. Claude stood on the stairs, listening to this converse and to any



sounds that might indicate their entrance. There was a sound of heavy blows against the wall and the door, and at each blow the place shook violently. They continued this battery, and Claude continued to watch its effects with great anxiety. "It will never stand that long," he thought, "and if something be not done to prevent them forcing it, they will soon be here in a body ; but there is no place where I can overlook these fellows ; if there were they would not continue that game so uninterruptedly."

Claude had scarcely formed this reflection, before the door split, and its pieces gave way.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted the men, "now for Duval's head! now for a prize! hurrah for a highwayman hunt."

Claude Duval bit his lip, and a shade of paleness came across his brow as he heard the cries of the mob of men who so savagely thirsted for his blood.

"If I have broken the laws," he muttered, "I have hurt no one of these meddling fools, whose appetite for bloodshed must be satiated amongst themselves, for while I have arms and life, they shall not touch me, much less shall they lay their unhallowed hands upon Cicely Brereton."

One man was about to step over the broken fragments, and rush along the passage that divided him from the main staircase, on which stood Claude Duval, whose voice suddenly arrested him.

"Hold—hold," he cried.

The man paused in the midst of a step he was about to take, indeed his leg was lifted, and he stood in that posture for a moment or two, as if enchanted.

"Hold!" again cried Claude, "any man who attempts to pass into the house is a corpse, keep back for your lives. I never miss my aim."

There was a dead silence for near a minute, and then a rush was made by those behind, who were not likely to be touched by Claude's bullet upon the unhappy wight in front, who, had he the desire to recede, would not have been permitted, for his rear supporters thrust him forward, shouting,—

"On, on, 'tis Claude Duval. On—on—capture him—don't let him escape. hurrah! hurrah for the reward!"

The man in front thus urged on, found himself in the passage, and the next moment the sharp report of the pistol was heard, and the foremost man staggered, groaned and fell all huddled up in a heap, while some kept back, and some rolled over him.

"Fire for fire," exclaimed one of the officers, who levelled his pistol at Claude, and fired, but Claude seeing so many men in the passage, knew that he exposed himself needlessly as a mark to all, for all no doubt carried fire arms—it was usual to do so—therefore, he now hastened to the side of Cicely, who would require all his care.

There was a momentary pause among those below, and it seemed that Claude's retreat was only effected in good time, for more than one pistol had been drawn, and no doubt they would all have been discharged upon him, had he remained.

"Poor fellow," said one of the besiegers, as he assisted to bear the fallen man away, "his time is gone—he's quite dead."

"Is he dead," enquired one of the two horsemen, who had been the cause of Claude's pursuit, and shuddered and shook from head to foot.

"Yes, quite dead, but go on up stairs, and help to take Claude Duval, for he will not be taken without a little blood being spilt; go up, and take your share of it."

This advice did not seem to be agreeable, nevertheless the individual addressed did go forward, but it was after many others had gone up and screened him. The stairs we have said were old and rotting; though many of the main beams were good and secure, and made of oak, yet the water occasionally steaming through the house, and laying there, had rotted much; still they continued to go forward, not without some accidents of rather a serious nature—from slips, and holes being forced through, and a man's body disappearing up to his waist, while his legs appeared below the flooring, and but for being quickly extricated, he would have disappeared altogether, at the cost of his bones.

"Ah! Claude, Claude, save me," said Cicely, in a low, trembling tone, as she almost sunk in his arms. "They come for me! they come for me!"

"Hush! Cicely—hush! and do not be alarmed; be courageous, and all may yet be well—we have many chances, prudence and caution may yet save us

through all; but I ask you to keep up your courage, Cicely, and do not despair, or feel terrified at what you hear or see."

"I will trust all to you, Claude, I do trust in you. Do but save me from these men who would bear me away to a living death. I will but see and hear you, Claude."

As Cicely spoke she placed her hands upon his shoulder, and looked so imploringly, and yet so full of confidence upon him, and yet seemed to dread the coming conflict, in which she feared so much for Claude as well as for herself; she hardly knew how to express her feelings to him, but he saw the tears course down her cheeks, and saw her generous emotion, and the endeavour to suppress it—and in a moment of ecstasy, he pressed her to his bosom, saying,—

"Dear Cicely, do not doubt, do not fear. I will run no unnecessary danger; my life is dear to me, because without it, I know what a sad fate awaits you—be confident, and all may yet I hope be well."

Cicely turned her lips nearer Claude, as if she were about to say something in reply, when urged by the opportunity, and the feeling of the moment, Claude's lips met those of Cicely. She shrank not, the terror of the moment, and her confidence in Claude was so great that she resisted not, but was passive, and her clear blue eyes looked eloquently into his.

A thrill of pleasure that Claude had never before experienced, shot through his veins, and he felt for the moment giddy with excitement, but was quickly recalled to the full sense of his situation by the shouts, and the sounds that kept approaching him nearer and nearer.

"We must fly this place, Cicely; when we pass across the head of the landing, hasten up without me—I will keep them back until you are safe, and I will rejoin you."

As he spoke, he passed out of the room in which he had been listening to the sounds of the besiegers below, but he had scarcely done so before he felt a hand grasp him by the throat, and a pistol thrust into his face.

"Surrender, Claude Duval, surrender—you are my prisoner. I have taken you, and you die if you resist."

"Take that, then," said Claude to this individual, who declared he had taken him, and at the same time he dealt the man such a blow on his head with the butt of his pistol, that the adventurous man relaxed his hold, dropped his weapon, and fell backwards down the stairs, overthrowing two more who were hastening up to his assistance, and this impeded all who were behind.

Claude Duval then hastened up a flight of stairs higher, but these were very precarious, and but for his rapid steps he must have fallen through the crumbling boards; once upon this landing, he paused, and after casting a glance below, he examined some of the rooms, and then appearing satisfied, he placed Cicely in one, saying as he did so,—

"Do you remain here, dear Cicely; I will not leave you, I shall be but on the landing, and when they have got so far, I shall come to you."

"I will not leave," she murmured. "I will share the danger—you shall not expose yourself to this peril for me, and yet I shrink from it—no, I will watch with you."

"Nay, you can but increase the danger; Cicely, by myself, I can take care of myself, without other thoughts distracting me; but hark! I must back to the stairs, I hear them coming."

Claude rushed back to the landing, and found that the enemy had got up the stairs, and were within a short distance of the top, and he was about levelling his pistol at them, when from their too great numbers the place gave way, and several were precipitated down below, causing much confusion and dismay among them, so much so, that a short cessation of hostilities took place, and the officers who were present, spoke out—

"Come, my lads, do not hang back, or be daunted, by one man, encumbered with a woman; we must have him, and I call upon you all in the king's name to assist me to apprehend him, alive or dead. You all know the reward you will

get, and in addition, you will rid the roads of a scourge, and perhaps save yourselves from some future attack."

"But we can't get at him," said one.

"Oh, yes," replied the officer, "where there's a will there's a way. We must go up these stairs one at a time."

"One at a time, and he will pick us off," said another.

"No," replied the officer, "that must not be. While you are making your way we must be on the watch, ready to pick him off if he appear. One party to go forward, and another to fire if he shows his face, that at all events, will ensure our getting close to him, and he can but fire once before we rush upon him, and he is then our own."

This seemed so feasible, that it was agreed upon all hands to adopt it, and having seen blood flow, they were warmed to their work, and felt determined not to be baffled by one man; the desire of vengeance was now added to avarice, and they at once prepared to follow out the plan devised by the Bow-street runner.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### BATAL ENCOUNTER IN THE OLD VILLA, AND NARROW ESCAPE OF CLAUDE FROM BEING SEIZED AND SHOT—THE VAULTS.

CLAUDE DUVAL, who had stood upon the stairs, and overheard the whole of the dialogue, felt convinced that now was to come his greatest danger. It was not that he shrunk from any conflict, however unequal, for his boldness and good fortune had been proverbial, and they even yet gave him confidence; but if he fell he felt how forlorn was the situation of poor Cicely; his troubles would be ended by his death, but that was not the case with Cicely, whose terrors would but date their recommencement at his fall.

"I have faced worse and more imminent risks," he thought, "and I have escaped, and why, now I have a good cause to back me, should I fail? but they shall pay a dear price for me, ere they say they have taken Claude Duval, or before they shall convey Cicely Brereton to a madhouse."

The thoughts of the last peice of barbarity nerved his arm, and leaning over the rails, he perceived his enemies were coming on slowly and cautiously one after the other, and others were waiting pistol in hand to shoot him, and thus they progressed towards him. Stealthily he stole upon them, and exerting great strength, he overthrew a door which went over with a noise little less than thunder, and completely stayed the onward motion of those below, for a loud groan proclaimed that there was much mischief done.

Indeed, several men had been knocked down, and one nearly crushed to death, but ere Claude had got back to the door of the room which he had left Cicely in, a bullet from one of the party below whizzed past him, and the report reached his ears simultaneously.

"After him—follow him close," shouted the officer. "He will pay dearly for this; some of you behind look to those who are hurt. I will keep a look out for him; my shot did not miss him by much."

The door had not destroyed those who were nearest to Claude, but only some of those who were lower down, among whom were several who received severe contusions, and one man was carried away completely disabled, and thus the party strong as they were, had been weakened by the fall of several of their force, but yet they had gained the next landing, and were now on the same floor with

Claude and Cicely, and a desperate attempt was made to force the door, but without any success in the first instance."

"Fire a bullet through," said one. "You may chance to hit him, or at all events make him keep clear."

This was done, and a small hole in the door soon proved that it had found its way through; but they saw nothing, and began anew to kick at the door, the panels of which soon gave way, and then the remainder of the woodwork, thus weakened, fell in also with a loud crash.

In another moment they were in the room, but the bird was flown. Another door at the opposite end at once explained the reason, and this was soon forced open, and then another room was before them, but the boards had in many places given way, and they could see the room below. It would take some trouble to get across without a fall, but it was possible.

Scarcely, however, had the foremost got three parts over the rafters before a bullet from the pistol of Claude stretched him on them—balancing for some seconds, and then pitched head foremost below.

There was a momentary pause—the dead man fell without motion, and lay like a heavy log upon the floor, and those behind looked upon him, and then at the place where the pistol was discharged from, and then again hesitating. But those behind were too far advanced to retreat, and those behind thrust those in front forward, and thus a rush commenced, and they reached the door, and then a small flight of stairs led upwards into a small room.

"He is a dead man who attempts to follow," said the voice of Claude. "There has been bloodshed enough for one day."

"We have lost too many men, Claude Duval," said the officer who had before spoken. "'Tis my duty to persevere, and I will. Upon your head will rest the blood that has been shed—so surrender."

"When I lose the desire of self-preservation. And as I fight but for life, and shed blood but to preserve my own, and you for the sake of money, why I shall not surrender—so die!"

Again the pistol of Claude was heard, and another man fell; and ere the sound of the discharge could have ceased, two others were fired at Claude, who, however, had just shifted his position, and thus escaped by the narrowest chance.

"Onward! forward!" cried the officer. "He cannot yet have loaded; besides, his ammunition must run short. In the king's name, I charge you all to aid and assist me in capturing a highwayman."

"Yes, master officer," said one of the countrymen; "yes, but do you go first a bit now. We'll help you, but you mustn't expect us to do all the work, and have all the hits to ourselves."

"Are we not forward?" said the officer. "Have I not exchanged shots with him several times?"

"I won't deny you've fired, but we have caught the bullets. However, I hope we shall have most of the pounds. But I'm willing enough to help to get him, if that be possible."

"Possible—aye, more than possible," shouted the officer, as he sprang past the speaker up the stairs into the room above, which was empty, and then across a small room, through two or three more, until he came to another door, which he found open, and displayed a flight of stairs, or rather steps, which had been broken down, and thus all communication from above was cut off.

"He has gone this way; we must be down after him. The distance is easily dropped. Keep a look out while I get down, and if you see anything move, fire at it immediately," said the officer.

In another moment the officer had dropped down on the flooring beneath, without any injury to himself, and he was speedily followed by the others; and again a chase was commenced from room to room, from floor to floor; after Claude Duval, who could be seen occasionally as he strode from place to place,

as he found them indefensible, and so he deemed it too hazardous to remain there.

They were now on the ground floor again, but they had got in quite a different part of the old villa. It was growing dusk now—the sun had set, and darkness was creeping over the scene—for some time had been consumed in making the attack, and following Claude from room to room, stair to stair, and from floor to floor.

“If this will but last another hour,” said Claude, “we may yet succeed in escaping, Cicely. When darkness comes we may, indeed, have a chance of leaving them behind.”

“Oh! Claude, what terrible dangers you have run. When will they cease—when shall we be safe?”

“Speak not of it, Cicely, You are my dearest care. All that man can do shall be done. When they cease to pursue then we shall be safe. I do not hide our danger; but all you need do will be to arm yourself with fortitude and patience, and all yet may end well.”

“Shall we get out into the garden now, Claude?” said Cicely, as she pointed to a window that looked out into the shrubbery.

“No, we cannot; our egress is barred—besides we should be a fair mark and we should be taken—besides we have not time; this way Cicely. Go to the bottom of those stairs, and there stand, for I hear them coming.”

Cicely went down slowly, feeling her way along as well as she could, while Claude levelled his weapon at one of his foes, who fell, making another pause in the pursuit.

“Now,” said Claude, as he pulled and secured the door after himself, “we are safe for a short time, this door they will be unable to burst open suddenly, and then among the many passages here, they will not be able to distinguish the one in which we may shelter ourselves, but Cicely the place is cold and damp, and is indeed such that might well occasion you a shudder.”

“Any where with you Claude, for safety,” said Cicely, “any where, save me from these men, Claude, and my lasting gratitude will be yours.”

“Dear Cicely, do not doubt my will or my endeavours, it must go hard indeed if they tear you from me,” said Claude, “but I fear your strength, Cicely, I fear what you have gone through—the hours of exertion, and of intense fear and anxiety, must render you almost incapable of further exertions.”

“Nay Claude, while we are in danger I feel no fatigue.”

“Bear upon me,” said Claude, “and I will take you over the rough ground, we have got to go over. Ah! they have broken open the door already.”

In another moment, the pursuers were pouring down the steps. Claude looked around him, he saw a door, opened it and drawing in Cicely he closed it, and quietly and quickly bolted it without being seen or heard by the pursuers, who were now in utter darkness.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE NEW FRIEND OF TOM BRERETON, AND HIS ADVICE.—THE CHANGE OF LUNACY.

It becomes absolutely necessary now, in order to the proper understanding of the various, and in some instances complex circumstances surrounding these of our characters in whom we have the greatest interest that we should for a very brief space of time leave Claude and the beautiful Cicely Brereton, while we relate to the reader how it was that Tom, her cousin, with all his folly came to



hit upon the notable scheme to her detriment, which has been so happily frustrated by the gallantry and chivalrous conduct of Claude Duval.

When we last introduced Tom Brereton to the readers of this most veritable narrative, that individual was in anything but a pleasant situation, for he was being carted off to Newgate in the chest, where, by the boldness of Claude, he had been confined.

That such a mode of transit through a great portion of the metropolis was anything but pleasant, may be readily guessed, and after the cart had proceeded some distance, Tom Brereton began to think it was high time to make some effort in order to obtain his release.

Now there may be circumstances under which it is pleasant and advantageous to be mistaken for some great character, but then, again such a mistake may have its advantages, and certainly in this instance to Tom Brereton there was little in the shape of gratification, to be extracted from the fact of his being mistaken for so redoubtable a personage as Claude Duval.

The officers had a full and hearty appreciation of the prowess of the redoubted highwayman, and when they had him, as they thought, in so very secure a position as the great chest afforded, it was not likely that merely for the sake of a personal conflict they should let him out.

Suddenly, however, Tom made what our gallic neighbours would call a demonstration within the chest, and which consisted in making a rather violent effort to escape from it.

At the same time too, he called out as well as he could.

"Murder! murder!"

"He's a making a rumpus," said one of the officers.

"What does he say, Joe," asked another.

"Murder! murder!" again cried Tom.

"Why, don't you hear him, he says he'll murder us if we let him out."

"Does he?"

"Yes. There he goes again. My eye, it's a good thing that the sides of the chest are thick and strong, or else he'd pretty soon be out of it. Whip on the horse, and let us get him to Newgate as soon as we can."

The horse which drew the cart was urged to increased speed, so that Tom Brereton gained nothing by making a disturbance, but a good deal of additional jolting over the stones with which Holborn was paved.

One of the officers, however, was still fearful that he would make good his exit from the box, and for greater security he sat down upon the lid of it.

Now it had so happened that there had been at one time a large nail driven through the lid of the chest, and afterwards extracted, having a small aperture through which Tom Brereton had received air, and a small ray of light, but when the officer sat down, both of these advantages were in a moment extinguished.

This was a state of things that the prisoner by no means approved of, and at once guessing the cause of them, he set about devising in his small ingenuity a remedy for them.

What that remedy was, will best be seen in the result.

"He won't get out now," said the officer, who had taken his seat upon the chest. If anything is more easy to break open than another, it's the door, and I flatter myself I have got that pretty fast now."

"All's right," said another, "only remember that we share the reward among us. Let's have fair play."

"Who want's anything else but fair play?"

"Oh, of course; nobody, I only mentioned it, that's all.

"Well you needn't have mentioned it."

"No offence."

"Yes, there is lots. Aint we gentlemen? I'd sooner have jumped out of the cart bang into the road, than said anything about the money."

"I should like to see you, you are too good a judge for that."

No sooner were these words, which sounded so innocent in themselves, spoke

than, as if they had possessed some magical power to accomplish their own behests, up jumped the officer from the chest, with a loud shout that terrified everybody who heard it, and fairly went over the side of the cart into the road.

"Murder! murder! Fire!" he cried.

The horse reared, and the other officers swore, but nobody knew, very well, what it was all about, until, with a woeful countenance, the officer got into the cart, and said something about the confounded fellow in the box poking a long pin through the lid of it, and then the other officers could not contain their mirth; but roared with laughter, and the lid for the remainder of the journey remained untouched.

"I think I had somebody, then," muttered Tom to himself. "It was a lucky thing I fastened one of my sleeves with a pin."

Nothing further of moment occurred until the party reached the Old Bailey, and then, when the cart drew up, one of the officers ran forward to announce to the authorities of Newgate, the important capture they had made.

At the name of Claude Duval, all was excitement and confusion in the lobby of the prison, and the governor himself was hastily summoned from his private apartments to be present at the production of such a guest.

The greatest care was of course thought requisite to the unkenning such a personage, and the governor betrayed considerable excitement, when one of the officers with a dubious shake of the head, had said to him,—

"We thought it best, sir, if you please, as we had him safe in a box, to keep him there, until we got here, for you to tackle him, sir, for perhaps he's got a double-barrelled pistol in each hand, for all we know."

"You don't mean that?" said the governor.

"Yes sir, we do."

"Oh—hem! Let me see. Dear me, I should quite rejoice to drag the fellow out myself, but I think I have got a letter to write that somehow can't be delayed. You can let me know when you have got him all right, you know."

"Yes sir, but——"

"But what? How dare you speak to me? A pretty thing, indeed, that the Governor of Newgate is to be told by a turnkey, that he must not write a letter."

The governor in a great affected huff, bounced out of the lobby, and sought at once the comfort and security of his own apartments.

The officers winked at each other, for they fully understood that the governor was not one of the most valourous of mankind, and from the first, they had never expected that he would wait until the chest was opened.

"Now Bill," said one, "you be ready to pounce upon him, and clap on the darbies as soon as the chest is open."

"All's right. Here you are," said Bill

"Stop a bit," cried another. "Let Watkins have his blunderbuss ready. Who knows what may happen? I like to be on the safe side."

No one was so fool-hardy as to negative the proposition concerning the blunderbuss, and Watkins accordingly took up his position with that formidable weapon, perfectly ready to blow the supposed highwayman to atoms, if he should make any very violent or unexpected onslaught upon the authorities of Newgate.

A ring was formed around the chest, and the officer who took upon himself the fearful task of opening the lid, with great ingenuity adopted a mode of operations which he thought would have the effect of thwarting him completely, should he attempt any very great violence.

"Now, are you all ready," said one.

"Yes, yes," was the response.

"Is the gate fast?"

"Oh yes, all's right,"

"Now for it then. A—hem! Mr. Duval, I hope you will be so kind as to listen to reason, and not kick up a row. You are in Newgate, recollect, and here

are about a dozen of his well armed and determined fellows, ready to nab you as soon as we can. Don't resist, I beg of you." The speaker paused, expecting an answer; but no answer came, much to the chagrin of the officer. Expectation was now on tiptoe, and the nerves of all present were on a flutter. The lid was made loose and slowly opened by him who had stationed himself behind it. A rush was made forward by the others, and in the flurry Wilkins drew the trigger of the blunderbuss, and lodged some hundred slugs in the opposite wall, and then Tom Brereton made his appearance, with his eyes starting from their sockets, and his hair on end with fright



The officers were so enraged at their disappointment, that they drew their prisoner forth by the collar, and bestowed on him some hearty kicks and cuffs, and there is no knowing where it might have ended if a superior had not arrived in time to rescue him.

We return, now, to the fortunes of Cicely. Claude Duval had only saved himself and Cicely by the narrowest chance imaginable, and it was only through the darkness of the place, for the officers had come out of a partial light and were almost blinded by the utter darkness of the

place; the little light that came in, come from them to him, and enabled him to shut the door unseen and unheard, for the noise they made, would have drowned any he might have caused in bolting the door.

In another moment, they heard several men rushing by them, and a shot was fired by some of them, for the purpose of securing their progress, and in the hope that in the dark a stray shot might take effect; and another reason was, the flash enabled them to see where they were.

"Be silent, dear Cicely," said Claude, as he felt her tremble and shudder, when the report reached her ears, and the place struck cold and damp to them both.

Claude paused a moment or two, and then feeling his way with his hand, he led Cicely away, until they had got several yards from the spot—he then came to a shelf in the wall and found a bottle, he felt it over and over, it was corked, and covered with dust and cobwebs, he took it gently, and then placed it in his pocket.

At a more convenient opportunity, he thought, I will ascertain what it contains, it may be a cordial, and if so it is welcome indeed, after many hours of abstinence, danger and fatigue.

Again he made his way onward in the same manner as before, until he came to some wood work, and upon examining it he found it was a door, he paused and listened, he heard no sign or sound beyond it, and then feeling for the lock found it was secured, but it was so rotten, that but a slight exertion enabled him to destroy it, and open the way beyond.

There was a cold noisome air exhaled—earthy and moist, so cold and so chill that even he, Claude Duval, paused ere he went farther, and Cicely completely shook from head to foot so violently, that Claude knew not what to do; he recollected suddenly the bottle which he had picked up, and at once made up his mind to use it, before going any further.

"I have," he said, "got a bottle of something here; it may be wine, Cicely. I will open it, and as well as the means will allow, if it be what I suspect it is, you must partake of its contents—you are exhausted, and these cold shudders will do you much mischief, unless you have a remedy."

Cicely made no reply, and Claude Duval who listened a few seconds, then struck the neck off the bottle against the brick-work, and then from the broken fragment of the bottle he tasted it.

"It is some of the finest port I ever tasted," he said; "Cicely this will recall some of your strength, and enable you to withstand the effects of the cold and damp; do not fear it, it is necessary that you should taste it."

Cicely, as well as her trembling hands enabled her, tasted of the wine, and at the entreaty of Claude she swallowed several mouthfuls, and refused any more, but Claude himself, who had suffered much from hunger and thirst and fatigue, was not so sparing—he knew that much depended upon his courage and strength, and at once drank freely of it; then throwing the fragments of the bottle away, he said—

"I hear them coming through the passages again. I cannot tell where these passages lead us to, but it is not improbable they will lead us to some spot, that is not guarded by our enemies."

"I will go wherever you lead, Claude. Wherever you lead, do but take me from them, and my life is yours."

Claude pressed the confiding and gentle creature to his bosom, and then whispering words of endearment into her ear, prepared to lead the way.

They advanced and but slowly, for the passage into which they had gotten was low and damp; they had to stoop their heads as they went onwards, to avoid the brick-work, which in many places was destroyed, and fallen down.

But beneath them as they walked along, they felt little more than wet and sappy earth, with here and there a pool of fetid water, broken and decayed bricks, and substances which they did not stop to examine.

In the meanwhile the pursuers were at fault.

"Which way have they gone?" enquired each man of his neighbour. "Which way have they gone?"

"Aye! which way have they gone indeed," said the officer. "We want lights, and then we can tell, but without lights we are not likely to find them, for there are so many holes and cellars about the place, that we should never hit upon them, save by chance."

"Can't we get lights?"

"Yes, but not here; some of the party had better take horse, and go to the nearest town or house, and obtain lights, and if possible more assistance."

"There are enough here," remarked one of those present, "to take him, and eat up the reward too, if you will."

"Well lads, I don't want any more, but we must stop in the old villa till we obtain lights."

"'Tis quite night," said another, "and before they can return, there will be an end of the chace, I think."

"How so?"

"Because Claude Duval will creep out of the house, when it is dark."

"That can be avoided; we can place each other as sentinels all over the lower part of the house, each room, each staircase and passage can have its man, and I defy the devil to pass without being seen, by some one amongst us, much less can a man and woman do so?"

This was so apparent that the plan was adopted, and every one was placed at a post, the doors thrown open, and the windows, so that there was ample means of communication from man to man in a moment.

The whole of the lower story, and a great part of the passages and cellars were thus occupied, so that not a mouse could stir without being seen.

"And now," said the officer, "let me advise you all, to be as still and as quiet as you can, you will then be better able to hear if anything be going on, which we cannot see. He cannot have got out—he has to do that if he can, and I have no doubt he will make the attempt, the darkness and silence he will think favourable to his object, and if you listen, you may detect by sound, what you cannot see in the dark."

This was at once acknowledged to be good counsel, and each man stood still at his post.

"And now if you three," said the officer, to one of his companions, and two of those who had joined the chace, "if you will ride and procure lights, we will hunt him out yet before daylight begins."

"Aye, or burn the old place about his ears," replied another.

"Well, I would not object if we cannot find him by any other means, and if we can set it on fire all well and good, but if not we must patiently set to work with pick and shovel till we beat down every door, and break a hole in every wall, and in every cellar or passage, till we riddle the whole place from one end to the other, and then a few more winters will bring the old villa down with a crash, and a crumbling heap of ruins it will be."

"That will be hard work," remarked one.

"Aye, but it will be paid for. I don't like burning until when all other means fail—then indeed, we may try it, but if he be in, he would sooner be burned than come out, and that you know would not answer our purpose, for a few blackened cinders could not well be sworn to as belonging to Claude Duval, and then where's the reward to come from."

"Aye, or where is it to go to?"

"That's easily settled, it wont go anywhere; but we must wait the return of our comrades."

While the officers were thus patiently awaiting the result of deputing a small party to obtain the means of searching below in the dark, Claude Duval, and Cicely Brereton were making their way through several long and tedious passages.

Nothing could be more disgusting and uncomfortable than their route, which lay in what might be truly called the accumulated muck of years, which had col-

lected in long forgotten and underground passages, where nothing but slime and darkness could ever penetrate.

More than once did Claude whisper words of comfort to Cicely, so chilled and so damp, and so noisome was the air they breathed, that he himself felt it could not be borne for any length of time with impunity.

However, they had been an hour in endeavouring to get out of this long and apparently interminable labyrinth, when suddenly he came against an impediment that somewhat startled him.

He suddenly came to a place which was high, and he was able to stand up in, and then he came against something warm, and a whinneying sound told him in a moment that he had strangely enough come out in the very place where he had secured his mare.

"Sue," he said in the first moment of his surprise. "Sue, we have, indeed, met! Cicely, Cicely, we are saved, we are out of the old villa—my horse—if now we can get away without being seen, we are saved."

"Thank God!" cried Cicely, in a low fervent tone.

Claude Duval patted the neck of the noble creature, and then he paused to listen at the entrance of the cave, but could hear nothing, and in a few moments more he quitted it to reconnoitre.

"The coast appears clear," said Claude, as he came back, "they are no doubt, now busily engaged in searching the old villa, the darkness is now complete, and they cannot see any distance from them; I will lead Sue out of the cave, and then I will fetch you, Cicely, and a few moments more we shall leave them behind us as busy as they please to remain."

Cicely remained passive, and Claude Duval led the mare outside the cave, and then taking Cicely in his arms, he followed, and placed her upon the saddle, saying as he did so,—

"Sue will keep you clear of this stagnant water, and when once out of the villa we shall be safe."

"But will they not see us—is there not light enough left?"

"I think not, and if there were, these willows are a good screen from them, and moreover I shall take the nearest copse, and by passing through that, I shall gain a path I think they know nothing of, and then we are safe from immediate pursuit."

"And then, Claude?"

"And then," said Claude, mounting Sue behind her, and holding Cicely in his arms, "and then, Cicely, I know a place where I can place you in safety, and where you can have that rest and refreshment you need—the people may not be of that kind that you have been used to—but kind treatment and safety are insured."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE RETREAT.—AN ADVENTURE.

CICELY was too well pleased and thankful for her escape from her pursuers not to feel joyful at this proposal of Claude's, and assured him how amply grateful she felt at the prospect that was thus opened to her of some retreat.

They now were silent, Cicely clinging to Claude, and Claude pressing her loved and confiding form to his heart, while he slowly directed his horse towards an opening in the forest that surrounded the ruined pleasure grounds, and then they entered the wood.

"And now, Cicely," said Claude, "I think we may breathe while we canter

through the wood, a short ride and we are upon a cross road leading to another part of the country."

"Thank Heaven," exclaimed Cicely, "thank Heaven then we are free from the many and immediate dangers to which we have been exposed, and oh, Claude, to what danger have I not been the cause of bringing you, and how ever shall I be able to ———"

"Nay, Cicely, I am rewarded by the knowledge that I have assisted you in a moment of need; it will be to me a dearer reward than any other you could imagine. You are saved! What is there I'd not willingly risk to secure your liberty and happiness. A life would be well lost in such a cause; but, dear Cicely, I say I am rewarded in being able to bear you away thus in my arms, from danger and horrors."

"Yes, Claude, horrors, that make me shudder to think of."

"Think of them, no more, Cicely, forget them all—forget those who were the authors of your intended misery, and remember that liberty at least awaits you."

"Thank you, Claude, how much it lightens my heart to hear you say so, but I never can forget this night, and all the varying and changeful chances that have so thickly beset it."

They had soon quitted the wood, and came out upon a cross road, and when once fairly upon the road, Claude Duval put Sue to her paces, and in about an hour a number of miles had been passed over, and the scenery of the country had quite changed.

"We have not far to go now," said Claude Duval. "I will dismount and lead the horse, while you ride, Cicely. Do you see yoder hill?"

"Yes," cried Cicely, "I do."

"Well, before you come there, we shall arrive at the cottage I speak of, It is kept by a worthy old couple, who are somewhat indebted to me for some little benefits I have conferred upon them, and they will take as much care of you, Cicely, as if you were their own child."

"Thanks, thanks," said Cicely, and she held out her hand, which Claude took, and then pressed to his lips, "this will be adding to the benefits you have already conferred upon me. What a change, Claude, the horrors of a madhouse for the quiet cottage."

"Yes, this is a change, Cicely; but you have not told me, why you have been thus used, and whom it was who was thus acting so infamously towards you. How did it happen?"

"I can hardly tell you; it was more like some horrible dream than a reality; but it happened that while at home, I was seized under the pretence that I was mad, and authority having been obtained to incarcerate me in some place—a madhouse—I was suddenly seized, and despite my entreaties, I was thrust out of my own home, and thrust into a carriage which was standing at the door.

"I was quite unable to resist, and entreated to be spared the horrors that awaited me, but they were deaf to my entreaties and prayers, and the door was shut upon me, and one of the men said to me in a low voice, as he thrust me back,—

"If you choose to marry Mr. Thomas Brereton, you will be set free."

"Then he looked very hard in my face, and paused a moment as if he anticipated I should make some reply.

"No, no," I said, "and you do not, cannot act so basely as to——"

"Then you must take the consequences of your own act," and so saying he slammed the door with great violence, and secured the handle on the outside, and in another moment I was hurried away.

"Then indeed I felt all the horrors of my situation, and nothing but the most intense grief swallowed up every other feeling.—I fell back in the carriage, and submitted to my fate—tears and prayers alternately formed the sole means left to express my terror and desolation.

"So deep was my grief, that I heard not the opening of the carriage, and but

for feeling the cold air, I should not have known who it was that opened it, but looking up, I saw you."

"And you are now safe," said Claude, "for the present at all events—but there is some infernal plot hatched by the brain of Tom Brereton. Of that I am convinced."

"I fear so," said Cicely.

"We have now arrived at our destination," said Claude, as he paused before a small garden.

"This is the cottage," said Cicely.

"Yes," replied Claude, "here it is—it is a pretty and retired spot, and they have but few visitors—they can spare you a bed and board, and will do so for my sake willingly, and when they know you, Cicely, they will do so for your own."

"Oh Claude," said Cicely, with a sweet smile, which lit up her face, and caused a thrilling sensation to run through him. "Oh! Claude, how kind it is of you to say so."

"Nay," said Claude, "I speak from experience—but let me aid you to dismount, and then come into the porch, where you will escape some of the cold wind that blows after the rain."

The cottage was one of those humble but sweet abodes which are but now and then seen—it was near the road side—surrounded on all sides by a pretty and somewhat spacious garden, save on the approach to the door, which was open and guarded by a hedge-row on either side—and protected by a porch with two seats, and a small gate a few feet nearer the pathway.

To this gate Claude Duval secured Sue, and patting the animal's neck he conducted her up towards the porch, and then he knocked gently at one of the bedroom windows, which he was able to reach with his riding whip. The window was one of the old-fashioned sort, a lattice one, and if there was not an air of wealth, there was one of comfort and of much beauty, for it was surrounded by ivy of a luxuriant growth.

A few moments passed, when a man came to the window.

"'Tis I, Johnston—'tis I, Claude Duval."

"I will be with you in a moment," replied the man, who had just opened the window in time to hear Duval mention his name, he shut the window again, and after a short interval, they heard footsteps approaching, and in a few seconds the door was opened, and Claude conducted Cicely into the passage, saying as he did so,—

"Mr. Johnston. I have a favour to ask you."

"You know, Mr. Duval, how happy I shall be to grant anything you can desire—I owe too much to you to feel otherwise than glad to be able to oblige you."

"This young lady, from circumstances which I will hereafter explain to you, has need of an asylum and secrecy—will you take charge of her and treat her as your own child—for a time—great oppression and injustice have been used towards her, and indeed but for an accident it would not have been in my power to defeat a scheme of the greatest villany I ever heard of."

"Ah! Mr. Duval, let people say what they will, you are the good genius that defeats the evil, and relieves the oppressed—be assured sir, I will not fail in my part towards the young lady."

"I am sure of that, Johnston."

"Walk in, my good young lady. What we can do for you we shall be happy and proud to do. You will stay, Mr. Duval."

"No, I must be elsewhere, beside, my mare is outside. I cannot leave her. I shall return in as short a period as I can—in the meantime all I beg of you, is, to take charge of Cicely, and you will indeed make me your debtor."

"You may be assured of it; I will call my wife, and she will at once see to her comfort."



The old man departed, and Claude took the opportunity of taking a tender leave of Cicely, and whispering a few words of consolation and love in her ear, and inspiring her with confidence, and then shaking hands with the old man and his wife he left the cottage, and once more mounted Sue, and turned towards the road, and rode away at a brisk rate for some miles, intending to seek an asylum for himself, where he and his mare could remain in security.

It was late, the time was making rapid strides towards midnight, and Claude Duval began to cast about for some secure locality, where he and his mare could repose in safety. The road was a lonely one, tall trees shaded it on both sides, and the road was so dark, though the moon was not absolutely hidden, that Claude had more than once to trust to his good mare, to pick her way, without any guidance from him, but this he had done before, and felt no new emotion at doing so now. She did it with confidence.

"Sue," he said, "your instinct will teach you what my reason cannot just now, you can travel safely, where I cannot see a step before me, take it easy, take it easy, and we will jog on together in safety. Adventure lies before us, we follow in the wake of fortune, and meet whatever she pleases to place in our way; we are all the creatures of circumstances."

These thoughts crossed his mind, and he uttered them aloud, or we might say that he was thinking aloud, for such was the fact, when Sue suddenly shewed signs of disturbance.

"Eh, lass," he said, "what now—the moon is behind a cloud, can't not find thy way, or has a rabbit crossed thy path."

At that moment, the moon which had been hidden behind a mass of clouds, now shone forth, and Claude Duval saw a saddle horse standing across the road, without any rider.

"Ho! ho!" said Claude, looking warily around. "What has happened now. Something has been done here."

He drew his bridle, and pausing, he gazed about for a minute or two, but he could make nothing out of it. There was the horse, a curiously marked creature, black almost, with singular markings of white, hardly enough of the latter, to make it a piebald, but there it stood quiet enough.

"This is a stray animal, that has lost its rider, either from being thrown, or he has met with some other accident; he would hardly have stopped here, if the horse had thrown his rider, he would have gone on, but I must be cautious and ride on. Come Sue, pass him my girl, pass him."

Claude pushed on gently, looking over the hedge rows, and examining the road as he went along, the horse followed him, as if the animal did not at all like being alone, and the company of a stranger was preferable to standing melancholy in the road at midnight.

However, Claude had not gone far, before he thought he heard the sounds of a human voice or voices; he pulled up and listened, and heard some one in angry contention with another.

"An adventure, I suppose," thought Claude, "well, it cannot much matter what it is, so that something comes of it; the air is still and cool, I'll ride quietly towards those voices—I will just ascertain what is the matter, and then interfere if I deem it necessary; and should there be necessity for doing so, and danger near, you, my Sue! must bear me away to safety."

He turned his horse's head towards the spot whence the voices came, and he found that they came from the road-side—from a place where there were several haystacks and labourers' cottages. The gate stood open, and Claude entered at a walk, and then made towards the haystacks.

The moon was obscured, and the tall trees under which he was riding would have been enough to have concealed him, had any one been suspicious or on the look-out, and, added to that, the sound of his approach was not to be heard, for the horse trod softly and silently upon the turf, and the noisy clamour of two men in dispute rendered it very unlikely that he would have been overheard had the sound of Sue's footsteps been more audible.

At length he arrived at the haystacks, and, by standing up in his saddle, he could see two men seated upon some loose hay, and in angry discussion with each other; while near by lay a third individual, who was, however, secured by a rope, with his hands behind him.

This last was watching, with a rueful and anxious glance, the two men who were sharing his personal property.

"Now, I tells yer what, Spanking Jemmy, you may say as what yer like, but you ain't a honest cove, for to go for to cheat a comrade of his fair share of the plunder."

"No gammon, Out-of-town Bob," replied Spanking Jemmy, who was a huge specimen of humanity.

"Nor does I give you any," replied Out-of-town Bob, "nor am I going for to take any—you wants to take advantage of me, and I won't have it, Spanking Jemmy, and I means to tell yer as kindly on't as I can."

"Thank yer," said Spanking Jemmy. "The lesson is to be taken, recollect, not given—I ain't a going to be done——"

"Who wants yer?"

"Then why don't you give me a fair share of the cove's plunder—ain't he got six-and-thirty guineas?"

"Well, and what of it?"

"Well—I'm entitled to eighteen of them."

"Who wants to deny it, Bob? Not I—take your share, man, take your share. I always acts on the square."

"Not so fast, my gentleman pad, not so fast. I'm country all the world over—but I'm York, and not to be done by any leary cove from Lunnun."

"Well—what now, my pig poker?"

"None of your joking—it won't do—haven't you got the watch? don't tell me you can't get ten guineas for that."

"No I can't; but if you value it at that, give me five for your share, and you shall have the watch. Come, that's fair, anyhow."

"No, it ain't fair."

"Then what is——"

"I'll tell you: when a man acts up to his bargain—that's fair—when he shares his plunder with his comrade, and lets him have the full value of his dues. You know you promised to take the trinkets, and let me have my full share; and here you want to offer me five pounds for what you'll get, at least, thirty for——"

"I tell you I shan't—what, Out-of-town Bob, do you think I'd do a comrade? No; I'd lose the whole spoil first. I'm willing to let you have the chance of getting as much upon the watch as you think I shall—I can't do more—I can't act fairer."

"Yes you may, yes you may; why now look here, that gold watch was never made under sixty guineas—hark how musically it sounds the hours and quarters—you know where to plant these things, I do not, and that's why you agreed to take the articles as your share."

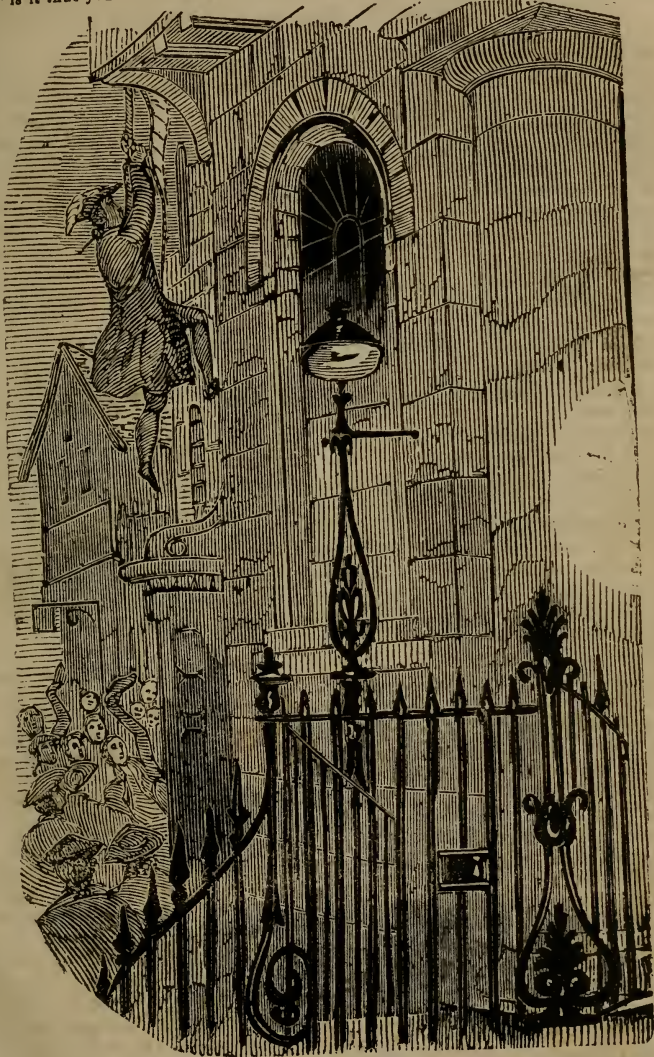
"Then it comes to this, Out-of-town Bob; that I must take them according to our agreement, at your valuation? No, no, I'm d——d first!" said the ruffian. "I'll not do it—I'm not such a pig-headed flat as that—as if I could get the sum that it cost, if I fairly sold it, much less can I get a tenth of it from the fence—no—no; do as you will—either you or I take it at the same valuation."

"Well, Spanking Jemmy, my turn will come next, by-and-by; take it now; but we don't do things on this plan any more, I can tell you, so your harvest won't be a very long one."

"May be not, but it will bring enough to my granary, and I own I don't like doing business with a dissatisfied pal. And now, about the prisoner, what shall we do with him?"

"Oh, ah! I had forgotten him—he has heard too much, he will tell tales, an

we are sure to be nabbed for this if he live—he must be settled, and that at once and no mistake." As they spoke, they both cocked their pistols and aimed them at the breast of the unfortunate traveller. Meanwhile, Claude Duval had dismounted, and throwing his bridle over the rails, he drew a large stake, and crept up to the scene of action and stood behind the two villains without their being aware of his vicinity, or even the traveller seeing him. "Infernal villains," said Claude Duval, "is it thus you would treat an unarmed man who has not resisted you?—let that be your



reward," he said, as he dealt repeated blows, which felled them to the earth senseless. "Now, sir," said Claude, as he released the traveller. "Now, you had better take what is your own." With many expressions of thanks, the stranger remounted his horse, and rode off with Claude until he pulled up, and told him that the town lay before him, when the traveller desired to know to whom he was so deeply indebted for his life and property. "Oh, my name," said Claude. "Well, you shall know it. I am Claude Duval!" and as he spoke he turned his horse's head, and left the spot, before the amazed traveller could speak.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## CLAUDE DUVAL VISITS MR. MARKHAM BRERETON IN NEWGATE.

AFTER leaving the stranger whom he had thus saved from death, petrified by the knowledge of whom he was, Claude Duval turned his horse's head, and cantered towards London, where he arrived about an hour after midnight, perhaps later—but it mattered not to Claude, who well knew the road, and the quarter of the town where he could with safety put up his Sue, for she, as well as himself, felt the need of rest.

The air was cool, and the roads heavy—though perhaps not so bad for a saddle-horse as they were for wheels, and Claude always took care to ease his mare whenever an opportunity offered, and cantered her over the turf when such was to be had, or some part of the road was better than another, that part would invariably be Sue's—unless in great haste, when pursuit was hot, and even then it was not always neglected.

It was with no regret for himself or his horse, that Claude drew his bridle, and walked up the ride to an old inn, where he had often stopped before, and dismounting, he led her up to a stable-door, at which he knocked with the butt of his whip, and whence appeared in a few moments a groom half clad and but half awake.

"Joe," said Claude. "I want to put up my mare, have you got a spare box by itself for about five hours."

"Yes sir," cried Joe, who no sooner heard Claude's voice, than he was thoroughly aroused; "come in this way," he added, pushing open the door, and holding up his lantern.

"Have you many persons in the house?"

"Yes they are pretty full," replied the man,—“most of 'em from the country, and some of them I think, will soon be returning—here is a nice bed for your mare—she will roll about on the straw—you'll feed her yourself.”

"Yes, Joe."

"Then you know where the oats are—there's some beans in that sieve yonder. I dare say she's been over some ground."

"Yes Joe, she has. There, Sue my lass, is a good supper for you," said Duval, as he patted the beautiful creature on the neck, "and now Joe, I shall be glad if you will brush and rub her down, it will lessen her fatigue—and she will be more refreshed than if she rested at once."

"It shall be done," said Joe, who busied himself with executing Claude's orders, and the latter went into the kitchen as if he knew all the arrangements of the place, and procured what refreshments he required, and then sought his bed, and in a few minutes more had fallen into a deep sleep.

The day was somewhat advanced, ere Claude awoke, and then jumping up he dressed himself hurriedly, and then sought the stable in which his mare had been placed the night before.

Joe had not neglected her, but had betimes fed her and groomed her well, even to Claude Duval's thinking, so taking a half-crown out of his pocket, he said to the groom, who took it with a glistening eye—

"Now Joe I'm going to breakfast, in an hour's time let the mare have her saddle and bridle on, and ready to start at a moment's notice."

"It shall be done," said Joe, patting the mare and dusting her coat, "she shall be as bright as a duchess's daughter before that time. She's been fed, and hasn't quite cleared out her manger yet."

"That will do, Joe," said Claude, as he gave a look of satisfaction at her appearance, and then he returned to the room where he was to take his breakfast, and listened to the conversation of the travellers.

Claude then left the inn, and went to a house not far from Fleet-market, where he purchased some clothes, and then returned to the inn, and dressed himself in them, so that he was of quite a different appearance when he went out, and none but those who knew him intimately, would have known him again.

A new coat, waistcoat, and hat were the chief articles he had put on, and added to which was a large neckcloth, which was so contrived with a large brimmed hat, to conceal the greater part of his face, and so to alter the other, that he considered himself safe anywhere.

"And now for Newgate," he muttered, as he looked down upon his disguise. "Markham Brereton is there, and I will visit him. Yes, I'll go to Newgate of my own will, but little will the authorities think whom they have within their walls. It may be," he added, "I shall see my end there; as matters have turned out though, I should sooner have found my death on the highway from a bullet, rather than in such a place, but Markham Brereton shall not fall from my deed."

He quitted the inn a second time, and then walked towards the jail of Newgate, it being about the hour at which visitors were admitted to see the prisoners.

He walked along until he came to the large building, which he surveyed for a moment or two, and then he walked up to the wicket, and then knocked, as the man who kept it was not at the moment there, the cause of his absence however, was easily explained, as he came smacking his lips, and evidently disturbed in some pleasing occupation, connected with the science of gastronomy,

"Well sir, what do you want?"

"I want to see Mr. Markham Brereton."

"Ah" said the wicket-gate keeper with a deprecatory groan. "Mr. indeed. We have people who calls themselves many things, but very few misters, and they are only called so by themselves. I'll go bail, the governor's receipt aint for any such article, as a mister, at any rate.

"Is the person I enquire for here?"

"You know he is," said the irate wicket keeper, opening it and locking it again rather ominously. "Here Sam, somebody wants to see your gentleman tobyman, and calls him mister."

"My friend," said Claude Duval, to the gate-keeper, "the next time I come I will not trouble you, but simply call upon the governor, since I can meet with nothing but impertinence from his jailors."

"Well, I'm blest," said the man. "You must be the secretary of state—but it's no business of mine, here Sam, just tell the tobyman he's wanted, by a pal I 'spose. I'm tired."

And with that the wicket-gate keeper sat down, and wiped his lips, as though so much talking had made him hot and thirsty, but which really arose from the fact, that he had been imbibing more than prison allowance, and of a much stronger nature, than anything which is allowed to come openly into the prison.

In a few moments more, Claude Duval following the steps of Sam, was conducted to a part of the prison, where he was requested to wait a moment, and then a door was opened and the name of Markham Brereton called aloud, and in another moment there were heard approaching footsteps.

"You are wanted, Markham," said the turnkey. "A friend wants to speak with you. You can come into this little side room if you please."

"Thank you," said Brereton, who was then left alone, and in another moment Claude Duval was informed, he could go into the little room and speak to the prisoner. Claude entered, and saw Brereton standing by a window, the only one that admitted light, he was pale but collected, and examined Claude as he advanced towards him with a scrutinizing glance.

"Mr. Markham Brereton," said Claude, "you may be surprised at the intrusion of a stranger, but I come with a good intention, and from no idle curiosity. You are here in consequence of an accusation of Mr. Thomas Brereton."

"Yes, that is true," replied Markham, looking very suspiciously at Claude, "but what may I owe this visit to?"

"To sympathy sir."

"To sympathy," repeated Markham, "I am a stranger to you, and I know of nothing in or about me that can excite your attention. Allow me to enquire your name, and your object."

"My name you shall know before I go, and as to my object it is to assure you that on your day of trial, you shall not sink as a guilty man, for I know you are innocent."

"I know I am innocent," replied Markham, "but how you are aware of it, I don't know, and as to your assurance respecting my trial, I can gain but little additional comfort. I am innocent, and the only consolation or hope I have, is in that fact."

"I know you are innocent, Mr. Brereton, because I am the person who committed the robbery."

"You?"

"Yes, I. You see I have ample confidence in your honour. I run much, very great risk, in coming here, a proscribed man as I am—one for whose head a heavy sum is offered, but should all things go wrong, should you be in real and imminent danger on your day of trial, I will step forward and admit that I am the man who stopped Tom Brereton, and took his papers."

"But would the judge and jury take your unaccredited statement?"

"Yes, there can be no doubt, they especially, when I bring other proof, and above all, when they hear my name."

"And that is ———"

"Claude Duval," said Claude, glancing around. "I pledge my word to come forward and save you if you stand in danger."

"But they would hang you," said Markham Brereton, after a pause, and gazing upon the highwayman with wonder and admiration.

"They would, but it will not prevent my doing so; in the meantime, have no unnecessary fears, or feel any unnecessary want of confidence, in my sincerity you may put every trust, I have given you an earnest of my truth by coming here and placing myself in your power."

"Of that confidence I can take no advantage," said Brereton, "you have confided in my honour, and I will do the same in your's."

"And you will do right. I will not deceive you. At the eleventh hour you may depend upon my stepping forward—if such a step be absolutely necessary—if not, you will know that I do not desire to throw away my life except in a case of great emergency."

"I understand you, and feel fully the greatness of your sacrifice, and cannot in any way expect any unnecessary risk on your part, when so few would make any, but I hope something may yet turn up to expose the falsity of my cousin's accusation against me."

"You are accused to keep you out of the way, I have no doubt," said Claude; "he would be glad to sacrifice you."

"He does not appear unwilling to do so," replied Markham, "I am sure he had no reason to suspect me."

"If you please," said the turnkey, putting his head in,—"time's almost up. I'm sorry to disturb you."

"I must begone," said Claude, "farewell, and you may depend upon my promise."

"I do depend upon it, though it is more than I can reasonably expect of any man, however, guilty he may be—but my time is up, farewell, and get clear of this place as quickly as you can."

"I am safe; farewell."

Markham Brereton held out his hand to Claude, who eagerly grasped it, and then the jailor again entered the little room or cell, saying it was time, and he re-

conducted Markham Brereton to the ward in which he was confined, and then turning to Claude he said,—

“And now, ~~xx~~, if you will come this way, I will shew you the way out.”

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE RECOGNITION.—THE ESCAPE.

CLAUDE DUVAL followed the gaoler through several of the tortuous passages through which he had been brought in the first instance, but which now seemed to have grown longer.

“These are queer places,” thought Claude, “how many poor fellows have stepped along these passages for the last time—well ’tis no use in being sad, but I sometimes think, that this business of Markham Brereton’s will cost me some such walk, and yet I should try to prevent it.”

They now came across a gateway which had been opened to let some prisoners into that part of the prison. Suddenly one of them stopped, and casting a scrutinizing eye upon Claude, who returned the gaze, but felt uneasy at it, when suddenly the former said aloud,—

“Claude Duval, by G—. What caught at last!—the pitcher that oft goes to the well, will be broken at last.”

“What are you talking about,” enquired one of the turnkeys.

“I say, there is Claude Duval.”

“Where?”

“There, that fellow alongside the turnkey, coming this way—the tall man—with the big neck-cloth——”

“Claude Duval.”

“Aye, to be sure.”

“Why, he is a visitor.”

Ah,” replied the man, “he! he! such a visitor as I am, I suppose you mean, a visitor upon compulsion—but I’m sorry now I’ve said anything about the matter if he ain’t known; I thought there were none of you but who knew Claude Duval.”

“We have all heard of him,” replied the turnkey, and he added, turning to Claude, “we must detain you for a short time—only a few minutes, and if it is all right, you won’t be kept long.”

“Kept long,” replied Claude Duval,—“kept long—do you imagine I shall be detained at all. I will submit to nothing of the kind, and if you offer this molestation to me you may depend upon it that neither you nor your employers will escape without severe punishment.”

“Oh,” said the turnkey, “the punishment will fall upon him, if we are wrong, and upon us, if we don’t chance it.”

“What do you mean,” said Claude, taking a rapid stride or two towards the little room, through which he had to pass to get to the wicket.

“Here Ikey—Nightingale, lend a hand.—An escape.”

In another moment, the two men appeared, and Claude rushed forward—but he was seized upon by the man behind him, who hung upon the skirts of his coat, and impeded his progress, and enabled the two men hastening towards him to bar his exit.

Claude turned round, and in an instant laid this man low, with a blow from his riding-whip, which he carried about him, and then threw himself upon the other two, who were big burly men, and who appeared nothing loth for the encounter, and a desperate struggle took place.

The whole were strong men, but Claude had the advantage, for his sinews were hard end, and his breath good, and he was much more active—but then he had two men to deal with, and assistance at hand.

"Help, help!" shouted the turnkeys who had felt the vigorous blows of Claude's riding whip, and the blood flowed in many places; nevertheless, they hung upon him, and if one was stunned and brought to the earth for a minute, another took his place, and kept Claude in work—but each fall caused them to remain longer on the stones.

Suddenly by one great and vigorous effort, he completely released himself from them, and then he made a rush at the wicket, but was met by having the door of the little room slammed, and the key turned, before he could do anything to prevent it.

"Ah," said the wicket-keeper, who had performed this feat of dexterity, and who presented himself to defend the passage. "Ah, so I thought you could be no good—I thought you were a tobyman when you seemed so precious high—it's all sham—and you'll have a——"

"You'll have that," replied Claude, dealing him a heavy blow on the head, which left him senseless on the floor, but seeing his progress barred in that direction, he turned round, and seeing a door open, which led into the governor's house, Claude at once entered it, and closing the door after him in time to elude the turnkeys, who made a rush after him, Claude secured the door, on that side, but not before an alarm had been given, and loud cries uttered his name.

"Ah," said Claude, "you may shout, 'Stop him—stop Claude Duval!' as loud as you will, but Claude Duval will not be so easily stopped; and now for a new way out."

Claude turned round, and was somewhat startled to see a man dressed in black with a white neckcloth, a blanched countenance and an eye that seemed as if no speculation had entered there, he was terror-stricken, and was as unable to speak as move.

"Well," said Claude, "what brought you here?"

"Oh," said the figure with a groan, "my legs—that is——. Oh lord, have mercy upon me, good Claude Duval."

"Oh, that's it, is it," said Claude, "well then as you came here upon your legs, just show me the way out upon them, and depend upon it you will fare worse than you can imagine, if you only attempt to play me false."

"Play!" repeated the terror-stricken ordinary, who smelt strongly of wine.

"Play, I play—oh dear no."

"Well, then, where does this door lead to?"

"To the governor's room, from whence I came, thinking it was the governor, and whom I came to meet, but I found it was you—don't kill me."

"Lead on," said Claude, who did not choose to lose a moment's time, knowing how valuable it was to him, and that life and death hung upon the difference.

In another moment they entered the governor's private room, where they saw nothing but papers, and a table upon which stood one or two empty bottles, and two wine glasses.

"This, I suppose is your private confessional, where you remain at devotion, eh?" inquired Claude.

"Sometimes we do come here."

"And how were they emptied?" inquired Claude, pointing to the glasses and bottles.

"By drinking," replied the drunken chaplain.

"Now show me the way out," said Claude, who could hear the alarm bell ringing furiously, and knowing that no time was to be lost, and yet not wishing to precipitate anything, for he wanted to get out without any hue and cry after him, otherwise he felt some suspicion that he might not get clear off at all



events he had few moments of irresolution arising from not having it in his power to decide upon his course at once.

He was much inclined to seize upon the ordinary and secure him at once, there was something so sinister and treacherous about the face; notwithstanding the drunken gravity, and the fear that seemed to sink deep in his heart, yet he feared he would do any act that would cause Claude to be secured.

"You must lead the way to the door."

"Yes," said the chaplain, "yes," and he moved towards the door, which they had just come through.

"But not that door," said Claude, sternly, "that is the way we have just come from, and you know I intend to go out at another—that which leads to the street. You know who I am—you heard my name mentioned, you pronounced it yourself. You know therefore what I am capable of doing. Now listen to me.

"Yes, most worthy sir, I do. Amen."

"You appear to me to be treacherous. I may do you wrong—but if you attempt the slightest act that will bring suspicion or notice upon me, I will fell you like an ox with the iron butt of my riding whip, and you will hardly get up again."

"My good Mr. Duval, I am the Lord's minister, and your servant, do as you please, I will be obedient, but do not attempt anything concerning the iron-headed riding whip."

"Mind what I tell you then, or be assured that the first word or sign you make, by way of a signal, will be your condemned sermon."

"Have mercy!"

"As you deserve it—so now put on your hat and come with me. I intend to honour you with my company a short distance, and I shall require you to be very particular in your conduct."

The chaplain with a trembling hand, put on his hat, but so much awry, that Claude, not wishing to attract observation, pushed it on in a more becoming manner, and then, with an admonitory shake of the heavy headed horsewhip, pulled him towards the door, whispering,—

"Now lead to the street-door, and mind when you are outside, you do not look at any one, but straight before you."

"Yes, yes, depend upon me," he said, "depend upon me—but the iron-headed horsewhip gives me the headache."

"It won't trouble you, if you act as I tell you; otherwise, it will be a cold application to your brains."

As Claude spoke, he led the way out of the room, and through the passage, and in going along, they met one of the servant girls who curtsied and then opened the door, as they were going out, thinking that the chaplain had a visitor, and at the same time, she thought there was a strange look about the chaplain she had never before observed.

They now emerged into the street, and at that moment there was a crowd of persons coming out of the prison entrance, and Claude at once divining the state of matters, pushed the chaplain straight across the road, and then hurried down one of the lanes leading to the old Fleet Market.

"Come, sir, don't look so scared, or you will frighten any one; you must recollect it is Claude Duval who has the keeping of you, you must have your wits about you."

It would seem that this was not likely to be the case, for the chaplain was about overcome with fear and drink; Claude immediately pushed him into a low public-house, saying to the servitor whom he met,

"Here, my friend is very ill—take care of him—put him into a private room for an hour, and you shall be liberally paid, mind he is a little delirious, and mustn't be let out till he is quite calm; but I'll call for him in an hour's time."

As Claude spoke he put a crown into his hand, and quitted the house, first seeing the chaplain pushed up stairs without any resistance on his part, by the pot-boy, who locked him up in the room, despite all remonstrance, for all he said was put down to the score of insanity.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE ARREST OF CLAUDE.—THE ESCAPE FROM THE LOCK UP AT HENDON.

To some extent, Claude now felt satisfied that he had done all that it was his duty to do as regarded the very painful situation in which Mr. Brereton was placed. Whether he, Claude, would have taken so much pains, had there not been such a being as Cicely Brereton in the case, it is scarcely our business to enquire, but certainly, the bright eyes of Cicely were the magnets that attracted him, and upon her breath for the future depended all his happiness.

Hence, of course, he could not but feel that it was as direct a road out of her affections as he could possibly take, were he to abandon her brother to the unjust charge made against him by Tom Brereton, and his bad advisers, who, no doubt, ultimately would make him, Tom, a sufferer, while they enriched themselves with the proceeds of the Guildford property.

And that the acquisition of that property from all parties, was the main spring of the man's actions who was advising and urging on Tom Brereton, there could not be a doubt.

Claude found no difficulty in again procuring the companionship of Sue, and having mounted, he cast but one glance around him to see if he were followed, then urging the gallant steed to an increased pace, he made for the northern suburbs of London.

Claude Duval seldom took any one particular direction without an object, and now in going northward of the metropolis he had one.

That object now, was to make enquiry concerning the fate of him who had suffered from the first pistol shot he, Claude, had ever fired, and likewise a strange and growing desire had been for a long time coming over him to visit his old home, the home of his infancy, where he had known so many joys and so many sorrows. He thought he should have liked his sister May to have been with him, but as that was not possible, without considerable difficulty and danger, he had given up the idea, although for a time it had held a place in his brain, and he had reasoned upon it to some extent.

At the period when the stirring incidents of our tale took place, London was so contracted in its limits, in comparison to what it is now, that it was a much easier task to get into the suburbs. Camden Town was hardly in existence, so that soon after leaving Holborn, Claude found himself among gardens and hedge-rows.

Sue when she came to sniff the cool, balmy, country air, gave a short cry of pleasure, and in despite of Claude's wish to proceed leisurely, she started on for a mile or two at a rapid pace until the hill of Hampstead was before them.

Then, as Claude had anticipated, she slackened her pace.

Claude looked around him upon the beautiful country in which he was making his way, and some of the blissful feelings of his early youth began to steal over him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "what place, be it ever so fair, is to the imagination so beautiful as the scenes which we have known in those happy days when the cares of the great world appeared to be too far off ever to reach us. What was I then? Alas, what am I now?"



CLAUDE DUVAL PURSUING THE PHANTOM.

For some time he rode on in silence, as if mentally contrasting his present position, as an outlawed man, one proscribed by the laws of man, and hunted down like a beast of the forest, with his happy lot when he had a tender and loving parent, who provided for his every want; and a gentle sister, into whose ears he poured forth his little troubles, and who was ever ready to soothe his young spirit. But alas, how altered was the time now. His father had been dragged to an untimely fate by an unscrupulous baronet, and his sister, though living, he could not approach with safety, for the instruments of that law he had spurned were always ready to pounce upon him with eagerness.

When he had ridden on some distance, he was attracted by observing a placard upon a tree, and upon riding up to it, he found to his dismay that it was headed by the following words:—

“£300 Reward, for the Apprehension of Claude Duval.”

The placard then proceeded to detail that the above named sum would be paid to any person, or persons, lodging the notorious highwayman in any of His Majesty's jails, and a further sum of £200 upon his conviction.

“Well,” he said, “I shall not be deterred from proceeding by this bill. Let those who have a desire to earn the money by my capture, take me if they can, and the danger of the attempt may recoil upon their own heads.”

Still, notwithstanding he did not feel inclined to place so much importance upon the notification for his capture as to allow it to stop him, yet it was considered by him as desirable to be cautious.

A little way out of the main road was a house called the “Antlers,” and it was towards it that Claude now directed his steed.

This house had not been always devoted to its present ignoble purpose, but at some period of time, considerably anterior to that concerning the events of which we write, it had been a superior kind of farm-house. Now, however, one portion of it had gone entirely to decay, while the other was used for the purpose of providing, as the sign indicated, “Good entertainment for man and beast.”

When Claude got sufficiently close to this hostel for the sound of his horse's hoofs to be heard upon the road, a lad ran out to reconnoitre the traveller, and to him Claude beckoned, and when he was close at hand, he said:—

“Does Mathew Larkin still keep the ‘Antlers’?”

“Oh, yes,” said the lad. “He's my grandfather.”

“Tell him then, that an old friend wishes to speak to him.”

“Won't you come in, sir?”

“Not till I have seen and spoken to your grandfather.”

With this message then the boy went into the house, and the result was that in a few moments a portly individual made his appearance, and hurried towards Claude, with some curiosity in his looks, but he didn't seem to recognise him, for the fact is, Claude had thought it but commonly prudent, under his present circumstances, and in broad daylight, as he was, to make what alterations he could in his costume.

“Well, Mathew,” he said. “You forget me.”

“The voice I knew in a moment. You have quite given me a turn. Good God! what brings you here, Claude? Surely you don't know your own danger?”

“Yes, I know all about it.”

“And yet you——”

“And yet I brave it. The fact is, Mathew, I had an irresistible desire to see the old neighbourhood, and let the danger be what it may, I mean to see it. Ye as I don't want to throw a chance into the hands of the Philistines, I think if you can give me shelter, that I would rather wait till night.”

“Well, well, it can't be helped. Come along, and between us, we will put up your horse, somehow, without troubling any one else.”

Claude was always sensibly touched by anything in the shape of kindness, and he could not help pressing the hand of the old innkeeper, as he said,—

“If all the world had treated me as you treat me, I don't think I should be what I am.”

“Claude,” said old Mathew, with an almost solemnity of manner, “Claude, I don't shut my eyes to what you are. You are a highwayman, and I know it, but you never stained your name by any act of cruelty, that I ever heard of, and you never, let your necessities have been what they might, stooped to take from a poor man his hard-earned mite.”

“So help me Heaven!” exclaimed Claude, “I never did.”

"I know it. Now come on, my boy, and you shan't want for shelter so long as old Mathew and the Antlers are above ground. Come along with you."

Claude had dismounted, and he now followed the old man into the public-house, the porch of which was most picturesquely over hung by clustering ivy. Indeed it was, take it altogether, a place of great natural as well as artificial beauty.

And there was scarcely a tree in all that neighbourhood which was not known to Claude, and as is always the case when the mind is full of recollections of the past, a strange and settled sadness took possession of his spirits.

This Mathew saw, and after Sue had been properly housed in a stable, the key of which Claude took possession of, the innkeeper took him by the arm, and led him to a parlour sacred to himself and his most esteemed intimates, and then closing the door, he said,—

"Now in order to place you completely at your ease, and to show you that in case of any alarm, your escape may be certain—look here."

As he spoke, he opened the lid of an old fashioned window seat, which, as is common enough in old houses, made a chest likewise, and within there appeared some litters merely. It was soon apparent, however, to Claude that a more admirable mode of escape from the room could not have been contrived, for upon touching a small concealed spring the whole bottom of the window-seat dropped like a door upon hinges.

"There," said Mathew, "below is a little staircase and a passage that leads you to the window-seat of another room by which you might escape. No one in this house knows of this place but myself, and you are the first to whom I have shown it."

"I am most grateful to you," said Claude.

"Pho—pho! don't mention that. Come now, we will have a cheerful glass, and you must recover your lost spirits."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE APPARITION ON THE HEATH.—THE CHASE.

A BOTTLE of wine such as mine host of the Antlers only reserved for special people, and for special occasions, tended in a great measure to dispel the gloom that hung over Claude, and at all events he soon got into a better conversational turn than he had been in for some few hours, and was able to speak with some degree of hilarity.

"You will think it odd, Mathew," he said, "that not having seen you for so long, and really taking the pleasure that I do in your society, I should now ask to leave it for a time."

"Leave it? How do you mean?"

"For three nights now, I have had no repose."

"Is that possible?"

"It is indeed, Mathew. One event and another has kept me in a constant state of watchfulness for some time past, and the consequence naturally is, that I am worn out. The sight of a sofa in the room, here, is too inviting for me to resist stretching my wearied limbs upon it, and tasting the sweets of oblivion for a few hours."

"With all my heart, Claude. Sleep as long as you like."

"No, let me beg of you as a favour to awaken me at sunset. I then will pay my visit to the heath, and those well known spots where my boyish footsteps have so often strayed, and then I must on the road again, for I have obligations now which must be met. There are others now dependent upon me."

"Why you have not a wife, have you?"

"No," said Claude, as he flung himself upon the sofa, "no, not yet, Mathew." In a few moments he was sound asleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mathew paid strict attention to the injunctions of Claude, to awaken him at sunset, and scarcely had the golden luminary sunk below the hills, when he touched Claude's shoulder.

The highwayman, whom a touch would always awaken, was in an instant on his feet.

"What is it?" he cried. "Keep off!"

"Why it's only me."

"Oh, you, Mathew, I think I was dreaming. Is it sunset?"

"Yes. You told me to awaken you and I have, but you were starting and uneasy in your sleep; I fear your mind, sleeping or waking is but ill at ease, sometimes you would moan, and sometimes you would cry out as though you were engaged in some life and death conflict, such as you have, I daresay, had many of in your time."

"Ah," said Claude, "if I had my time over again."

"Well, what then?"

"Why, I think I would—Eh! What noise is that?"

Claude sprung to his feet, for he thought—nay, he felt quite certain that a chair, or some such article of furniture, had been thrown over by some one in the adjoining apartment. Old Mathew took the pipe from his mouth, and listened intently.

"Did you not hear?" said Claude.

"Yes. Something I heard, but what it was, passes my wits, for the room has been empty, for Heaven only knows the time. You remain here while I go and see."

"Nay, if there is danger—"

"Oh, pho! There cannot be danger.

"But in case there should be, I will accompany you. I cannot permit that you should be running any risk, while I perhaps, was sitting here in peace and perfect security."

"Come on then."

They both rose, and advanced towards the door of communication between the two rooms, but on attempting to open it, it was found to be fast.

"A plague upon it," said Mathew, "the key is on the other side."

"Which is a difficulty," said Claude, "easy to be remedied."

"As how?"

"Thus."

As he spoke, Claude dashed himself against the door, and it burst open in a moment. He and old Mathew at once entered the chamber, the latter bearing the light, but nothing was to be seen, nor was there any article of furniture in the room, upset or standing, which could have made the noise Claude had heard.

"This is very strange," he said.

"Ah," said Mathew, "you may think so. but I, who am used to the old house, think nothing of it. Lord bless you, if I was to pay attention to all the odd noises I hear at times here, I should have nothing else to do. They say the place is haunted, but I never yet saw anything, whatever I have heard."

"Well," said Claude, "it's only once in my life, that shadows have appalled me."

"Once,—when was that?"

"At some more convenient time ask me, Mathew. Now I wish to go out upon the heath, for I see the gentle moon is rising. I know where to find Sue, and you may expect me back again in about an hour's time from now."

"You will find your supper ready, and another choice bottle of claret; but let me assist you with the horse, and good luck go with you."

Sue was soon saddled, and Claude in a few moments, was upon Hampstead-heath, with the cool breeze blowing upon his face.

The night was just such a one as Claude loved to be abroad in.

It was not dark, and yet it was not moonlight, for the bright and beautiful luminary was yet young, and there were drifting clouds, which occasionally came over the fair face of it in such a manner, that at periods of some minutes in duration, you could not see your hand before your face.

Then again through some small crevice the young moon would just take a peep at the world, shewing its fair face, like some coy beauty, to be admired and then withdrawn.

A gentle dew was falling, which imparted a freshness to the air, and a crispness to the grass, while a nightingale with its soft melancholy notes made the night zephyr full of melody and beauty. Take it for all in all, it was a gentle and delicious night.

Claude, who knew the heath well, sought an elevated position upon it, where he could command a view of many well-known objects.

He waited until the young moon peeped out to shew him the tree and house that the years of boyhood had so often looked upon.

"Ah," he said, "if I could but have remained in some spot like this, and been happy!"

It was too late now for the gallant knight of the road to turn sentimental, so Claude shook off from his spirit as best he might, the gloom that seemed inclined to settle upon it.

"It is fate," he said. "It is fate. We have each our mission to fulfil, and I am fulfilling mine. Destiny made me what I am, as destiny I suppose might have made me an archbishop, not but what I doubt if in the latter case I should have been a whit honest, as the world goes than I am now."

\* Claude's reverence for the church was never very great.

A slight canter, of about a quarter of a mile, brought him to the cottage which had been occupied by his father. The sight of it brought such a torrent of fearful recollections, that after regarding it for a few moments in silence, he turned his horse's head, and fairly galloped from the spot, but he did not well heed in what direction he was going, and when he pulled rein and cast his eyes about him, he to his horror and confusion, found himself within a few paces of the still extant gibbet, upon which his father had hung in chains.

A cry of horror burst from Claude, as all the events of that awful night came upon his memory. He would gladly have flown from the place, but a species of fascination seemed to bind him to the place, and he could not move for some minutes.

When he had in some measure recovered, it was to utter passionate exclamations of horror and of indignation, as the thought of the outrage which had been inflicted upon the dead rushed across his brain.

"Oh God! can it be possible, that human justice ever can stoop to pursue those who have been really criminal, after death has expiated all offences? Father,—father,—You were innocent, and yet they put you to a cruel and a shameful end, and placed your bones to blanch here in the winds of Heaven!"

Overcome by the violence of his emotions, Claude leant upon the pommel of his saddle and wept.

This was a mood, however, not likely to last with one of his iron spirit, and indignation soon again got the mastery over all other feelings.

"I avenged you," he cried. "I avenged you! I struck down the villain who falsely took your life, and suborned others to bear false testimony against you. father, I avenged you, and it was—it must have been right in the sight of Heaven, that I should do so. Was I growing to manhood, to suffer your poor spirit to cry out from the tomb for vengeance—no—no—no, they denied you a tomb. They denied you even a tomb. Oh, God, they could not confer upon you even that small boon.

At this moment there slowly emerged from amid a mass of shadow cast by some trees, on the other side of the gibbet to that upon which Claude was stationed, a solitary horseman, and so slow and utterly unexpected was his appearance by

Claude, that to him it had all the effect as if the new comer had risen up out of the earth.

The new comer slowly approached the gibbet, and just as he took off his hat, with what precise object Claude could not guess, the young moon peeped out from a fissure in the clouds which were rapidly careering over its silver disc.

Claude could not be mistaken. It was Sixteen-string Jack!

\* \* \* \* \*

Claude sat on his horse, like one petrified, and yet he tried hard, even at that moment of mortal perturbation to make himself think that he must be in some manner the slave of an over-excited imagination.

There was only one circumstance that completely put an end to that feeling, and prevented him from laying such a solace to his mind, and that was, he had before that, in another scene and under other circumstances, seen the figure.

"It must be real," he gasped.

Soon, too, something else, conspired to make him think that it was not a delusion, and that was the fact that the spectre was evidently making great speed to get away from him, which would not have been the case, he thought if his fancy had conjured up the apparition.

Claude was by no means inclined, notwithstanding the horror that had come over him, to give up the chase.

"What," he said to himself, "shall I live all the remainder of my life, be it short or long, in dread of this visitation and its dreadful unknown powers. No—no. Rather let me have the worst at once, than that imagination should make such a coward of me."

With this determination, he touched Sue slightly on the neck, and notwithstanding that faithful animal had with the rare instinct of her nature, comprehended that terror had usurped the place of courage and confidence in her master, she bounded forward after the now rapidly retreating horseman.

Claude, when once he made up his mind to any course, was, as the readers of this most veritable and eventful chronicle of his achievements well know, not exactly the sort of individual to draw back, and it was quite in accordance with his general character that now, as he galloped after the rapidly retreating horseman, he cried, in stentorian accents,—

"I'll follow you, were it to the infernal regions, and

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,  
Bringst with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,  
I'll speak to thee."

The wind swept the dim clouds over the fair face of the young moon, and rather a moaning sound rustled the branches of the giant trees that were upon the heath, while the only other sound that came upon the ears of Claude was the beat of his own horse's feet upon the hard ground, as with such speed he pursued the spectre.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE STRANGE CAPTURE.—CLAUDE'S INDOMITABLE COURAGE.

CLAUDE knew that he was well mounted. It was not from the partiality of affection, or from the vanity of habit, that he had come to consider Sue as almost unequalled, for he had had too many opportunities when life and liberty were at stake, to test the powers of that noble creature, not to feel that she needed not the voice of unfair flattery to fix her as an unrivalled racer, and yet he now fancied that the spectre horseman really gained upon him.



If anything could, more than another, tend to make Claude believe that he whom he pursued was really a something more than natural, it was this apparant fact of his distancing Sue. But his imagination had more to do with such a state of things than anything else.

The spectre horseman took a route across the heath in the northern direction, so that, at all events, it was not likely to be an embarrassing one, by getting among houses, for Claude well knew that between where he now was and the little bridge over the Brent river, there were but few mansions, in none of which the retreating man or fiend was likely to find shelter.

"If I can but keep him in view," said Claude, as he glanced up to the clouds which were rapidly, and to him, most provokingly, accumulating over the moon's disc, "if I can but keep him in view, all will be well, but if he once gets out of sight and hearing I shall feel that the night's chase is over, and that I have again to wait until the spectre-horseman crosses my path."

And now a new and most uncomfortable idea came across the mind of Claude, and, although he was certainly not a person full of superstitious imaginings, yet for a time he could not resist the strange impression which this notion produced upon him.

It was this!

"I have heard," he said, "that the appearance of the dead three times to a living person, is at once quite conclusive of the rapidly approaching fate of that person. I have now seen that spectre twice. Perhaps when I see it again I may be breathing almost my last in this world, and the bloodhounds of the law may be sufficiently close upon my track to have me soon in their meshes."

Claude was, like most persons who have led a strange, desultory, adventurous sort of life, much of a fatalist, so that when both reason and imagination were puzzled, he quietly threw himself back upon that belief, and submitted to what he called his destiny.

A more convenient mode of getting rid of difficulties could not very well be suggested. But still it answered its purpose, and, under many circumstances of great danger, when ordinary men would have been perfectly appalled at not being able to find some resource of safety, Claude awaited what he considered the course of inevitable destiny with the calmness of a stoic.

He saw by the darker colour now by the road side, for he had got into a regular road track, that there was a considerable patch of grass close at hand, and he turned Sue on to it, for the purpose of sufficiently deadening the sound of her footsteps to enable him to listen for those of the spectre horseman.

A moment's strict attention sufficed to convince him that the chase was continuing upon the high road to Hendon, and, so long as it did so continue, he considered that the result surely must be safe, for no mortal horse could for long continue a race with Sue, and that the spectre rode upon a mortal steed was surely evidenced by its hard tramp upon the road.

"Things of air and vapour," said Claude, "do not make so palpable a tread upon the green earth, so let us on, my Sue, and see if we cannot terminate this wild adventure."

The sound of Claude's voice always had a cheering effect upon Sue, and in this instance, accompanied as it was by a pat upon her neck, it did not fail. She started off again like the wind.

There had been, however, a slight pause while Claude was listening to the sound of the horse's feet, so that the spectre might be fairly supposed to have got an additional start of him, but, at the rate Sue now proceeded, that start was not likely to last for long.

The clouds, too, that had obscured the face of the moon, were evidently clearing off, and a soft, faint, white light began to spread itself over all objects. It was a strange misty-like light, too, and had the effect of exciting the imagination of Claude still more powerfully than before. However, he was not disposed upon that account to pause again, and just as he reached some high ground, which com-

manded a view of the then little rustic bridge across the Brent, he caught sight of the retreating horseman, standing with his steed apparently motionless upon the bridge.

This was a slight check to Claude, for it looked as if he were being waited for, and after all, with his courage, an interview in so solitary a spot, with a supernatural being, was not one of the most comfortable things to be looked forward to.

The moon suddenly broke through a mass of clouds, and there could be no mistake about the horse and man waiting upon the bridge. Without relaxing his speed in the least, Claude dashed on until he could not be farther from the object of his pursuit than a distance which Sue in a few moments would have most completely obliterated, and then, both horse and rider disappeared over the parapet of the bridge, or through its centre, Claude could not well decide which.

Now, that this was the likely and probable mode by which a spectre should take its leave of any one pursuing it, it came forcibly upon Claude's mind, and he immediately checked the speed of Sue, and with a saddened feeling, for it was dreadful to him, to be thus convinced of the supernatural character of the appearance, he slowly made his way to the bridge, beneath which ran the brawling little Brent river.

"Yes," he said. "There can be no doubt. That was the spectre of poor Jack."

The bridge was soon gained, and Claude stood exactly upon the spot where he had seen the spectre so suddenly disappear from.

The clouds had again obscured the moon's disc, so that he could only hear, without seeing, the waters below, which at that place formed a little cataract, and came brawling along with mimic fury. The trees, and there were many, both tall and stately, cast a deepened gloom upon the scene, while the wailing of the wind among their branches, seemed to him like the melancholy requiem of the dead, or as if the natural elements had been affected by the recent appearance of that apparition.

"This is more than strange," said Claude. "It is horrible."

He shuddered as he spoke, and then asked himself what should be his next step. At one moment, he thought that he had better at once proceed to London again, or cut across the country to some of his old haunts upon the Western Road, and then again he should break his word to old Mathew at the Antlers by not returning.

"He will think something has scared me, and that I dare not come back," said Claude.

This was quite a sufficient motive for him to turn his horse's head in the direction of the old inn, and in another moment he would have been off, but that a most unforeseen accident prevented him.

Just as he was upon the point of touching Sue's bridle, he heard a loud splash in the water, upon the other side of the bridge to that where there was the little cataract.

The splash was one loud enough to make itself heard above all the roar and dash of the water, as it fell down the little fall, and rushed through the narrow confines of the bridge. Nothing but the sudden descent into the stream of some very heavy body, could have produced such a sound. In a moment, it turned the current of all Claude's thoughts.

To fling himself from the back of Sue was his first impulse, and then rushing to the parapet of the bridge, he looked eagerly over into the stream, when he saw, notwithstanding the darkness, the form of a horse and rider stemming the little cataract, and swimming towards the green sloping bank of an estate that coasted the river for some distance to the spot.

Claude watched with the most intense interest the progress of the swimming steed. He saw the creature urged on by its rider, make several ineffectual attempts to leave the water, and climb up the bank of earth, that margined the lawn that was skirted by the river.

The horseman, by both whip and spur, was urging the animal to desperate



THE RESUSCITATION OF SIXTEEN-STRING JACK.

efforts, but all was use'less. The moment it, by a bold plunge, seemed something of a foothold, the crumbling ground gave way, and with a loud splash it was in the water again.

From this secure position upon the bridge, and with the parapet to steady his aim, nothing would have been easier for Claude than to have shot the spectre, for that it was the same form he had been pursuing he did not entertain a doubt; but the fact that, really or falsely, the form was the representation of Sixteen-string Jack, stayed his hand.

"I think," he muttered to himself, "that Sue would make good a footing even upon that slippery grass and crumbling loam."

As he spoke, he saw that the horseman was making use of a very different method to overcome the difficulty he was in.

Throwing himself off his steed, he made himself for the bank, still retaining the bridle in his hand, and thus released of his weight, and assisted by the bridle, the horse soon regained the land.

By this time, Claude had felt himself compelled to come to a conclusion that it was no spectre that he was pursuing, and the only rational way in which he could account for the whole affair was, that some knight of the road who had been intimately acquainted with Sixteen-string Jack, had managed to make up his face, head, and figure, in such a way as so closely to resemble the deceased highwayman, that even he, Claude, himself was taken in by the likeness.

At all events, he made up his mind now that he would know who it was that had given him so much trouble and annoyance.

"I will follow this apparition," he exclaimed, "if apparition it be, and if it be not, I will make him, who has so imposed upon me, receive the consequences of his folly."

Whatever was to be done, it was quite clear now must be done quickly, and, accordingly, Claude took Sue by the bridle, and led her by the side of the bridge down a little deep descent that conducted to the water, and when there, he, by the dim light, saw tolerably well what had been the abiding place of the spectre horseman, before, most probably by a mere slip, the horse plunged into the stream.

The stream was not so wide as in periods of heavy rain it was accustomed to be, and so there was just beneath the bridge a small slip of sandy-looking ground; partly covered with ashes, where no doubt he who was pursued had fondly hoped to find concealment for a time.

Claude noted this without making any delay in his progress, and mounting on his own steed, he gently urged it to the water.

Sue could swim like a fish, and was quite as tractable in the water as upon land, so that Claude had no difficulty in guiding her to the edge of the lawn, but he went a little lower than the point where the spectre horseman had made his repeated failures, and close by the roots of a large willow, whose pendant branches overhung a great portion of the stream, Claude found that the horse obtained at once a good foothold.

In another moment he was upon the lawn.

By this manœuvre of going lower down and being completely hidden by the willow tree, Claude calculated that he might succeed in stealing a march, as it were, upon the spectre, and such indeed seemed to be the case, for he saw that personage just slowly walking his horse round the angle of what seemed to be a conservatory, as he (Claude) reached the centre of the lawn.

A moment's consideration decided Claude that now to follow on foot would be the safest plan. He well knew that Sue would not stray from the spot where he might choose to leave her, and indeed the fine soft herbage of the well-kept lawn appeared to be very attractive to her, and therefore, hastily dismounting, he ran forward, his footsteps being perfectly noiseless upon the grass.

The spectre, if we may be allowed still to call the retreating horseman by that name, was mounted again; it was a matter quite evident to Claude that he was proceeding with the caution of one unacquainted with the premises.

"I shall at length," uttered Claude to himself, "I shall at length resolve this question, I presume, and find who it is that by such a marvellous chance, or by such little less than marvellous art, contrives to make himself the very image of one whom I know to be no more."

Some feeling of curiosity to know how far and to where he would go prevented Claude from rushing at once upon the spectre, but he soon found cause bitterly to repent of that amount of forbearance, for upon turning the corner of some flowing tall shrubs, a low fence leading to a paddock presented itself, and in a moment the spectre leaped it, and was off at a gallop.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## THE CAPTURE OF THE SPECTRE.—A SURPRISE.

CLAUDE in a moment turned to mount, and with him this was usually the work of a moment, but somehow or other he was longer than customary; his foot slipped in his haste from the stirrup, and though such a trifling incident delayed him but a moment, yet it gave the spectre an advantage he was rapidly increasing; but a moment more and Claude Duval was on horseback.

A gentle pressure of the spur upon the sides of Sue was enough to induce her to follow the flight of the spectre, and away she flew over the wall in the pursuit.

"Again eluded," thought Claude, "but pursuit is not hopeless. I will be satisfied this night, if it be possible, what the being is who has thus more than once crossed my path."

When he got into the road he reined up, and cast a look towards town, but there were no signs of anything moving, and though enshrouded in trees, yet he could see far up the road; he paused a moment, and turned his gaze in the other direction; he could see nothing there either; but on listening he fancied he heard the sound of a horse galloping away in the distance.

Without a thought more he pressed on in the chase, and after riding a few hundred yards, he came more in the uncertain light of the moon, and thought he could see before him the form of a horseman; but the large trees that grew on either side of the way offered so many impediments to vision that he could make nothing out with certainty.

But he pressed on, and Sue did her duty right gallantly, for she stretched onward with good will, and the ground was passed over so rapidly, that the flitting spectre before them at length came into view, just in time to see him turn to the right, and then he again disappeared.

"Gone again," muttered Claude. "It flits before me like the phantom light in fields and marshes."

Another moment and Claude had also reached the spot where the apparition had disappeared. It was a broad opening, with an inn on the left hand, a smithy, and some small houses, and then it suddenly narrowed as it ran down hill, and was lost among the dark trees and the foliage of some woods and plantations.

Claude in a moment guessed how matters stood, and dashed at once across the green, and into a small coppice at the end, and was soon amongst the trees.

The road was a descent for a few score yards, and then it led a short way up to the right; but here it was a very sharp ascent, but Claude heeded it not, but rode rapidly up that, and then found, when on the summit, a bridle path, hardly deserving the name, to the left, which he took.

This he followed for some minutes almost in utter darkness, for there was a cloud over the moon, and if there had not been, the foliage would have rendered the finest moonlight useless.

However, this did not remain long, for on coming to an opening in some trees he saw the stranger at a little distance ahead of him. It would seem as though the same things that were impediments to Claude Duval's progress became the same to him.

This caused Claude to urge Sue on, and accordingly he dashed onward, but this manoeuvre had been anticipated by the stranger, who had urged his own steed onward.

After about ten minutes, they again emerged upon the same road, and Claude could see the same spectre on ahead of him, about a score or two yards. This was vexing, and Claude began to feel something more than the strange feeling with which he had hitherto looked upon the strange apparition.

He began to feel that he had been beaten, and his mare, he was convinced, was as good as the stranger's.

"He can't have a better," muttered Claude to himself, "and if he gets away

it will be a strange thing to me ; something more than usual must be at work. Come, Sue, we must step out again."

As he muttered these words audibly, he pressed his legs against his mare's side, and away she went, the sound of her feet upon the road came in regular and rapid beats. All was still, save this, and the sound accompanied him as he rode through the parish of Hendon.

However, Claude now saw that he was gaining ground upon the stranger, who had made many efforts to escape him, and who evidently had some object in avoiding him.

Was it terror, or was it some unearthly creature, who re-visited the earth with the glimpses of the moon ? If it were, it certainly had shuffled off its old habits with its mortal coil, for the old roads and likely spots were its chosen stations.

Could it intend only to levy contributions upon the spirits passing from earth to heaven. If it were so, it surely was usurping the functions of the clergy.

Be it what it might, Claude was more and more resolved to fathom the mystery ; the excitement of riding, and the chase, dissipated much of the undefined feelings of dread or awe with which he had before regarded the strange appearance.

They had now ridden some distance, sometimes diving down some of the lanes leading to Edgware, and then, breaking through gaps, and returning across the fields.

This had been done more than once, when they were near an old fashioned mansion, surrounded by tall trees, whose luxuriant growth bespoke the absence of the woodman's axe.

In amongst these trees the stranger seemed to plunge, just as Claude Duval thought he must be within his power, for Sue had overtaken them or nearly so ; and to save himself, the stranger dashed into the grounds that immediately surrounded the court-yard.

Here Claude reined up, and entered over a broken gate, and soon found himself in an open avenue of trees.

The moon at that moment shed her light cheerily, though mildly, for a cloud that had long been hanging over partially now passed away, and by this light Claude saw the stranger's horse loose in the avenue, and upon looking further, he saw the same figure entering the mansion we have noticed.

Claude dashed up after him, and when near the door, dismounted, and proceeded as fast as he could to secure the mare to the broken rails that yet stood ; this done, he looked up at the mansion as if to ascertain its character before he entered it.

It was a fine old house, substantial but empty.

" Ah !" said Claude, " one that has had many a festive scene in it, I'll warrant ; but I'll fathom this mystery, if I live."

As he spoke, he placed his foot upon the step connected with the door, when he met the stranger's face, suddenly thrust out of the door with so much precipitation, and the white moonlight came full upon it, and it looked so ghastly, that Claude for the moment was unable to advance ; indeed he took a step or two backwards.

A moments thought, however, suggested to him that the stranger's head had only been thrown out to discover if his horse were safe, or if indeed he were pursued, for on observing him it had been instantly withdrawn from the doorway.

What, however, struck Claude so much, was the certainty he felt that it was the head and face of Sixteen-string Jack.

This for a moment had a great effect upon him ; but at length recovering from his surprise and amazement, not to say consternation, he rushed into the house, in search of this mysterious being, and by coming to a struggle to ascertain, if possible, of what character he was, that had so much alarmed him.

As soon as he got into the hall, he found that he was too late, for the spectre, if such it were, was in the rooms above, for he could hear him moving across the rooms overhead.

Up the flight of stone stairs before him, Claude Duval rushed with all the

speed he could, and entered the first room that presented itself, but it was empty.

There was no time to deliberate; Claude saw there was another door, and to that he flew and found another, which led yet further through a small passage into a gallery; here Claude again caught sight of the fleeting object of his pursuit.

Claude had run from room to room, up one flight of stairs and down another, until his breath was nigh spent, but yet he was resolved to hunt down the object that had caused him so much alarm and uneasiness, if he could exert a limb.

At length, he entered a room panting with haste, and had got across the apartment before he was aware that there was no other outlet to it; but on looking round, the stranger had just shot through the very door which he himself had entered, no doubt finding there was no other means of escape.

Claude Duval dashed after him, and they were hardly too paces apart, when some of the woodwork of the stairs gave way under the stranger's feet, and he fell; Claude Duval also fell from the same cause, but he contrived to grasp the throat of the stranger, who was decidedly flesh and blood.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A STRANGE MEETING.—AN OLD FRIEND.

IN a few minutes more they lay on the flooring at the foot of the stairs, both half-stunned and out of breath, and incapable of making much exertion. The moon's beams were hidden for a moment, and Claude could hear and feel that the stranger breathed heavily and rapidly, as he himself breathed; he felt he was a living man like himself, and he was slowly rising to gain his advantage of position over the fallen man, who, however, did the same thing himself, and had partially arisen.

The moon's rays now fell full upon them, and Claude Duval's gaze fell full upon the face and features of the supposed spectre, and he now knew them fully as being those of Sixteen-string Jack. The rays of the moon, however, had contributed to throw over them a peculiar pallid hue, and they looked so unearthly that Claude could not help an involuntary shudder, and exclaimed—

"Sixteen-string Jack, by Heaven!"

"What, Claude Duval?" exclaimed the spectre, endeavouring to rise, while Claude, hearing his name repeated in such well known accents, recoiled a little.

"'Tis Claude," said the stranger, "'tis his voice."

"Yes. I am Claude Duval," he said, recovering himself, and rising upon his feet; "but—but—"

"I am Sixteen-string Jack. Are you sorry to meet an old friend, Claude? You sought one?"

"Yes," said Claude, "I should be glad to see Sixteen-string Jack, but I saw him hanged, and you know—"

"Thereby hangs a tale," said Jack, "which I will unfold to you in a more fitting place. I was hanged, Claude, you are right enough. I wish I had known it was you who was riding after me, I would have spared my nag."

"Well," said Claude, "there are some things that we believe, yet cannot understand them. I thought you a dead man, and yet I cannot doubt you live now, though I can't understand how it is."

"That you shall soon, Claude Duval," replied Jack. "You thought me a dead man—well, you were right; I was hanged, and I believe dead; but here I am again. Come, we had better adjourn to a more convenient place than this; you are sure of who I am, Claude, are you not?"

The inquiry was made because Claude still seemed unable to recover his wonted spirits and decision, and continued to gaze upon Jack in a most marked manner.

"Yes," replied Claude Duval, "I believe, though I don't understand; but I suppose there is something behind, that will appear on explanation."

"It will, Claude; and now we will seek our horses," continued Jack; "I left mine loose, and I may have some trouble to find him."

"I secured my horse," said Claude.

"Then perhaps you'll give me your assistance to catch mine, since it is at liberty, though she is very quiet."

"With all my heart, Jack; but where do you intend to go to when you are mounted?"

"Wherever you like, Claude. I am very retired at present, indeed I can't well show myself anywhere where I have been known, lest I should cause what is termed a sensation."

"And scare your old friends from their propriety."

"Indeed, you are right; my supposed death has cut me off from all the benefits of society."

"You are worse off," added Claude Duval, "than if you had not the benefit of clergy."

"Something of the same; but no matter. Where do you live? in what cave do you contrive to elude the friendship of Bow-street?"

"You shall see presently; do you know Golden's-green?"

"Yes, well."

"You know the 'Antlers' there, I dare say?"

"I know there is such a place, though I cannot say I have been often there," said Jack. "I may have been in the house, and indeed I think I have; but it is all strange to me."

"Well, there I am in safety, and it's an easy ride to Finchley or to London, and for the matter of that, it's right for all roads on this side of the Thames, you know."

"Yet there are good roads from London to Edgware, and good cross roads, too; and then you are soon on the Uxbridge, Oxford, and Bath roads."

"Handy for all quarters," replied Claude. "But now, Jack, we may as well get out of this place, since we neither have any business here or any purpose."

They both got out of the place which they had fallen into, and then quitted the old mansion, and walked down the avenue in search of their cattle, with very different feelings to those with which they entered it.

"You must confess," said Claude, "since you showed your heels, that you had no idea the meeting would end so pleasantly by half, when you rolled down stairs."

"I will admit that; but then you will have to admit a little too, for I believe in my heart that you had any notion but the right one as to who I was and what I was."

"Truly, I had no notion as to what you were, for I had more than one doubt upon the subject; I resolved to follow you and discover who and what you were, I was so disturbed at your appearance; and hence it was I determined to run you down."

"And I endeavoured to run away."

"You have escaped once or twice before," replied Claude. "I was so struck with your likeness, that I was unable to act promptly enough to attract your attention."

"And I," said Sixteen-string Jack, "saw in every man a Bow-street officer, one who was about to drag me to that death from which I had been recalled, and which I have no wish to have done again."

"The recovery of the hanging?"

"Neither—I would not desire to be brought to life again if I were again hanged."



"Well, here is my mare," said Claude, "and now for yours. Where did you leave her?"

"In the avenue. I had no time to secure her among the trees as I at first designed. I thought if you passed by you might overlook the mansion—and if not, when once you were in the house, why I could slip out, find my nag, and off again."

"A good plan," said Claude, "a very good plan for an escape; but I'm glad it failed."

"Why, yes, as it has turned out, I am very glad it did fail; you kept so close upon me, that I had no time even to turn, much less to get out and mount my horse."

"Well, we shall have a night of it yet."

"I see my horse, Duval; do you ride down to the entrance, he may attempt that road, and you can then secure him. I've no mind to walk to the Antlers."

"And the loss of a horse may be the loss of a head," remarked Claude, patting the neck of his own mare; "nay, Sue has saved my neck more than once, and I expect she may do so again."

"A good horse on the road, Claude, is half the battle."

"You are right," said Claude, as he trotted down the avenue of trees until he came to the entrance, where he pulled up and waited the coming of Sixteen-string Jack or his horse.

The latter's horse, however, had been somewhat blown, and showed no design of running away, and allowed his rider to seize the bridle, and to bestride him without any opposition; then turning his head, Jack joined Claude Duval at the entrance, and once more quitted the vicinity of the old mansion.

"Towards London?" said Jack.

"Yes, for a quarter of an hour's ride," said Claude Duval, "and then we shall be in safety."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### SIXTEEN-STRING JACK'S RELATION.

THE moon was high and the evening fine, not a cloud remained to chequer the sable expanse, as black as night is painted by poets; but there were thousands of stars; faint, it is true, were their mimic rays; but the moon shone so brightly that she robbed night of half its power, and set a charm upon nature, that those who have seen it alone can appreciate its beauty.

They rode along at a gentle trot, now and then glancing to the right and left, as they gained upon grounds where they could have a full view of the country.

"There is nobody out to-night," said Jack, as they rode along the road for some distance without meeting any one.

"No," replied Claude, "I see none; just now it is as well, unless indeed it were some one who carried a heavy purse."

"Exactly!"

They rode on in silence for about half a mile, and then they came in sight of the "Antlers."

"Here," remarked Claude, "we shall at all events be secure for the night. But we must go cautiously, for old Matthew does not like too much disturbance; he may have visitors, and that might be only to awaken them to the fact that we are come."

"Do as you will," said Jack; "I am obedient to your directions; the promised

rest and friendly intercourse is a boon to me, for I have been compelled to make myself scarce even among intimates."

"I guess as much," replied Claude; "but here we are. I will dismount and give the accustomed signal."

Claude Duval dismounted, and approaching a window, he gave a tap at the pane in a particular manner, at the same time the ostler came out and presented himself.

"We want stable room for two," said Claude; "the horses want well looking to, and to be fed—you understand me?"

"I do, sir: lord love yer, I knows yer ways. I'll feed 'em like princes, and I'll take care of e'em—but step this way, sir, and you shall see the bed I've got made for one of 'em."

"Then make one for the other," observed Jack.

"Ay, ay, sir, I will, in the same stable—no stint of corn and straw here, I can tell you, sir. I'm manager of all that."

"In that case we shall not forget the management, if it's liberal," remarked Jack.

They followed the ostler into the stable, and saw the horses carefully attended to; then they adjourned to the house, in the passage of which they heard some sounds of mirth and jollity, but Claude opening a small door, old Matthew appeared.

"I want a private room, Matthew," said Claude.

"You can have one," said old Matthew, in a whisper.

"Good; now let us have some of your choicest wine, Matthew," said Claude, "for I have a friend whom I wish to honour; let us have a good supper—anything good and quick."

"You may depend upon all that," replied the landlord. "I was waiting for you myself."

"What, is t'ere any one here?"

"No, no, all right—a few in the parlour, but we know them all; but you won't see them."

"Come on then," replied Claude. "Lights and wine—we will have a toast or two before we see daylight again."

The landlord preceded them up stairs with a light, while Claude Duval and Sixteen-string Jack followed into a small but neatly furnished room, where the landlord placed the candle on the table, saying as he walked to the door—

"I'm glad to see any friend of yours, Mr. Duval, and will do my best to entertain him and you too, Mr. Duval."

"I know that, Matthew; you know what good cheer is!"

The landlord left the room, and in a few minutes an excellent supper was set before them, of which they partook heartily, for their ride had given them appetites fit to do justice to a less enticing meal.

When the supper things were cleared away, and the wine placed on the table, Claude Duval in pouring out a bumper said to his companion—

"Jack, I wish you prosperity and a long life—I am glad to see one back whom I had looked upon as dead!"

"Thank you, Claude," said Jack; "all I say is, let the dead alone when once they are gone."

Jack took a bumper, and after quaffing it, said—

"You remember when and where you last parted with me?"

"In Holborn."

"Yes, I was on my road to Tyburn."

"You were," said Claude, "and little did I expect to find you upon any other road again!"

"Perhaps not—here I am, however—I got to Tyburn in due course, and was elevated in the usual manner, and attended by many a gaping fool and admiring brother—the gentlemen connected with the object of the procession; the rope was



CLAUDE AND SIXTEEN-STRING JACK BETRAYED BY OLD MATTHEW.

adjusted as they call it, that is, it was put round my throat with due deliberation and regard to immediate choking.

“The next thing I felt was a sudden shock—pain, and a feeling as if the world were swimming away from me.

“The next sensation I experienced was dreadful—or rather it was a compound and collection of all manner of evils that the human body can suffer.

“I felt as if I were on fire; nails were being driven into my body; suppose I had been frozen thoroughly, and then imagine me put incautiously before a large fire,

when part of my members begin to char, the body swells, and the blood begins to circulate with an agony that words cannot paint."

"It must have been no joke," replied Claude.

"Indeed you are right, it was the most fearful moment that ever I felt in my life; I do not desire such another, even to gain life. I think that it lasted a long time; but of time I had no idea: I was suffering a martyrdom, an agony inexpressible.

"At one moment I fancied flashes of lightning were passing through my body from one end to the other. I thought I could see flashes of light shoot from my eyes.

"In time I sat up; I think I made many attempts to do so; but I found myself in a reclining position.

"Life was returning. I looked about. I thought the rope had broken when I had hung a minute or so, and that I was suffering the effects of reanimation and choking; fearful that I should suffer this again, I said,—

"For God's sake hang me and have done with it; I don't want to be butchered in this way."

"Oh, s'help me, Father Abraham," said a voice, 'he tinks he's got the halter about his neck! Take courage, my tear.'

"I did not understand it all; I looked, or tried to look—my eyes had been swollen, and the light came in too great abundance, and rendered all a mass of confusion.

"At length I discovered I was not in a crowd at Tyburn, but in a small room in which there were lights and a fire, with some strange apparatus. I started up.

"Where am I?" I exclaimed.

"Ah, tere's a question," said the same voice. 'I know now tat he lives. Oh, yes, when a man asks such a question as tat, you may depeñd, tho' he's abroad a bit, he's alive.'

"The truth was, I had been taken to a Jew chemist, who had resolved to practice some experiments respecting the supposed theory of recovering people who have been dead.

"I recovered; but the recovery was a thousand times worse than the death inflicted. They behaved with humanity to me. I was placed in some blankets, and some strong stimulants administered to me. Indeed, between one thing and another—chemical experiments, and what he called electricity and strong water—I felt bewildered, and completely unable to tell how many lights burned in the room, and fell into a state of insensibility, much resembling a deep sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

"When I awoke I found it was daylight. The sun's beams broke through a small window, across which were several iron bars. I lay in bed, and there was some attempt at conveniences—mean—but enough for all purposes.

"I got up in bed—I felt that there was something the matter with me—my neck was horribly painful. I immediately recollected the halter, and put my hand up to my neck, when I found a large mark or swelling, at least, it felt so to me."

"An uncomfortable sensation," remarked Claude.

"Very," said Jack—"most uncomfortable, both from the fact and the association, and so I thought at the time."

"You, however, recollect nothing?"

"I do; and what amazed me most was, that the time between the moment when I was turned off, and that in which I came to life again, to me appeared to be one and the same,—there was no interval between them, though, from what I learned afterwards, it must have been two hours, at least, before I survived."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## SIXTEEN-STRING JACK'S CONTRACT WITH THE JEW APOTHECARY.

"An unpleasant affair, but yet a narrow escape."

"Well," said Jack, "I can hardly call it an escape, because I was put through the ordeal, and I absolutely entered the jaws of the monster, though I live to tell the tale."

"And came out at the other end."

"I certainly passed through all that I could. I could have felt, or been conscious of, no more, had I been left alone for a hundred years."

"That is true," remarked Claude, thoughtfully. "Had a bullet gone through your brain, it would have prevented the possibility of your recovery; but I think you would have been conscious of no more."

"Decidedly not," said Jack; "however, I found myself very feverish, and very totterish. I was weak. I laid hold of the water at hand and drank. I felt myself revived, though swallowing was not accomplished without a slight reminiscence of the halter. I suffered some pain."

"I began now to recollect the past—I recollected Tyburn—I recollected indistinctly, the occurrences of the night before. I began to dress myself, and I succeeded in accomplishing my object."

"When I had walked about once or twice, I was anxious to leave the room, and proceeded to open the door; but here I found myself at fault, for the door was secured. I examined the lock, and found there was no key."

"I was puzzled. I looked again. The key was evidently on the other side."

"Well, thought I, this is a very strange affair. Locked in—the windows barred—hanged and all. Was it a dream, or had anybody secured me comfortable lodgings in the next world?"

"Ah, that was well thought of."

"Indeed you are right; but I hadn't been thus puzzled long before I heard some one approach. The door was unlocked, and a very strange and mysterious child of Israel appeared."

"Quite dramatic," said Claude.

"Yes, and with your permission, as I have had reason to know, I may add, quite tragic too."

"The Jew entered, and stood for a moment looking at me with a twinkling eye and pleased countenance, in which was a great deal of cunning, mixed with mystery."

"Ah, my tear, so there you are, beautiful and pluming. Oh, you ish nish—"

"Why," I replied, "I am better than I could expect to be."

"Oh, no tout of it, my tear. I heard you walk about, so I thought you wanted your breakfast."

"I am obliged to you," I replied; "but I have much to thank somebody for, and I don't know yet whom."

"Oh, never mind about that, you may tank me—I did it all, you know; but you needn't tell anybody, you know. But come down stairs, and we will talk over the matter. Come along, come along."

"I accordingly followed him, and we entered into a small apartment, where there was a breakfast laid for two."

"Sit town, my tear, and eat, and trink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die, he! he! he!"

"Yesterday we did, if you please," said I; "but how came I here, I don't know; but nevertheless I can enjoy my food, I think, despite all the inconvenience of a sore ring round my gullet, thanks to the halter."

"Ah, never mind, my tear, you are safe; cat, trink, and be wise, that's petter you know."

"The old Jew locked the door, and put the key in his pocket, saying as he did so,—  
 "'No, my tear, we can have a little conversation without any fear of interruption. You know very well you were hanged, do you not, eh, my tear?"

"'Yes,' I replied.

"'Very well. Now listen, but go on with your breakfast; you needn't leave off eating. You were going to say you were very grateful, and all that sort of thing; put never mind, you may show your gratitude if you have any, in a much better way than that, 'cause 'tis all worts.'

"'Very well,' said I, eating very heartily of some bacon, 'show me how, and I will do it.'

"'You know, my tear, though I brought you to life again, yet if I were to let the runners know the least iokling of the fact, you'd soon see Tyburn again.'

"'Yes, but that cannot be your object, else why did you recall me to life to treat me thus?"

"'For this reason, my tear—you and I may do a little business, that may be mutually beneficial.'

"'With all my heart,' said I.

"'Well, then, my tear, you know life is worth having, and you will not object to pay me fifteen shillings out of every pound you get on easy terms.'

"'Well,' said I, somewhat startled, 'you mean to say you'll take five shillings out of every twenty!'

"'No, my tear, fifteen out of every twenty—not take, but you'll give—not take at all, my tear—'tis life, and life is very precious, very precious, indeed, and worth it.'

"'The terms are hard,' I replied, 'but I will agree to them; but I am afraid that I shall be an unproductive servant, seeing I have neither horse nor means.'

"'All that shall be cared for, my tear,' replied the Jew, 'now you have agreed to my terms; but beware of playing me false, for I have means of knowing things that you cannot believe, or even understand; so let me caution you.'

"'No fear of that,' said I; 'but when do we commence operations?'

"'As soon as you please—to-morrow?'

"'Agreed,' said I. On the morrow I was put in possession of a good horse, suit of clothes, case of pistols, and a purse with some ten or fifteen gold pieces."

"'Well, said Claude Duval, "a most extraordinary circumstance; but at what a moderate price you were required to pay for your permission to live."

"'Very."

"'And you paid it?'

"'I did; I couldn't help it. I always found the Jew at my elbow. I once, at Finchley, stopped a banker with about six hundred pounds."

"'A good night's work, Jack."

"'It was. I made up my mind to quit London for the west of England, and had scarcely set spurs to my horse, when I ran up against my friend the Jew, who was always at hand in this manner, appearing where least expected, how I could not tell."

"'He followed you."

"'I can't tell; I kept a sharp look-out after him, but never found him doing so; though the road before and behind was open for miles, there he was."

"'Money,' said he.

"'Very well,' said I, and I gave him a hundred guineas.

"'Three hundred and fifty guineas more, my tear,' said he; 'and if you were generous, you'd give me my travelling expenses too.'

"'I gave the money; I should have been tracked if I had not, and it's only by paying him that I do not get into the hands of the officers. I don't know which is worst, to get taken and be hanged, or to pay him."

"'It must be very irksome, but can't be got rid of.'

"'It seems not. I would do it immediately if I could, but I can't succeed; what to do I don't know, save it is that indefinite thing, the best one I can."

"And this Jew always attends upon you thus, to receive the money, does he, Jack?"

"Yes, he does, and what is more, he seems always to have some kind of information as to what I ought to give him."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### CAPTURE OF JACK AND HIS FRIEND CLAUDE DUVAL.

THERE was but little time indeed to make anything in the shape of comment upon the extraordinary tale told by Sixteen-string Jack, for events now took place of a nature calculated to obliterate all remembrance of it for a time in the all-absorbing interest of the present.

Claude had just raised his wine glass to his lips, and was about to say something, when old Matthew came into the room in a hurried manner, exclaiming—

"Claude, Claude, there is a travelling carriage at the door. You need not let such an opportunity escape you. Come to the window and you can see it easily. This way; this way. Come along. You are in luck to-night, my boy, I can tell you, for I have already seen a purse well filled with money."

At this intimation, both Claude and Jack naturally enough rose hurriedly from the table and proceeded to the window, where they flattened their noses against the glass in a vain effort to see anything on the outside of the old inn.

All was dim and obscure.

"There's no carriage," said Claude, "that I can see. Why, old Matthew, you must be gifted by the faculty of second sight; as the poet says, you 'see what others cannot see.'"

Scarcely had these words escaped the lips of Claude than he found himself seized by each arm, and upon turning from the window he felt the cold muzzle of a pistol at each of his temples, while a voice said—

"You are my prisoner."

"Prisoner?"

"Yes, make any resistance, and you are a dead man. Our orders and our determination are to take you, whether you be dead or alive, and by Heaven we intend to do it."

"Well, gentlemen," said Claude, who felt the perfect futility of attempting anything at such a moment, "I suppose I need not ask who you are?"

"We are officers, of course."

"Very good, and may I ask if old Matthew there knew anything beforehand of this little projected affair?"

"Yes, he—"

"Hold your tongue, you fool," cried Matthew.

"It's quite sufficient," added Claude. "You have betrayed me, but remember we shall meet again."

"Ab, Jack, so they have nabbed you, too, have they? Well, it can't be helped, and there's no use in making the worst of anything; but you may rest assured, Matthew, that I will settle scores with you."

Matthew tried to laugh, but surely never had anything so unlike a genuine laugh, with any real mirth in it, come from the lips of man. It was quite clear that he positively writhed under the fear that came over him at the threats of Claude Duval.

Had Claude betrayed passion and excitement, he might have had some hopes that in cooler moments the threat would be forgotten; but when such a person with such absolute calmness, announced his determination of settling scores with him, it was enough to make Master Matthew wince.

"You—you—don't mean what you say, Claude?" he stammered. "You will find' out that I am not guilty. I have nothing to do with it. How can I prevent the tips from grabbing you?"

Claude disdained to give any answer to this whining appeal, but Sixteen-string Jack, whose indignation showed itself much more boisterously than Claude's, spoke—

"You could have helped it by not peaching," he said; "but beware, for if anything happens to Claude to prevent him from fulfilling his promise to settle scores with you, remember that I owe you a similar debt."

There can be no question but at that moment mine host of the Antlers bitterly repented the part he had played. The heavy drops of perspiration stood upon his brow, and, although he again and again tried to laugh and mutter something about the good of society, he was clearly in a most wretched state of mind.

"Come," said one of the officers, "we cannot stop while you have an altercation. We have only done our duty. You are highwaymen, and we are officers, so as cats catch mice, we catch you."

"You may not find us such mice," said Claude.

"Well, that's as it may happen; but to town we must go to-night."

"I have one favour to ask," said Claude.

"What is it?"

"That you will not place irons upon my wrists."

"Hark you," said one of the officers, "it has been said that, whether you promised good or evil to any one, you never broke your word yet. Now if you will say, upon your honour, that you will make no attempt to escape, you may ride to London with us as comfortably as possible, and with your hands as free as mine."

Claude was silent for a moment or two, and then, in a low voice, he said—

"I cannot promise."

"Exactly," said the officer; "a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse. I did not suppose you would make such a promise, so on goes the darbies."

Claude made no opposition. It would have been madness, and possibly might have resulted in his receiving some personal injury, which would have prevented him from making any effort to obtain his liberty. All he did was to complain that the handcuffs were much too tight, upon which the officer, after finding upon examination that there really was a deep indentation upon his wrist, apparently from the pressure of the irons, changed them for a larger pair which he had in his pocket.

As to Sixteen-string Jack, he seemed too much depressed to say anything for a time. The anxious consideration in his mind was, whether he could actually be hung again.

"We have overheard your strange story," said the officer to him, as he was locking the handcuffs. "You ought to have given up the old trade after such an escape."

"If the old trade were to be given up," said Jack, "what would become of you?"

"Ah, that's true enough."

The whole party were soon mounted and at the door of the Antlers, where the thing that gave Claude most concern was, that he was not permitted to mount his own horse, but was placed upon one belonging to the officers, while one of those personages mounted Sue.

Claude smiled faintly as he said—

"You had better let me ride my own steed."

"No, thank you," said the officer.

"Very well. Hilloa! Up, lass—off and away—woa! Chirp, chirp!"

No sooner did Sue hear these cries, than with a snort of defiance she rose upon her hind legs, and then coming down again very suddenly, she made a demi-veult; and the officer lay sprawling in the road, to the great amusement of his companions, who wonderfully enjoyed the joke.



The officer managed to scramble to his feet in some way or another, and then as he rubbed his head, which had received rather a severe concussion, he muttered,—

“Confound the beast, it is as wild as though it never had carried any one. I’ll be hanged if I ride it.”

“Will you?” said Claude to the other officer.

“No, thank you.”

“Then, gentlemen, I presume I may?”

“Oh, yes; confound the brute. Mount it yourself, and see what you can make of it.”

Claude smiled, and calling Sue to him, who came with all the gentleness of a pet lamb, he mounted, and to the surprise of the officers, no creature could possibly be more docile than she was.

“We have heard,” said one, “much of your mare.”

“And let you have heard what you will,” replied Claude, “you cannot have heard too much of her excellences. I love her now, next to one other breathing thing, dearer than I love else in all the world. She has saved me many a time.”

“Ah, your reign is over now!” said the officer.

“We shall see,” said Claude.

Matthew the innkeeper did not show himself again, and now the horses being put to a trot, the whole party went off at good speed towards London.

From that moment Claude dismissed all other objects from his brain, and gave up his whole intellect to a consideration of the means of escaping from the custody of the officers.

In this consideration he felt that he must rather hope to take advantage of circumstances as they might arise, that in any way attempt to evade those circumstances, and he thought that it would go hard with him indeed if something did not take place, even during the course of so brief a journey as was before him, by which he should be able to make some strong effort to free himself.

The next thing he now wished was to get private speech of Sixteen-string Jack for a few moments, but the officers took good care to keep between their prisoners, so that anything of a private character taking place would be necessarily likewise communicated to those ears which it would be most urgent to keep it from.

During these anxious considerations, Claude and his capturers arrived at the verge of Hampstead Heath, and at the moment the party was emerging from the heath, there came upon their ears such a terrific clap of thunder, that it was enough really to appal the stoutest heart.

The officers paused and looked alarmed, which alarm was by no means decreased as a sudden intense darkness swept over the face of nature, and made no object even faintly visible within the space of half-a-dozen yards. Another peal of thunder followed, almost sufficiently soon to mingle with the echoes of the first.

“What is all this?” said one of the officers.

“Only a little storm,” said Claude. “Are you afraid? If you are, I and my friend will show you the right way, and take charge of you. You may depend upon us.

“Afraid! No! no!”

“You speak as though you were!”

A flash of lightning, of so awfully dazzling a character, that even in broad daylight it must have been absolutely for the moment blinding, lit up the scene. The officers instantly closed their eyes. The horses reared and showed every sign of fear, but Claude did not even at such a moment of consternation as that, think it worth while to make the attempt that he meant to make. A random shot, and the officers had their pistols ready, might have rather ingloriously terminated his career.

"Steady, Jack," was all he said, and that was in order to let Sixteen-string Jack know that he was fully alive to what was passing around them.

"Spur on," cried the officer, who seemed to be best able to stand the terrors of the storm which had begun with such unexampled fury. "Spur on, and let us get to Camden Town. There is a good lock-up there, and there we can wait till the storm is over. Come on, come on, and remember, prisoners, that I fire at you if you make the least attempt to escape. I am not one who often misses what he means to hit."

Claude made no reply, but accommodated the speed of Sue to the pace at which the officers chose to go, so that the whole party swept down Hampstead Hill, during one of the most terrific storms of thunder and lightning upon record, at a pace that, if any one of the horses had stumbled, it must have hurled its rider to absolute destruction at once.

Horses, however, by some dispensation, seldom stumble when going at a break-neck speed, and the whole party reached the lower tract of land known then and now by the general name of Pancras Vale, in safety.

At that period, fields and hedge-rows upon each side of the way were the only distinguishing characteristics of a spot where now the railway and the suburban villa share all between them. The storm each moment increased in violence, and by the time they had gone half a mile further, and were fairly in the suburbs of Camden Town, a hail shower came on, of such amazing force, that the horses winced under the blows they received from the stones, with which they were literally pelted.

"Ride on, ride on!" cried the officer, as he saw the party were getting scattered a little, "ride on, the lock-up is in sight."

It would seem that Sixteen-string Jack at this moment had an idea that Claude was letting a valuable opportunity for escape pass by him, and being quite unable to control his impatience, he cried,—

"Claude! Claude! remember my fate!"

"Peace," said Claude, "I bide my time."

The officers grasped their pistols tighter, and swore many oaths to the effect that instant death should be the result of the slightest attempt to escape; but Claude said with wonderful calmness,—

"I am fatigued, and quite willing to go to the lock-up."

The exclamation of Sixteen-string Jack had had the effect, however, of putting the officers more upon their guard, so that if Claude had meditated any movement it certainly would have been more difficult than before; but as he really did not just at that time, no real mischief was done.

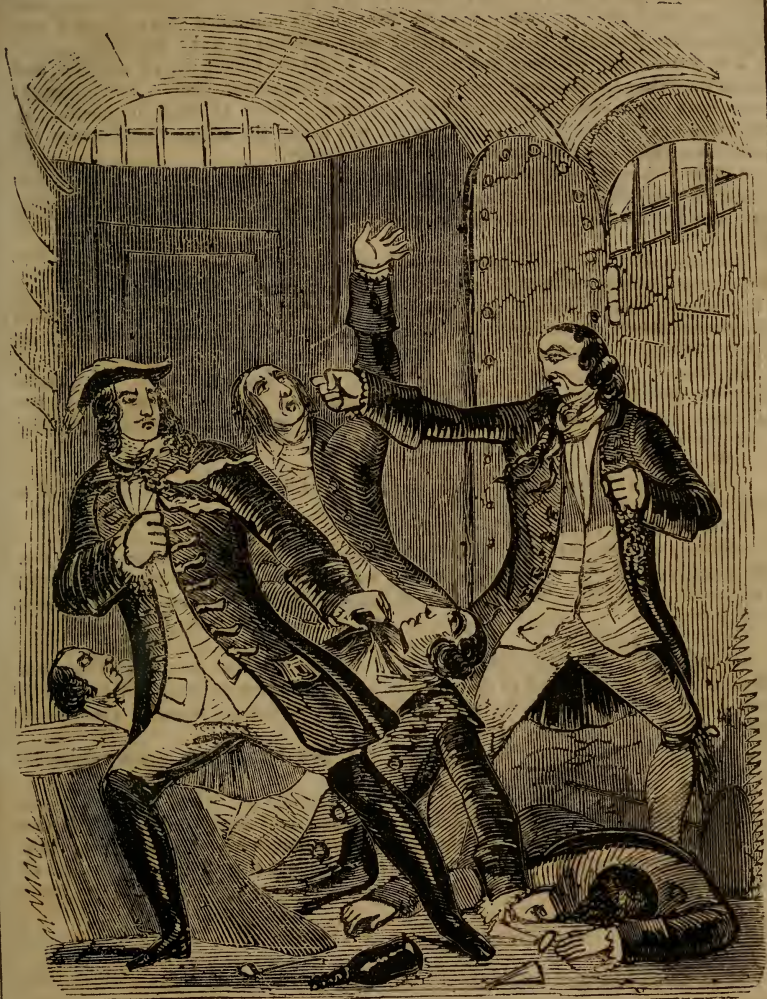
Luckily for them all, the hail-storm did not last above two minutes; had it kept up with its first fury for any long period of time, it would have been utterly impossible to have borne up against it; it ceased, however, at about a couple of hundred yards from the lock-up.

This lock-up at Camden Town, which in its day had the honour of holding some very celebrated criminals, stood very near the corner of the present Park-street, but it was entirely swept away in the year 1801, when some great changes took place in that locality.

It was a strong compact building of one story, with an immense roof, in which there were small flat red tiles, enough to serve for a whole row of more modern houses. When we say it was a building of one story, we were not counting some lofts just beneath its roof, the height of which was not above four feet at the utmost. The place occupied a good-sized bit of ground, and from time to time so much had been done to make it a place of security, into which might be thrust the footpads and others that infested the North-road, that it was imagined by the authorities to be almost impregnable.

Such, however, was not the case, as we shall see.

"Thank the fates," said one of the officers, as he drew the rein of his horse. "here we are at the lock-up. I never rode through such a storm in all my life."



CLAUDE AND SIXTEEN-STRING JACK ESCAPING FROM THE LOCK-UP.

"Nor I," said the other.

"I have, frequently," said Claude.

At the abrupt cessation of the trampling of the horses' feet at the door of the lock-up, a man with a red worsted night-cap upon his head, and a pipe in his mouth, looked out, saying—

"Hilloa! any customers for me?"

"Yes," replied the officer. "Here is Claude Duval."

"The devil! You are Mr. Jefferies, I think?"

"The same. Open the door."

The officials of the place were soon all in a state of commotion. Lights flashed

upon the darkness for a moment, but to be extinguished by the dashing rain that had succeeded the hail, and now came down in one combined sheet of water, and in the midst of all this, Claude and Jack were ushered into the building.

The outer room was long and narrow. A bright fire blazed at one end of it, and above the chimney-piece was a goodly show of blunderbusses, pistols, and cutlasses; but it was not in this apartment that the prisoners were allowed to remain. A door was opened which conducted to what was called the strong room, where the more dangerous class of prisoners were stowed away.

"Here," said the constable, as he pushed through, "you may make yourselves as comfortable as princes, if you only know how to set about it, and if you don't, I'm sure I can't tell you, so you can set your ingenuity to work to find out. Ha! ha! ha!"

The door of the cell was closed upon Jack and Claude.

All was darkness with the exception of a few dim rays of light that found their way through a narrow grating at the top of the door, and that grating, in addition to admitting a dim uncertain kind of light, had likewise the faculty of admitting the conversation of those without.

But if such was the case, it may be fairly concluded by a parity of reasoning, that whatever might be said by the prisoners might reach the ears of the officers—a consummation by no means, to the apprehension of Claude, devoutly to be wished.

"We are lost!" said Jack:

"Say you so?" responded Claude, in a voice which was far from being of a desponding character.

"Yes—what can save us?"

"Silence and discretion," whispered Claude, in the ear of Jack. "Do you not perceive, that by the nature of the arrangements of this place, that any words we may say above the merest whisper will be overheard in the outer room?"

"I did not notice."

"Jack, Jack! you are as different from your former self as possible. Time was when you were so bold and so daring that I was emulous of being like you; but now, if my eyes did not convince me that it was you indeed whom I am with, I should doubt your identity."

Jack was silent for a few moments, and then he said, in a low, dejected voice—

"I will own to you, Claude, that since that horrible day when I was dragged to the gallows, to be made a spectacle of to gaping thousands, I have not been the same man that I was before. A sadness and nervousness has come over me. The shock of that day's proceedings has left me little more than the weak shadow of what I once was!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

CLAUDE DUVAL'S ESCAPE, WITH SIXTEEN-STRING JACK, FROM THE LOCK-UP AT CAMDEN TOWN.

SOME time was passed in silence; Claude Duval remained absorbed in thought, his active and energetic mind was engaged in examining the position he was in, not with regard to any amendment of his condition, but to a total change. Expedient after expedient presented themselves, and were rejected as being impracticable; while his companion, Sixteen-string Jack, was absorbed in thoughts that might almost be called fears.

For this there was a reasonable cause, for what Jack had recently suffered was enough to shake the nerves of the boldest and the best; for what between hanging and resuscitation, Bow-street Runners, and a mysterious and omnipresent Jew, he was unable to have an entire command over his nerves or his thinking faculties.

Besides this, they were in a terrible fix: caged in a strong room, which they had no tools to force, and a number of men armed on the outside, where there was the only chance of an escape.

"Well," muttered Claude, between his teeth, "this is a sudden and unexpected change, thanks to old Mathew."

"Yes," said Sixteen-string Jack, "I begin to feel the halter round my neck already—don't you?"

"I never had it there yet," remarked Claude, "and I don't even now think it will be there yet, though I confess we are very securely caged."

"Hush! they'll hear you. I wish it were possible to lay down and die at once. I've had enough to satisfy me with the pomp of suffering—I wish to escape all that—"

"Don't talk of dying," said Claude Duval, "we must encounter the grim tyrant some time, but at the same time, I do not say I like it, and yet I am ready to run my chance among those men."

"What, the officers here?"

"Yes."

"Oh, it would be hopeless—don't think of it, Claude."

"But I do think of it, Jack—you have lost some of your nerve."

"I dare say," said Jack, dejectedly.

"Never mind, Jack—keep your spirits up, man—you are worse now than when I shook hands with you on Holborn-hill."

"Very likely—I've been hanged since then, you know."

"Yes, yes; but listen to the officers, and let us ascertain how the game is to go with them—if we can learn their intentions, then we may be able to make intentions of our own, and, what is more, we may be able to execute them."

Jack offered neither remark nor objection—he was completely cowed by the late events—his nerves were completely shattered, and his spirits had sunk.

Meanwhile the officers were loud and noisy—there was much congratulation and boasting.

"Well," said the keeper of the lock-up, "so you've nabbed the gentleman at last, have you?"

"Yes; and a glorious haul it will be."

"You'll be set up for life."

"Very nearly—a few such hits, old boy, and I'm a made man, and every one of us, and no mistake."

"Did you have much trouble to take him?"

"No. It was a planned affair. The old landlord put me up to the affair—an old dog—but he'll be well paid for it—and I came upon them when they couldn't resist."

"He shall be well paid," said Claude to himself, "he is an old dog, as sure as dogs wear tails."

"Well," remarked the lock-up keeper. "I tell you what, you are an infernal shabby fellow if you don't stand handsomely all round, and make a happy night of it for once."

"I'll do it—but the prisoners must be looked to. I'm not going to lose such a bird for a glass."

"Oh, as to that—we ain't going to get drunk; besides, we can go in every half hour and see if they are all right, that will make your mind easy—besides, they are handcuffed, and there is a strong door between this and them."

This was apparently well relished, and some liquor was sent out for, and as a

commencement, three officers came to visit the prisoners and see that they were quite safe.

"You will be well taken care of here, Mr. Duval," said one of them; "there's little ceremony, tho'—but you'll have enough of that by-and-bye, when your turn is come."

"Yes," replied Claude, "you say very right—but all I can say is, that I am not hanged yet."

"All in good time," said the officer, shutting the door with a bang, and turning the lock. The liquor came, and they commenced a carousal—drinking toasts—singing songs, and every now and then making an examination of the prisoners.

"Now," remarked Claude Duval, after he had been listening to their sounds for more than an hour. "Now the time to make an escape is come. Can you get your handcuffs off?"

"No," said Jack. "And as for an escape, I don't see the time or the means.—It's all up, Claude."

"I never give in, Jack. If you can't get your handcuffs off, I can," and as he spoke he slipped his hands through his irons, which were somewhat too big, and then he examined Sixteen-string Jack's.

The officers came again—but seeing them both as they were before, they returned to their carousal—while the light they brought had given Claude a momentary glance at a piece of iron—or something that glistened on the ground at a little distance from them.

Claude got up and examined it.—It was a key dropped by one of the officers or turnkey—a handcuff key.

"The very thing," muttered Claude, "Now Jack, you handcuffs, let me see what I can do with them."

Claude put the key in, but it was evidently not the key that had been used for them before, but it was something for Claude to have a key at all, that was a great point, for having got it, though the wrong one, yet it was an instrument of which he could make some use, and by dint of using great exertions, he contrived to make an effective use of it, for he forced it round a part of the way, just enough to liberate the ring.

"There," said Claude, "now, Jack, you must do as I do, and when the officers next come, rush upon them, and we must fight our way out."

"It will be desperate."

"Granted, and we must be desperate too; they are more than half overcome by liquor, perhaps fully three parts intoxicated, we are more than a match for any six such men."

Jack made no reply, he followed Claude Duval to the door, where they had not been a minute, before two of the officers, the most active of the lot, came, and not seeing them in the place where they last saw them, they made a rush into the room.

"Jack," said Claude, as he quickly got out, and Jack following, he drew the door to and secured it. "That lessens the number. Now for it, Jack, don't flinch."

The officers inside no sooner saw themselves shut in, than they guessed what was the matter, and gave the alarm. Three or four more presented themselves to prevent their flight, and shots were fired, but Claude flung both pair of handcuffs at their heads, and then flung himself upon them, seconded by Jack, who was rendered active by the prospect of escape, and they speedily overcame all opposition, not without danger or blows, and then when outside the lock-up, Claude secured the door of that also, and in a few minutes more they were some hundred yards from the scene of their adventure.

"Where shall we find refuge now?" said Sixteen-string Jack.

"In London, of course," said Claude. "If you wish to lose your friends, or to evade your foes, let London be your place of refuge; but I am not going with-out Sue."

"Good God! you will ruin all by remaining merely to look after a horse. Let me implore you to come away at once, Claude, and consider your own safety."

"Do not attempt to advise me on such a subject."

"But listen to reason."

"Jack, you are free to go where you like and leave me. You know I can look after myself. Do not fancy I am angry with you by what I say, for I will meet you were you like in London; but you might as well attempt to turn by your breath the current of the winds of heaven, as now prevent me from making an effort to recover my gallant steed."

"Well, well."

"You will go?"

"No, Claude, no; I will share your fortunes and assist you."

"That was spoken like yourself, Jack. And now let me tell you the task will not be a very difficult one, for in yonder outhouse all the horses are placed."

The door of the outhouse was well secured by a large padlock, but a stone of some half hundred weight which happened to be lying in the road furnished Claude with a ready means of smashing the fastening and opening the door.

"You will not in the dark," said Jack, "be able to pick out your horse from the others."

"There is no occasion," said Claude, "to make the attempt." Then he gave a peculiar whistle, and in another moment there was a bustle in the stable, and out rushed Sue.\*

The saddle had not been removed, and with a look of triumph at Jack, Claude caressed his steed for a moment; then plunging into the outhouse, he caught the first horse he could lay hands on for Jack, and in another minute they were off and away.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE NOTE FROM CICELY AND THE OPPORTUNE ARRIVAL.

It was towards London that our adventurers took their course, and for more than a mile they galloped on at a speed which rendered conversation entirely out of the question. When, however, they got near to the end of Tottenham-court-road Claude relaxed his speed a little.

"Jack," he said, "you know as many places of safety in London as I do. Only name where you wish to go, and I will soon come to you."

"Can you not accompany me?" said Jack in a desponding tone.

"No; I have some one to make a visit to who is dearer to me than life itself."

"Must it be so?"

"Indeed it must. I am sorry to see you so much depressed. Rally yourself. Come, come, Jack, remember your former reputation. Why, there was not a knight of the road who could come near to you at one time, and now the merest tyro would get the better of you."

"It is true—it is true."

"Well, knowing it to be so, why do you not make a gallant resistance against such a state of mind?"

"Say no more to me, Claude. I wish that I were dead."

"We must talk over this at another time, Jack. In the meantime let me ask you if you are well provided with money, because if you are not, of course my purse is your own."

To Claude's surprise he heard some deep sobs come from Jack, and when he looked closely at him he saw that he was nearly falling from his horse.

"Good heavens! Jack," he said, "what is the meaning of all this?"

"Claude, will you do me an act of mercy?"

"Yes, surely."

"Take one of your pistols then, if you happen to have one about you, and blow my brains out."

"And act of murder, and of folly, you ought to have named that, Jack, and not one of mercy. You must not groan in this way, or you will make me fancy that you have gone out of your senses altogether, and I shall have to be at the expense of keeping you comfortable at some lunatic asylum."

Claude said this in rather a laughing manner, for his object was to rally Jack out of his despondency; but, on the contrary, the mental agony of the latter rather seemed to increase than to decrease, and turning to Claude, he said—

"I will delay my confession no longer. I have something to say."

"Confession?"

"Yes, confession."

"But you have nothing to confess to me."

"Yes, Claude, I have."

"Well, well, go on then. Alas, poor fellow!" thought Claude to himself, "is it as I suspected, his wits have decidedly forsaken him. That hanging business has been the destruction of him, and it is a great pity the Jew doctor ever restored him to life again after he had once shut his eyes upon this world."

"May I speak?" added Jack.

"Oh, certainly. Come now, Jack, tell me that you are having a jest with me, and I shall be well pleased to forgive you for it, although just now, when many cares assail me, it is rather ill-timed."

"Jest!" repeated Sixteen-string Jack, "I shall never jest again."

"For Heaven's sake, then, tell me what you mean."

"There is such a person in the world—as—as—"

"As who?"

"As—oh, Claude, you will kill me."

"Now, Jack, you are positively provoking. What name is it, in the name of all that's troublesome, that sticks in your throat so?"

"The name of Cicely Brereton."

Claude was so completely taken by surprise that he nearly fell off his horse, and as it was he gave such a start that Sue was prodigiously alarmed, and made a bound that would have thrown any less practised rider. But the astonishment of Claude soon took a less exciting course, and in a voice of command, he said—

"What would you say of her? Speak, I charge you, Jack."

"You shall know all."

"Quick, quick."

"I will tell you as quickly as I can. I know you will kill me when you do know all, but better to die by your hands after putting you upon your guard, and so making a sort of reparation, than to live the life of misery which I now live. Have a little patience with me, and you shall know all."

Claude did not speak, and Jack in a hoarse thick voice continued—

"The Jew to whom I owe my life came to me one day, and told me that it was an object to get a Mr. Markham Brereton executed for a supposed highway robbery, and that a Mr. Tom Brereton would pay very handsomely for the job. At first I resisted, but he threatened me with instant apprehension, and I was weak enough to go into his schemes."

"Go on, go on."

"He said he was likely in the whole affair to be foiled by you, and that it was necessary to do a something to render abortive any attempts of yours to save Mr. Markham. For this purpose he wanted a letter in a handwriting so strongly resembling yours that indifferent persons who knew your hand would swear to it as being yours, stating that you knew Mr. Markham had robbed Tom Brereton on the western road, but that you, in consequence of Cicely promising to elope with you, had made up your mind to take the responsibility of the robbery upon your own shoulders."



"Go on, go on."

"This letter was supposed to be written to Cicely, and intercepted so that when you should appear in court, your gallant surrender of yourself would only result in consigning you to Newgate, while it would confirm the story of the guilt of Mr. Markham. They wanted some one to prepare that letter who knew your handwriting well enough to imitate it very exactly."

"And you?"

"I—I—I did it!"

"No, no, Jack, you did not?"

"Oh, God! oh, God! I did, Claude—I did. Will you not kill me now? Do you not abhor me? Do you not look upon me as one accursed?"

"No; from the bottom of my heart you have my pity."

"Pity?"

"Yes, I can feel towards you no otherwise. Oh, Jack, how you have fallen off from what you were. I would rather have stood the fire of a troop of soldiers, each intent upon my destruction, than I would have heard such a tale from your lips. Go on, go on."

"This Jew, whose powers seem to be actually superhuman, told me that he had discovered where you had placed Cicely."

"Ah!"

"Yes, he said that he should have her in his power by this morning. He obscurely hinted that you as yet did not know the value of your prize; for that the girl had become, by the death of some one in India, entitled to enormous wealth, which he and Tom Brereton intended to share between them."

Claude stood for a moment, and then placing his hand upon the shoulder of Jack, he said—

"Cicely, Cicely, more of her; can I save her from falling into the hands of that monster?"

"I spoke of making what reparation I could, and I will do so. The letter I speak of is in the hands of the Governor of Newgate, and Cicely is to be met by me and conducted to the Jew's house within half an hour of this time. A sham message from you, accompanied by a suit of boy's clothing, has been sent to her, and she will be at the end of Oxford Street by seven this morning."

At this moment St. Giles's church clock chimed solemnly the three-quarters past six. A crimson flush came over the countenance of Claude, who sat upon his horse like a statue.

"Speak to me, Claude," murmured Jack; "for the love of mercy, speak to me. You said that you pitied me: oh, pity me so much as to say but one word to me."

"Jack."

"Yes, yes—go on, oh, go on."

"I forgive you; but henceforward, between you and I, there is an abyss which I shall never wish to cross, and which I warn you not to dare to attempt. Farewell!"

Claude turned his horse's head up Oxford Street, and, at a furious pace, went towards the spot where he had been told Cicely would meet him. He never looked back to see what became of Sixteen-string Jack, but with his thoughts quite full of Cicely, and the unexampled treachery to which both he and she were then subject, with an anxiety that was almost sufficient to make his heart burst in his bosom, he pursued his course.

At the pace Claude went, the top of Oxford Street was soon gained, and then he paused and looked most anxiously around him, but no figure that he could tell himself was Cicely's met his gaze. And now strange and maddening thoughts came across his brain, and more than once he half suspected that it was but some refinement upon the treacherous behaviour of Sixteen-string Jack, who had told him that he should meet Cicely there, while, perchance, she was falling into the hands of his and her enemies at some other place.

Then, again, the thought did strike him, that after all it was just possible Jack might be insane, and had conceived one-half of the story from his own disordered

intellect; but, upon consideration, there was too much coherency about the whole affair to admit of that solution of the difficulty.

"No, no," said Claude; "it is all true—it is all true!"

There were very few passengers abroad at that hour, so that Claude could see without obstruction some distance down the Uxbridge Road. No one resembling Cicely was visible, and after some thought and some waiting, he made up his mind to walk quietly down the road, in the hope of meeting Cicely.

Scarcely had he got a quarter of a mile on the road when he heard a cry for help, and as some tall trees, just where the road turned a little, prevented him now from seeing above forty yards in advance of him, he put Sue to a gallop, and soon cleared the distance, and came upon a group of persons most unexpectedly.

Two men were holding a youth, who was crying aloud for help. Could Claude for one moment mistake the accents of that voice? It was that of his Cicely.

To fling himself from his horse was the work of a moment. The strength of twenty men seemed to nerve his arms, and seizing the two ruffians in either hand, he, by one vigorous movement, knocked their heads together with a sound that was quite blood-curdling to hear.

They fell at his feet both of them in a state of insensibility. In another moment Cicely was in his arms, and he pressed her to his heart.

"Oh, I have been so terrified," she exclaimed; "they said you would come."

"And that I am here, Cicely, is something almost like a miracle."

"But you sent for me, Claude?"

"No, dear one, no. But there is no place for explanations. Come, I will take you to where you will be safer than at your last place of abode."

He lifted her on to the horse, and then springing up behind her, he caught the bridle in his left hand, while his right arm encircled the waist of her who was his treasure, and whom he loved with a love that knew no bounds. At a fast trot they proceeded to London.

"What do you mean, Claude, by its being a miracle that brought you here?"

"I will tell you another time," he replied; "but I have now a much more important question to ask of you, Cicely, and it is one which I hope you will answer me at once with candour."

"I will, indeed."

"Will you be my wife, Cicely?"

There was a moment's pause, then it was in a soft low whisper, that Cicely replied—

"Yes, yes."

Oh, what pen can describe the joy that came over the heart of Claude at this moment. He could not speak, but Cicely thought proper to add something to her consent.

"I am already yours, Claude," she said. "My fortunes are your fortunes."

"Yes, Cicely. And with my life I will for ever stand between you and all harm."

"I know you love me."

"As man never yet loved woman."

"Ah, Claude, under what frightful circumstances our union will take place. Are you not proscribed among men? Is there not a price set upon your life?"

"Yes. But with you as my guardian angel, I shall triumph yet."

"We must talk of this, Claude. England must not hold us long. In some other land you may find peace as well as security."

"Tis a good thought, Cicely."

"It is one that I would have you seriously consider, Claude. What have you to hold you to England? and as for me, has it not been written that the wife shall cleave unto the husband? Where you go there will I go, Claude, and as I say, your home shall be my home."

"Oh, what joy it is to hear you speak."

"But, Claude?"

"Say on, say on."



Claude Duval compels the Bishop to perform the Marriage Ceremony.

h "My brother. You will still save my brother. You will still remember that he is innocent of that which is imputed to him, and although he may for a time look coldly upon us, and deem that I have done an act which should alienate me from his affections, he will think better of it, and we shall not have the loss of his affections. You will save him, Claude?"

Claud's voice, as he spoke, was full of emotion, and the tears glistened in his eyes as he pressed the hand of her who was so dear to him.

"Certainly," he said. "Have I ever said or promised ought to you which I have afterwards failed in proving the truthfulness of?"

"Never, never!"

"Then hear and believe me now."

"With all my heart and soul."

"I solemnly swear to you, that I will save your brother."

A gentle smile played upon the fair face of Cicely, but in a moment it was displaced by a look of exquisite grief, and with a voice of agony, which went deep into the heart of Claude, she said—

"But you shall not sacrifice yourself. No, no, Claude, you must even let Markham perish, rather than your life shall fall a sacrifice to those who will look for vengeance upon some one."

"Be tranquil," said Claude; "all will be well. My life has now a value, which will induce me to take extraordinary care of it. Be calm, Cicely."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE MARRIAGE OF CLAUDE AND CICELY BRERETON.

THEY proceeded onwards now for some time in silence, but it was that description of silence which is in reality more eloquent than any words could possibly be, for heart spoke to heart, and an occasional glance from the eyes of each sufficiently exemplified what were the thoughts passing in the brain, and how weak and inefficient language would be to the expression.

It was Claude, however, who at length broke the silence.

"Cicely," he said, "what say you to a scheme I have now, for the purpose of making you really and truly my own?"

"But am I not really and truly your own, Claude?"

"Yes, dear one; but listen to me. There is a clergyman, who resides not far from here, and who has the power, in consequence of his rank in the church, to marry us, if he had the will to perform the ceremony."

"Would he be induced, Claude?"

"Not by anything we could say, [in the way of entreaty, you may depend, Cicely."

"Then it is hopeless."

"Not so, not so."

"How otherwise, Claude?"

"I will tell you. This haughty prelate, for such he is, and I have met before now, and no doubt he has in his mind a lively recollection of that meeting. I am induced to think so from the significant fact, that he has offered one hundred pounds reward to any one who will apprehend me, and lodge me in Newgate."

"Is that possible, Claude?"

"It is both possible and true, Cicely. He has a personal quarrel with me, of no light character, I assure you, and I will therefore take this opportunity of being obliged to him for a favour."

"A favour?"

"Yes. When I want a man to do anything for me, the consequence of which may not be altogether pleasant for him, or tell well for his courage, I go to an enemy; and thus I mean to make this bishop marry us."

"A bishop?"

"Oh, yes. The bishop of Exeter shall perform the service, if he be in London, which I think he is. But it is necessary that I make some slight alteration in my costume."

The back portion of the saddle of Sue had a small recess in it, which was just sufficient to hold some flimsy articles of apparel, chiefly made of silk, so that they should go into a very small compass; but it was quite wonderful, when Claude

had put them on, to see the effect, in the way of disguise, which they had upon him.

A thin silk coat, of a silvery-gray colour, that buttoned quite up to his throat, and then a white cravat, with long ends, and laced, made him look as different as possible from his former self, as any two things could possibly be. Cicely, who was all unused to the many strange disguises in which Claude was at times, during his eventful career, compelled to show himself, could scarcely believe that any human being could produce such an absolute metamorphosis in himself in so short a space of time.

"I should not know you, Claude," she said.

"Except by my voice?"

"Oh, yes, I should know your voice in a moment, Claude."

"Not always," cried Claude.

Cicely started, for in the utterance of those two words he had so completely altered his usual mode of speaking, that she, for the moment, could scarcely think but that some one close at hand had uttered them.

Claude laughed.

"You must always say something," added Cicely, "which shall let me be able to penetrate your disguises, or I shall be very unhappy."

"Yes, Cicely, I will always say something by which you may know me; and be assured, that however I may change and assume many Protean shapes to the world, I will never change to you."

"I believe it—I believe it, and it is in that belief that I will find my joy. Where are we going now, Claude? These are handsome houses."

"Yes. In one of these lives our friend, the bishop, or rather our enemy the bishop, whom we shall make do a friendly act without a friendly motive."

"Ought you to venture?"

"I ought and will. Say nothing now, for we are close at hand; and beware how the name of Claude passes your lips, for any premature development of who I am might be fatal."

They had now turned down a street to the left of Oxford-street, and which conducted them to a square of the most aristocratic aspect and importance. Claude deliberately paused before a large house, the front of which was dignified by a remarkably heavy portico. It was the town abode of the well-known bishop, with whose lady Claude had danced upon Hampstead Heath. Cicely trembled, for she could not but feel that the errand upon which they now were was a most perilous one, and she could not refrain from asking herself what would be her fate if he should be taken from her.

Such reflections were, however, soon merged in the intense interest she felt in what Claude was about, and in watching how he accomplished his object of securing a private interview with the bishop.

The door of the mansion was open, and a footman, with a profusion of powder on his head, was lounging at it, in an attitude which showed what a trouble it was to him to live, and, at the same time, to support the great weight of dignity that belonged to him and the office.

When Claude paused before the door, he scarcely deigned to look at him, and it was not until both Cicely and the highwayman had dismounted and ascended the steps, that the official gentleman condescended to turn his eyes upon them, in an easy sort of way.

"The bishop," said Claude, "is he up?"

The footman seemed so perfectly astounded at the idea of any one coming to see the bishop so early an hour, that for some moments he could not reply, but continued to stare at Claude as though he had been some remarkable and curious specimen of some unknown animal. This close inspection of Claude's countenance had, however, one good effect, and that was, its producing an impression, even upon the obtuse mind of the footman, that its owner was not a man exactly to be trifled with.

"Ahem!" he said, by way of recovering his mental equipoise a little, "ahem! Did you say, up?"

"Yes."

"Oh, very well; then I don't know."

"Very well. I have a proposal to make to you, which deserves your serious attention. Will you take half-a-crown to go and inquire, or will you have your nose pulled here for refusing to do so?"

"My nose?"

"Yes, your nose. Come, decide quickly."

"Well then, sir, I can only say, that I am not a man to be bullied, or made game of. Nobody ever did that with me; and as to being frightened into anything, it's not in my nature, so if you please, sir, give me the half-crown."

"You are a cleverer fellow than you look," said Claude, "and I improve consequently upon my terms. There are two half-crowns, and now, if you can get speech of the bishop, just say that there is a gentleman at the door, who will place Claude Duval, the highwayman, in his hands, and ask no reward for doing so."

"What, Claude Duval? He they call Gentleman Jack, that robbed my lord and kissed my lady?"

"The same."

"He'll see you, sir, if he were ten times over not up—but I think he is. Just step into that room, and I'll manage it. I dare say I shall get something for myself out of him for bringing such good news. He did offer a hundred pounds reward, and he might have paid it if he had been forced; but didn't it stick in his gizzard above a bit to think of paying away so much!"

"Indeed."

"Lord bless you, sir, yes; and you will be as welcome as flowers in May, if you can save him the money."

"I can and will."

Claude and Cicely were both shown into a handsome reception room to the right of the hall, and there they both waited with some natural degree of anxiety the return of the footman.

"Will this succeed?" whispered Cicely. "It is an adventure full of peril."

"I never ask myself," replied Claude in a louder tone, "if things will succeed or not. It is sufficient for me, if I try my best; in this instance, I do feel pretty sure that I shall be able to give up Claude Duval to the bishop."

Claude looked so significantly at Cicely, while he uttered this, that would otherwise have been a strange speech, that she at once comprehended he had good reason for uttering it. Following, then, the direction of his eyes, she saw a door partially open, and at the foot of it, part of the boot of a man.

They were being listened to; but luckily, Claude had well-framed his answer to the harmless remark of Cicely, and no real mischief was consequently done.

In another moment the foot disappeared.

"That was a moment of real peril," whispered Claude. "Hush! make no remark. All is well as yet, I am quite certain."

Cicely trembled at the danger which had just passed, for without a doubt had Claude made any answer to her, which would have declared their real intentions to be different to what they had stated, a police force would have been sent for, that would have made opposition madness on the part of Claude.

In about five minutes the footman returned, followed by a slim, sleek-looking personage, dressed in black, and with a perpetual hyena-like smile upon his white face, which he intended should be evangelically beautiful. This was the bishop's secretary.

"So," he said, "I understand that you know something of Claude Duval?"

"Much," replied Claude.

"Well, the bishop presents his compliments, and will feel obliged at your giving to me all the information you can."

"About what?"

"The highwayman; of course."

"Give my compliments to the bishop, and say that I will give my information to no one but himself, privately."

"Well, but—but——"

"Exactly."

"Who you are I know not, even the knowledge of your name."

"A state of ignorance in which I remain likewise concerning you."

"Oh, very well, I see we shall have to give you into custody, my friend. We cannot be trifled with in this manner, upon a subject of consequence to his lordship's feelings."

"Now, hark you, sir," said Claude, "I don't know and I don't care who you are. I am here to see the bishop, and to do him a favour, and you threaten to give me into custody for it. No if you do not at once apologise, I will leave the house, and I don't think that just at present there is any one that can prevent me doing so."

The secretary bit his white lips, and looked confused, for the fact was, that all he had said and done was without orders from the bishop, and merely to show his own efficiency. At length he gave a sickly grin, as he said—

"Well, well, wait a little. I will go and see."

"But the apology?"

The secretary had left the room, but Claude added to himself, "I will make that fellow humble, even with all his glorious arrogance, before I leave this house."

"Oh, Claude, I tremble," whispered Cicely.

"Hush, dear one, hush! All is well—all is well. You may depend upon me. I know well how this affair is going. We shall see the bishop, and after that our difficulties and dangers are all over."

"Think you so?"

"I know it."

The sickly secretary returned.

"His lordship will see you."

"Of course."

"Follow me, if you please. You must not be surprised at our showing some suspicion about strangers. There are so many men about London of seeming fairness, but who are such rank hypocrites and rogues."

"You are right," said Claude. "I have met one myself this morning of the sort you mention."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. A man in shiny black, with sleek hair, and a white face, upon which was a perpetual faint smile."

The secretary shrank back, and looked very uncomfortable at the description of himself, while Cicely was afraid each moment that the reckless courage of Claude would plunge him into greater danger than was at all necessary, even under the fearful circumstances, as she considered them, in which they were now plunged; and yet there was a contagion of courage about the bold daring of Claude that almost at times made her as firm as he was himself.

A handsome staircase was ascended, the balustrades of which were profusely gilt, while the walls were hung with pictures, some of which were of anything but a saintly character. The carpet, too, was so soft and beautiful, that any of the apostles, a humble follower of whom of course the bishop was, would have been perfectly astonished, and thought such things could only be in that world beyond the stars which his faith promised him the enjoyment of in another state of existence. But, then, bishops are so self-denying, so anxious to walk in the footsteps of their great Teacher, as all the world, of course, knows of all the bishops.

To Cicely, whose mind was most intensely preoccupied, these things did not present themselves as they did to Claude, who, now that he made sure of seeing the bishop, also made sure of his own safety and the safety of Cicely, and so was much more mentally at leisure to notice circumstances of an extraneous character.

On the landing was some rare and exquisite statuary, upon which Claude could not help casting a passing glance of admiration, and then a door, the panels of which were of mahogany, and the corners gilt, was opened, and the bishop was found sitting at a table, writing, or pretending to write.

All great men are always found writing or reading by those who visit them. It looks grand, abstracted and overpoweringly intellectual. It is the custom, then, always to look with quite an appearance of surprise, as if the visitor were not at all expected, but had just trotted in out of the streets, without the slightest let or hinderance to reaching the sanctum sanctorum of the great personage who had taken perhaps half an hour to consider whether they should be admitted or not.

The door of the room was opened, and Claude, with Cicely clinging to his arm, was in the presence of the bishop, who looked rather scrutinisingly upon them.

"Can you give me information, indeed, of the notorious Claude Duval?"

"I can."

"And—and—and you do not want the reward?"

"By no means."

"Pray be seated. My time, of course, is rather valuable, and I have to request that you will be so good as to say, as quickly as possible, what you have to say."

"I have as little desire as your lordship can have," said Claude, "to occupy valuable time; I have much to do, and therefore cannot afford to waste my opportunities. Will you lordship tell me candidly if any one be listening?"

"Certainly not. You may proceed in perfect confidence."

"Well, my lord, you see this small, exquisitely-mounted pistol, which never misses fire, and carries a couple of bullets with the greatest steadiness."

"Yes, I—I. Oh, yes. Hold it the other way."

"Well, my lord, I took it from the secret pocket of Claude Duval's coat."

"You did?"

"I did, my lord."

"And did he permit you, or had you previously taken him prisoner—perhaps killed him? I should like to hang the rascal. Oh, that I could see him before me."

"A wish easily gratified. I am Claude Duval—nay, my lord, I shall trouble you to be seated. Remember this little weapon and its qualifications. You wished to see Claude Duval before you without the necessity of paying a hundred pounds, and you have your wish. Remove your hand from that bell-pull, my lord, or I fire."

The bishop hastily enough took his hand off the bell-pull, and sunk back into his chair again, from whence he had suddenly risen in the alarm of the moment.

"Well," added Claude, "have you nothing to say?"

"This overwhelming assurance!" gasped the bishop.

"Cannot be without an object more distinct and important," added Claude, "than merely frightening a bishop. I have a motive far higher. This young lady, for a young lady she is, despite her male attire, has agreed to make me so happy as to become my wife; the only return I ask of you for bringing you Claude Duval without any reward, is that you marry us forthwith."

The bishop looked quite blue and spectral like.

"Your answer," said Claude. "Quick, your answer!"

"I cannot."

"Very well."

Claude deliberately cocked the pistol.

"That is to say, stop," said the bishop. "I think I will, although it is contrary to my usage. I—I really ought not. God bless me I wish some one would come, I never was in such a horrid situation."

"And I never in such a pleasant one."

"Pleasant one?"



"Yes. Can anything be more pleasant than the prospect of an immediate union with this young lady? Come, my lord, delays are dangerous. I will trouble you to proceed at once, and any shuffling at your peril. I am not a man to be trifled with. I tell you candidly, that this is something like a trial of strength between us, and I am determined to have the mastery. Quick, my lord! where is your book, or will you trust to your memory? I am not very particular to a word or two."

The bishop groaned.

"I—I don't think I can remember a word of it," he faltered. "Indeed, I am quite sure I cannot. I don't often marry people; but if I must, I must, so I'll go for my book at once."

"If it be in this room you may get—if in another I will go with you; and remember, upon the least appearance of treachery on your part, or even if I suspect you wrongfully, I will blow your brains out."

The bishop groaned again. Then he rose and went to a book-case, from whence he took a Book of Common Prayer, and that moment, the sickly-looking supercilious secretary came into the room.

"My lord, I——"

"Will give away the bride," cried Claude, finishing the sentence for him, and at the same time seizing him by the collar, and flinging him into a corner of the room, where he sat propped up by the wall, looking the picture of fright and surprise. Claude now walked to the door and locked it, saying as he did so, "We don't want any one else, so now proceed at once. Cicely is the name of the lady, and with my christian appellation you are already acquainted. Proceed my lord."

"Dearly beloved," said the bishop with another groan, for the idea of being forced to marry Claude Duval was gall and wormwood to him, and his thoughts were wandering to what the wicked wits of the time would say, should the affair get wind among them. More than once he thought of breaking off abruptly in the midst of the service, but as often as the thought came over him to do so, and he looked up from the prayer-book, his eyes were dazzled by a sight of that provoking bright pistol barrel, to which Claude had given such commendations, and with another groan, he would resume.

Thus it was that Claude and Cicely were made man and wife.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE ESCAPE FROM THE OFFICERS.—NEWGATE AND ITS GOVERNOR.

THE ring with which Cicely was married was one that had belonged to Claude's mother, and which he had, until that occasion, worn constantly upon his little finger. The dubious-looking secretary gave the bride away, and then shrunk back into his corner again, where he thought it prudent to remain, until watching his opportunity, he crept under a table, and so on to the door, and fairly escaped from the room.

It may be presumed that Claude did not notice the absence of the secretary till it was too late to prevent it. Cicely saw a flush of colour suddenly visit his cheek, but she did not attribute it to any apprehension. Claude himself, however, the moment he became aware that the secretary was gone, knew his danger.

But with so adventurous a spirit as he was, to know his danger was to know almost at the same moment, as if by intuition, some means of avoiding it.

Turning to the bishop, he said—

"My lord, you have done me a service, and I do not see why you should cherish the unchristian resentment against me that you do. I must, however, despite that, make you useful to a yet greater extent."

Something strongly resembling an oath passed the bishop's lips. In fact, if he had not been a bishop, nobody could have scrupled to own that he said, "D—n it!" as audibly as possible.

"I think I must trouble you," added Claude, "to accompany me down stairs."

The sight of the pistol again stopped all scruples, and down stairs they went together. The moment they gained the passage, the street-door opened, and the secretary appeared looking quite triumphant, although, owing to suddenly confronting Claude, he was a little cut up in his gratification. Duval took but one step towards him; and then looking keenly in his face, he said, in a perfectly calm tone—

"Will they be here soon?"

"Who—who—do you mean?" stammered the secretary.

"Oh, pho! The officers you have been for."

"Seize him," said the bishop.

"Hold!" said Claude, as he held the bishop's arm with a grip of iron—"hold! I know that I shall be taken, because I think you are angry enough now, and fierce enough to sacrifice your life for this object. I have sworn to myself to take your life, or to leave this house in safety; and, by all that is sacred on earth or in Heaven, I will keep my oath."

"Go in peace," said the bishop, with a shudder, "go in peace."

"Order your carriage, then, and come with me. I will do you no harm, but you must say it is a mistake of your officious secretary, and that I am a friend of yours—or—your life!"

"Yes, yes! Oh, dear me, yes."

"Where is he?" said a gruff voice, as two men rushed in the hall.

"Who?" said Claude.

"Duval, the highwayman, to be sure."

"Ask his lordship."

"There is no such person here," said the bishop, "it is all a mistake. This gentleman is a friend of mine, and is going out with me in my carriage. Oh lord!"

"Your lordship seems as if you would enjoy your drive," said one of the officers. "If I catch the fellow, who came round to my house and made a fool of me, I'll make him remember it."

The secretary immediately hid himself behind a statue, and as he did so he made noise enough for one of the officers to glance that way, and say—

"What's that?"

"Only a cur," said Claude, as he gave the secretary some half-dozen heavy kicks behind the statue, which the valorous individual put up with quietly, rather than come out, and be put in the dilemma of contradicting the bishop, or admitting he made a mistake in calling the officers.

"Order the carriage," cried Claude, as the footman made his appearance.

The bishop repeated the command, and the carriage, which was just about ready, was in a few minutes at the door of the house. Claude whispered in the ear of the bishop—

"You have played your part hitherto like a man of discretion, but circumstances compel me, although reluctantly, to give you some more trouble. You must come with me, until we are in a safer place than this."

The bishop had now no disposition to sacrifice his life, after going so far, and he readily enough complied with Claude's wishes, that he should get into the carriage. In another moment they were all three seated in the luxurious vehicle, that is, its owner, Claude and Cicely.

The footman touched his hat as he shut the door, and lingered to know where to drive to.



THE LAST MEETING OF LUCY AND GENTLEMAN JACK.

"The Cat and Cucumber in Drury Lane," said Claude.

"The what, sir?"

"The 'Cat and Cucumber,' in Drury Lane."

"Yes sir—oh yes.—A-hem! Certainly, my lord. The Cat and—a-hem!—Cucumber, in Drury Lane."

The footman perked up his nose, as though there had been something noxious at the extreme end of it, which he was afraid would fall into his mouth, unless he was very careful, and then mounting behind, he gave the order to the astounded coachman.

There was another person, however, who heard the order where to drive to with some gratification, and that other was one of the officers, who accordingly jumped up behind the coach, resolved to see the end of the adventure. As may be supposed, the bishop was rather ill at ease in his carriage with such company, but he dissembled his feelings the best way he could, and the vehicle soon reached the classic regions of Drury Lane.

An inquiry or two on the part of the still ireful footman soon discovered the Cat and Cucumber, and probably never before in the annals of that establishment, could there be recounted such a visit as was now paid to it. Claude alighted, and handed out Cicely. The officer sprang from behind, and laying his hand upon Claude's arm, said—

“You are my prisoner.”

“By what authority?” said Claude.

“The law. I know you are Duval.”

“And how came you here?”

“At the back of the carriage.”

“That must have been uncomfortable. You shall return inside, which I assure you is as convenient as it can possibly be made. It is not everybody who would do so much for you.”

As he spoke, Claude put forth all the extraordinary strength which he possessed, and which only upon extraordinary occasions he called into exercise. Lifting the officer off his feet, he at once dashed him into the carriage, and closed the door. In another moment he was in the public-house called the “Cat and Cucumber,” with Cicely.

To the first person he met, Claude said—

“Go to the door. You will find that my horse has followed me, although I came in a coach.”

This was literally true. Sue had indeed followed the bishop's carriage, which the sagacious creature had seen contained her master, and now stood waiting for him at the door of the public-house. He had to show himself, before she would allow herself to be removed. The officer, however, by this time had managed, after doing some amount of personal damage to the bishop, to scramble out of the carriage, and, mad with anger and shame at his defeat, he rushed into the public-house.

“What do you want, Fletcher?” said the landlord, advancing.

“Claude Duval.”

“You know as well as I do that you can't have him here. Come, come, be wise and be off. Keep what sort of watch you like outside, but here, as you are well aware, it is an understood thing you are not to make prisoners. It won't do, Fletcher, so don't try it on.”

“Confusion!”

“Oh, that's likely enough; but you know what's right, as well as I do, so get along with you, unless you choose to come in the regular way, and make yourself comfortable and look about you a bit.”

“I must take him.”

“Nonsense, you have your regulars, you know as well as I do, so don't make a fool of yourself.—Will you take anything to drink?”

This last was a proposition that had a mollifying effect upon the officer, whose rage had cooled down sufficiently to convince him that a row at the “Cat and Cucumber,” for the purpose of trying to make a prisoner, would be the most ineffectual thing in all the world.

He took the something to drink, and left the place.

## CHAPTER XL:

## THE GOVERNOR OF NEWGATE'S INTERVIEW WITH TOM BRERETON.

THAT Claude and Cicely, who now so closely united her fortune to his, found shelter and kindness at the Cat and Cucumber, we may well suppose. The course of our narrative carries us now to gloomy Newgate.

In one of the apartments of the governor's house, sat that individual himself, and Mr. Tom Brereton. The latter was explaining something with some amount of vehemence, while the governor looked anything but pleased, and was biting his pen, with which, by the papers lying before him, he appeared to have been writing some letters.

Tom Brereton broke the silence that for some time had been maintained between them, and which the governor did not seem disposed to disturb.

"It is as I tell you," he said.

"I cannot make it out," said the governor.

"No—nor I. I am quite sure she had the note purporting to come from Claude, and I am equally sure, from further inquiries that I have made, that she had no suspicions of its genuineness whatever, but actually set out to walk to London. However, she never reached the spot where my men were posted, to snare her up."

"So it appears."

"Yes, and that's what puzzles me."

The governor shook his head, as he said—

"Ah, you don't know what sort of person you have to do with, Mr. Brereton; I can tell you that Claude Duval is capable of things that would make your hair stand on end only to dream of."

"I know that; but how could he know what we meant to do?"

"Can you trust the Jew?"

"Oh, yes."

"Can he trust his agents?"

"He had but one, he said, in whom he put any confidence or faith, and that one he declared was so bound to him in every possible way, that he dared not betray him; if he were ever so much inclined so to do."

"And yet he must have done so."

"Well, it's a hard case, after all my exertions to do myself some good in the world, to be so thoroughly posed at all points. My plan was a good one enough, too, I'm sure."

"Yes. I never, though, perfectly understood it."

"Why you understood you were to have £500."

"Oh, yes, yes."

"Well, then, I'll tell you the rest. You must know that old Junks, a relation of ours, has died in India, and most unaccountably left me nothing, though he died worth £50,000 they say."

"What was old Junks's objection to you?"

"Why, I have seen the will, in which he says, I have heard something of a relation of mine, named Tom Brereton. He is not very bright, I hear, or very honest, so I leave him nothing; convinced that he is just the sort of person to consign to the care of Providence."

"Humph!"

"What do you say humph for?"

"Why, I was just thinking it was not very flattering to you."

"Well, not very, certainly. Well, as I was saying, he left me nothing, and goes on to divide all his property between Markham Brereton and Cicely, and he says that if one of those should be dead, or die within twelve months, the other shall have the whole."

"Humph!"

"D—n it—why do you say humph always?"

"Oh, that's nothing; it's only a way I have got. Go on."

"Well, don't do it again, that's all. Where was I? Oh, I know; well, when I found out that old Junks had left me nothing, of course I set about seeing whether I could not make something out of it."

"Naturally."

"Of course. Well, the grand thing was, that neither Markham nor Cicely knew of old Junks's death or will—I had that information all to myself."

"A most important point."

"Very. I have something to pay to the Jew, though; but one can afford to do that out of so much money, and I thought to myself that the nicest thing in the world would be to get rid of Markham, so that Cicely should have all the money, and then marry her."

"A very good idea."

"I thought you would say that. Well, if Markham were hanged, of course he is out of the way, you know, most effectually."

"I should rather think he would."

"Of course. Well, as he would not do anything of his own accord to bring him to a bad end, I thought the next best thing was to make others believe he had."

"Exactly. Hence the concoction of that letter, which is to be produced at his trial, if Claude Duval should really be as good as his word, and come forward to clear Brereton."

"You are right; but as regards Cicely, somehow she never saw my merits."

"No?"

"Never, never! So the only way was to get her to consent by some means that had nothing to do with my merits, that she somehow don't or won't see."

"Spoken like an oracle."

"Very well. Don't bother me. I thought of getting her shut up somewhere, and then telling her that the only way to save both herself and Markham, would be to marry me. What do you think of that?"

"Humph!"

"Good God, there you are, saying 'humph' again."

"Well, where's the harm?"

"Oh, no particular harm—only it's monstrous provoking, that's all, and you ought not to do it, considering that you are to have five hundred pounds for helping me."

"Yes, that is understood."

"Of course it is; and what makes it more provoking is, that she has given me the slip, after all my trouble. Where can she be?"

"Ah, humph?"

"Do you want to drive me mad?"

"Well, well, something will turn up, I dare say, to make all right enough; of course the letter in Claude's name will have a great effect, and you will at all events have the satisfaction of getting rid of Duval, for he will be hung to all intents and purposes."

"You really think so?"

"I know so, my friend. But you are, I know, wasting your valuable time with me."

The governor rose as he spoke. It was his only way of getting rid of his visitor, who was not the most welcome guest he could have in the world.

"Very well," said Tom Brereton, "very well. You do the best you can, and I will do the best I can; and if, between us, we cannot get the better of this Claude Duval, it will be a very hard case indeed."

Tom Brereton now left Newgate, and sauntered down the Old Bailey towards

Holborn Hill, but just as he got to Fleet-market, some one touched him on the arm, and upon turning abruptly, he saw, to his amazement and consternation, Claude Duval.

"One word of alarm," whispered Claude, "one exclamation or gesture so as to bring danger upon me, and I will scatter your brains upon the pavement. Take my arm, and walk gently. I want to speak to you."

Anger, rage, fear, all were struggling in the bosom of Tom Brereton, but he knew well the determined spirit he had to deal with, and he took the arm of Claude, while his face turned as white as milk, and he trembled so he could scarcely walk.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE EXTORTED DOCUMENT.—THE PROPOSED ROBBERY IN QUEEN STREET.

"You seem surprised," said Claude.

"I—I am a little."

"And terrified."

"Yes, yes, a little—only a little. I—I confess to being a little put out. It's a fine day, ain't it?"

"Why, I think it's very gloomy."

"Yes, yes, I—I mean gloomy."

"And yet the air is balmy, and on the whole the day is decidedly cheerful."

"Oh yes, decidedly cheerful."

Claude smiled to himself as he saw how thoroughly determined Tom Brereton was to agree with him. But it did not suit him to spend his time in trifling, so he at once proceeded to what he meant.

"You perfectly understand your position, Mr. Tom Brereton," he said. "It is one of some danger, if you do not use your opportunities with discretion; but if you wish to preserve yourself, you are too insignificant to make anything like a serious effort to destroy."

"Oh," said Tom.

"Yes. And now I want of you a written confession of the little piece of villany, regarding the forging of my name to a letter, addressed to Markham Brereton."

Tom was so completely astounded at the suddenness of this statement, that but for the supporting arm of Claude, he must have fallen to the ground. The whole street appeared to swim round with him, and the idea he was found out in what he considered one of the most cunning and secret things he ever did in his life, was enough to drive him out of his senses.

"Answer me," said Claude. "I insist upon an immediate answer."

"What—what can I say?"

"That you will come to the nearest tavern, and write]the confession I want of you."

"I—I must, I suppose."

"You may be assured that you must."

Tom Brereton uttered a deep groan, but he saw that there was no help for him, and being quite sure that Claude Duval was one who kept his word, he did not scruple to think discretion by far the better part of valour.

"Only say what you want of me," he cried, "and I'll do it."

"I only want what I say. Come this way. Here is a house that may afford the necessary accommodation to us. Attempt to move an inch otherwise than I direct you, and you die."

"Lord have mercy upon me !"

"He may, but I will have none, unless you speedily perform what I require of you."

The door of a tavern near at hand was invitingly open, and into it Claude led his prisoner, for such Tom was, to all intents and purposes, and calling for a private room and writing materials, he made Tom sit down.

"You—you won't kill me," said Tom ; "oh dear me, you don't mean to murder me, I hope ; do have some mercy upon me."

"Why," said Claude, quite composedly, "when you were dead you would only be so much carrion, but while you are alive I think I may do some good with you, notwithstanding your wish to be mischievous."

"Then you will spare my life ?"

"Yes."

"That's a comfort. I breathe again ; only spare my life, and tell me what to do and I'll do it, you may depend."

"I think that you will ; now write down, as clearly and distinctly as you can, the particulars of the forged letter that the governor of Newgate has, and which it was and is intended to produce at the trial of Mr. Markham Brereton, for the purpose of quite confounding me, should I come forward as a witness in his favour."

"Perhaps you won't mind telling me how you came to know——"

"Write !" cried Claude, sternly ; "it is my place to ask questions, yours to answer them ; I am in no humour for trifling, and will not endure it."

Thus admonished, Tom Brereton thought his best plan would be to commence his enforced confession at once, and he did so, although with a reluctance that was quite ridiculous to see.

When it was complete, he handed it to Claude, who then, finding that it was quite as full as could be wished, made him sign it, and then, folding it carefully, he said in a calm, determined voice—

"You are now at liberty ; but knowing as I do, that on the day of trial you will seek to disown this document, and to say that it was extorted from you by force, and has not truth in it, I warn you that in such a case a terrible retribution shall be exacted of you."

Tom looked dreadfully pale.

"The same power," continued Claude, "which enabled me to discover that you were pursuing such infamous courses, will arm me with the means of defeating you when you make further attempts to avoid the consequences of your crimes and your follies."

So saying, Claude Duval left him at once.

Hurrying through several streets, so as to place considerable distance between him and the house where Tom Brereton was left, Claude at length slackened his pace, and appeared to be involved in deep thought.

"I am sorry," he said to himself, "that after all I have behaved so hastily to Sixteen-string Jack ; to be sure he committed a serious offence against me, but after all he did all he could do for the best, that is to say he confessed the truth to me, and put me upon my guard ; I ought to have considered, too, that the offence itself would not have been committed, had not his mind been thoroughly weakened and his intellect frightfully subdued, by the strange and terrible adventures he had gone through."

These thoughts thronged through the mind of Claude, and induced him to wish much to discover Jack's retreat.

Under ordinary circumstances, he would have found no difficulty in doing that ; but since the execution, Sixteen-string Jack had been so frightfully beset by fears of re-execution, that he had not frequented any of his old haunts, so that Claude was completely at fault concerning where to find him.

Suddenly, while he was thus ruminating, he fancied some one gently touched him on the arm, and turning suddenly he saw the object of his thoughts standing with a woe-begone face within a few paces of him.



"Claude," said Jack, "don't look so sternly on me. Oh, Claude, if you knew what I have suffered!"

Claude Duval held out his hand to Sixteen-string Jack, saying as he did so, in a voice of emotion—

"All is forgotten."

"Oh, no—no—no."

"Yes, I say yes. All is forgotten and forgiven, Jack; we are all to each other as ever we were. I only grieve that your sufferings have so far got the better of you as to make you fell and think in a manner repugnant to your nature."

"Can this be possible?"

"It is true, Jack."

Sixteen-string Jack took Claude's arm, and they walked on for some short distance together in silence. At length the former spoke.

"This is the happiest moment," he said, "that I have known for a long time."

"May it be the worst," said Claude; "and all the moments that are to come, as far transcend it in happiness as it transcends those that are past!"

Jack shook his head.

"Come, come, you must not despair."

"No, no, C'auide, I will not now despair, since I have become reconciled to you, but happy I can never be. I have now but one ambition, and that is that you will employ me in undoing some of the bad work that I have done."

"Well, Jack, where does the Jew live?"

"The Jew doctor who restored me, and whose real name is Myers, lives here in Queen Street."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, he has a large house there, full of the most costly articles that the whole of Europe can furnish him with. There is no limit to his luxury and extravagance."

"Well, I propose paying him a vist."

"A visit?"

"Yes; you must know, Jack, that I am not in funds just now, and it is quite necessary that I should be. I rather think that that Brereton has not money to fee counsel and to go to the necessary expenses for his defence against the false charge that is brought against him. Cicely likewise must be differently provided for from what she was, so that I really, one way and another, am in immediate want of one hundred pounds, and I have no time to go on the road for it."

"But you do not expect to get it of Myers?"

"I do."

"Impossible!"

"Not so impossible, perhaps, as at the first glance it appears. You used to be, before you took to the road, as good a hand at a lock as was to be found in the length and breadth of all England. Has your cunning deserted you?"

"I think not."

"Then I have just but one question to ask of you."

"And that—"

"Is, will you accompany me to-night in an attempt to get some cash from the Jew?"

"I will go with you, Claude, through fire and water—to the end of the world or a step beyond it, if you wish me to do so."

"The devil!" exclaimed Claude, suddenly.

"What is the matter?" said Jack.

"It's an awkward thing. Do you see who is coming?"

"Ah, yes, yes, Lucy."

"To be sure. Well, the fact is, I don't want to have anything to say to the girl, and would gladly avoid her."

"You cannot. She sees you, and is coming fast. Talk quietly to her, and don't have a scene, if you can help it."

"I wish not for that."

Lucy, whose dependence upon the promises of Claude had up to the last few days been very strong, now made her appearance, and rushing up to him, she seized him by the arm, and bursting into tears, exclaimed—

“ You do not care for me now, Claude ; you have forgotten me.”

“ Not forgotten you, Lucy, but—but the fact is, I lead too bad a life for you to care about me. I have not forgotten you, nor—but I want you to forget me.”

“ Forget you ?”

“ Yes, Lucy ; you will find some one who can love you better than I.”

“ Oh, Claude, Claude, this is a cruel jest.”

“ It is no jest, Lucy, my destiny calls me another way. Listen to me, my girl. You must name some place where I can always send to you. You may be assured you shall never want.”

“ Want ?”

“ No. That shall never be the case, Lucy, while I have anything for you, you may depend ; and you may have sufficient faith in my resources to feel assured that I shall be always able to provide in some way for those whom I love.”

“ Love ?”

“ Yes, Lucy, love.”

“ Then Claude, you do—love me still ?”

“ Assuredly, you have been a good girl to me. Now and then, perhaps, when a little jealousy got the better of you, you did not know very well what you were about ; but as a general thing, I say you have been true to me.”

“ And yet you would cast me from you ?”

“ There is a necessity that we should part.”

“ You love another ?”

Claude was silent. In the course of a few moments the girl abruptly held out her hand to him, saying—

“ Good-by, Claude.”

“ Good-by,” he replied. “ Tell me where to send to you to-morrow.”

She passed her hand across her eyes, as she said in a low mournful voice—

“ Alas, how can I ?”

“ Surely—surely you know where you are going.”

“ I cannot help it.—How can I tell where the tide will take me ?”

These last few words were said in so low a tone as she hurried away, that Claude did not catch them, and turning to Sixteen-string Jack, he asked him if he heard what she said. Jack had heard, but he shrunk from telling Claude, and replied in the negative, adding after a moment—

“ Women say a world of things that they don't mean.”

‘Tis true. Let us forget her. She will manage, no doubt, to let me know where to find her, and I will keep my word regarding her, but live again with her I cannot now. Higher motives own me.”

Claude did not feel exactly disposed to tell Jack in precise words that he was married to Cicely, but left him to infer what he pleased from the ambiguous way in which he spoke of the affair. No doubt Jack had his own surmises on the subject, but he did not choose, after all that had taken place, to ask any questions of Claude concerning Cicely.

“ Show me the Jew's house,” said Claude.

This Jack did ; and after noting well the general aspect of it, and feeling assured that he not only should know it again at any hour, either of the night or the day, but that he had a tolerable notion of the plan of its internal arrangements, he said—

“ Well, Jack, where shall we meet to-night ?”

“ Here, under this archway.”

“ Agreed. You must provide yourself with all the tools necessary for making good an entrance to the house.”

“ Certainly, I understand that part of the profession better than you do.”

“ Yes, I will have everything ready.”

Claude could not help seeing that Sixteen-string Jack was afraid of the adven



CLAUDE AND JACK WATCHING THE MOVEMENTS OF THE JEW.

ture, and indeed he could easily suppose that under the peculiar circumstances, the Jew had acquired a control over Jack's mind that bordered quite upon a superstitious fear. He hoped, however, to be able to rescue his old friend from such a state of mental depression; and if the night's enterprise had no other results than filling Claude's empty purse, and letting Sixteen-string Jack see that the Jew was not so all-powerful as he thought him, it would certainly not have been undertaken in vain.

They agreed between them to meet under the archway, at one o'clock in the morning.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## THE ROBBERY.—THE ADVENTURE AT THE JEW-PHYSICIAN'S.

THE midnight in London on that eventful date was one of the most wild and stormy that for years had shown itself in the great city.

By about ten o'clock large masses of clouds had gathered together in the far west, like some invading host, and had then taken the next two hours to complete their march to the city, over which they hung like a huge black pall, threatening death and destruction to all beneath it.

The people of London, that is to say, the decent, orderly, and estimable portion of the population, knew nothing of what was threatening, for they had all retired to rest; but those persons who for rapine, robbery, and illicit pleasures, were in the street, shrank within themselves at the prospect of the coming storm.

It was quite twelve, however, before the tempest showed any unequivocal signs of its presence, and fairly awakened the sleepers in London.

At about that hour there came a vivid flash of lightning that for a brief moment translated the whole city from intense darkness to a strange, lurid sort of light, making all things look like the remnant of some vast conflagration, which in its red dying embers was awful to look at.

The thunder that almost immediately followed, for the storm was fairly over the city, was perfectly terrific, and in an instant the whole population of London was awake. Who could sleep with such a summons in their ears to be up and watching?

Not the dread trumpet-blast which at the day of judgment is to summon the nations to the throne of Heaven, could have created greater consternation in the minds of many, than did that peel of thunder that startled them from sleep.

It was just at the moment it took place, that Claude Duval stood under the archway in Queen-street, waiting the arrival of Sixteen-string Jack.

Claude Duval was astonished at the storm, but he was not terrified, as many men. An enthusiastic lover of the beauties of nature as he was, he ever found too much to admire in any of her operations, to find anything to dread; and now in the stern sublimity of the storm, he felt that elevation of spirit which is ever the accompaniment of a superior intellect.

Alas! that that superior intellect which was given to Claude should have been desecrated, as it was, to base purposes.

He shrank back into the archway and watched the storm.

After the first clap of thunder, which had awakened everybody, there was a pause for some minutes, and then there came another, not so loud, and yet quite loud enough to be very startling, and to keep fully up to the mark the fears of those who had been alarmed at the first. The storm might then be fairly considered to be raging, for the lightning and thunder went on with scarcely one moment's intermission. Indeed the echo of one report blended into the actual reverberations of the next.

Claude was anxious for the appearance of Jack.

"Where can he be?" he said to himself. "Surely the tempest will not, even in the weak and excited state of his nerves, have the effect of frightening him from the adventure."

Scarcely had Claude uttered these words, when some one in a low, crouching attitude, entered the archway.

"Is it you?" cried Claude, fancying that, if it were Jack, he would know the sound of his, Claude's, voice.

"Heaven have mercy upon us!" replied Jack, for it was really he.

"Ah, I am glad you are come," said Claude.

"Spare me! Spare me!"

"What do you mean? What has happened?"

As he spoke, Claude placed his hand upon Jack's arm, and the latter thereupon gave a cry of terror,

"Gracious Heaven!" said Claude, "do you not know me?"

"Oh! spare me."

"Why, what is the meaning of this, Jack? Have you at length fairly taken leave of your senses?"

By this time Sixteen-string Jack seemed to be aware who it was that was speaking to him, and he said, faintly—

"I think it is you, Claude. Oh, yes, I am sure now that it is you."

"Assuredly."

"Thank God you are here, Claude. Did you hear it?"

"Certainly—I were deaf else. You mean the thunder?"

"No--no--no."

"What then?"

"The voice that came upon the storm with it. Did you not hear a voice say to you, audibly, that the hour of vengeance was at hand, and that the end of the world had come, even while we were plotting and planning a robbery? Oh, Claude—Claude, you must have heard it—you must have heard it. Would it not have been dreadful for us to have been caught by the Almighty in iniquity?"

"You are mad, Jack."

"Oh, no—no. They are mad who heed not the visible warnings of the hurricane. You and they, and all the world, are mad."

"Well," said Claude, with a despairing sort of shrug of his shoulder; "I am sorry, Jack, to find you are in such a frame of mind. Your judgment was once strong and able, but now I grieve to see that it is shattered. If you intend to help me in easing your friend the Jew of some of his cash, say so; if not, just be equally explicit, and I will essay the adventure myself."

"No, Claude, no."

"You will not?"

"Come away, let us pray and repent."

"I beg your pardon, Jack. Every one to his taste. I had rather not just now, but don't say I stopped you. You can go and pray till all is blue, if you like. As for me, I think this storm is a capital opportunity for attacking the house of the Jew, so I shall set to work upon it."

"No—no."

"Yes—yes, I say. Yes—yes. Why, how you shiver! Your teeth chatter, too, as though you were as cold as ice."

"I am cold."

Claude took from his pocket a small flask of brandy, and handed it to Jack, saying as he did so—

"Then drink of that, it will perhaps bring you to a better frame of mind. The storm, too, is well-nigh over. Do you not see and hear how the rain is coming down? We shall be washed out of the entry if we do not leave it voluntarily in a few moments more. Have you drunk some?"

"Yes."

"And how do you feel now?"

"Better, I think, and—and if you really have made up your mind to break into the Jew's house, it would be a dastardly thing of me to desert you."

"Give me your hand," said Claude. "Now, old friend, I know you again. Why, you were but playing a part before, and in your disguise no one would have recognised you as the bold, generous, daring Sixteen-string Jack."

"I am weak at times. Is there any more of that brandy?"

"Certainly. Take another drop, and don't let us have any more snivelling and crying about praying and repenting, and all that sort of thing; you know we are men, and have got our work to do. Come on. Have you your tools with you?"

"Yes. There is not a lock in London can stop me, if I choose to say open."

"Good."

They both left the archway, although the rain was coming down at a rate that was sufficient to wash any one quite away. They ran until they reached the deep portico in front of the Jew's house, where they had immediate shelter, as well as concealment; but it was rather an awkward thing for them to find that there was a watchman's box close at hand.

"What shall we do?" whispered Jack. "There is a watch-box."

"And a watchman in it," said Claude, "you may be sure."

"Think you so?"

"Of course; and no doubt fast enough asleep, where he will continue. The only thing to dread is his suddenly awakening and fancying he hears an alarm, in which case he will be springing his confounded rattle, to show his efficiency, as the sleepest watchmen are in the habit of doing, the moment they do chance to awaken; and then when they have made a tumult, they say they have scared away some thieves."

"Exactly. But what can we do?"

"Take away his rattle."

"Can you manage it?"

"Oh, yes, anything in reason."

Claude crept close to the watch-box, and looked in; he saw by the faint light of the night, that the guardian of the property was fast asleep.

"Hilloa!" said Claude close to his ears.

"Eh! Eh! God bless me, what? Eh!" cried the affrighted watchman.

"Here—your—your lantern," said Claude, "and your rattle."

"Yes, yes. What's the matter?"

"Spring your rattle well, you might get a guinea, and something else, if you do."

"Certainly, your honour."

The watchman had quite a job to get his rattle, which was in the profound depths of the pocket of his great white coat, but he did at length get it, and was about to spring it, when Claude dexterously snatched it from his hand, saying—

"You shall have the guinea another time, but the something else I promised you, you shall have now."

A knock on the head with the rattle sent the guardian of the night in a heap to the bottom of the watch-box, and then putting the rattle in his own pocket, Claude came back to Jack.

"Is all right?" said Jack.

"Oh, yes, yes."

"What have you done with him?"

"Oh, nothing particular. I have only advised him to be quiet for a time, and he is prudent enough to accept the good counsel. Come, now, Jack. Begin upon the doors with your keys. A more favourable night could not be for cracking a crib than this, I suppose, although it is a sort of work that is new to me, and rather out of my line altogether. Be quick."

"I don't think we shall be interrupted," said Jack; "and as for cracking cribs, I can assure you, there has been some very respectable people in this line, and I don't myself see why it should be thought worse of than saying, 'stand and deliver!' on the king's highway."

"It's all a matter of taste, Jack."

"So it is, so it is."

Jack made clever use of a skeleton key that he had, and the click of the lock, as he shot it back, sufficiently testified that he had succeeded.

"Humph!" he said, "it's all very well. But there is an iron bar in the inside."

"What is to be done?" said Claude.

"Oh, it's only a matter of time, after all. The iron bars to doors are of the worst and softest iron, usually. People think if they are heavy that's enough; but I have a saw here which will soon settle the matter, and in this rain it will hardly be heard by any one."

A fine saw blade soon made way through the bar of the door, but when that obstacle was removed, it was found that there were too bolts to get rid of, so that, with one thing and another, half an hour was consumed before the door of the Jew's house yielded, and then both Claude and Jack thought that all the labour would be in vain, for a bell that was communicated with it, rung violently the moment they moved it.

"Confound the suspicious rascal!" said Claude.

"Hush, hush," said Jack.

The bell ceased ringing and all was still. They could not tell, of course, whether any alarm was given or not, but they closed the street door, and fastened it on the inside as well as they could, and then they stood in the dark passage and listened.

For full five minutes they remained motionless, and then hearing no noise they concluded that, amid the clatter of the descending rain, the noise made by the bell had not been sufficient to awaken the Jew.

"It's all right," said Claude.

"It's hard to say," whispered Jack, "but we must chance it. Come slowly up stairs, and when we get past all observation from the fanlight over the door, I will get a light."

"You have matches?"

"Oh, yes, I never come upon an expedition of this kind without all my tools and implements with me, you may be sure."

"You're right."

They carefully ascended the staircase, which, being well carpeted, returned no sound of their footsteps, and when they reached the first landing, in another moment a faint blue light which he had procured through the instrumentality of a chemical match, enabled Claude to see about him.

When a lantern which Jack took from his pocket was lit, every object upon which he turned the magnifiers was fully irradiated with light, and then they found that the landing upon which they were, was fitted up in a very costly manner indeed, and prevailed with so many luxuries, that Claude could not help saying—

"If the staircase be thus elaborately furnished, what must the room, to which it is only the thoroughfare, be?"

"He is rich with plunder," said Jack.

"No doubt—no doubt, and you have of late contributed not a little to his ill-gotten wealth, Jack?"

"I have. The command he has had over me has been immense; I hope some day to be able to shake it off."

"You have but to determine to do so, surely, and it may be considered to be done, I should say."

"Oh, you do not know him."

"He is a man."

"Yes, with power seemingly more than human."

"Hush!"

Claude laid his hand upon the arm of Jack, who in a moment shut up the lantern, so that all was darkness around them.

"What did you hear?" whispered Jack.

"A footstep—look, there is a faint light, too. We must hide ourselves somewhere—ah—good luck! this door is open—come, Jack, come in. The light increases. Some one is evidently coming down the stairs. Who can it be?"

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## THE FATE OF THE JEW.—JACK'S DELIVERANCE.

It was into a back room upon the first floor that Claude and Jack went for refuge from the person who was coming slowly down the stairs, but they did not close the door sufficiently to shut out all means of observation, for they were naturally anxious to know who it was that at such an hour was going about the house.

"Look," said Claude in a whisper to Jack, "and tell me if you know who it is. There—there he is."

"It is the Jew," said Jack, with a shudder.

"Then the bell has alarmed him."

"No doubt—no doubt, and we are lost."

"Lost! What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know him not as I know him. He has powers of mischief that transcend all that you can imagine."

"I fear him not. Hush, only watch him narrowly."

Meyers, the Jew doctor, was a tall gaunt-looking man, of about fifty years of age, and as he came slowly down the stairs which led to the upper portion of his house, he looked more tall and gaunt than he really was, for he was attired in a dressing-gown, the skirts of which swept the floor, and upon his head he wore a strange conical cap.

In his hand he had a large knife.

It was impossible to draw any precise conclusion from his manner, as to whether he had risen in consequence of the alarm given by the ringing of the bell, or not, although Claude, as far as he could be said to have an opinion, was inclined to think that it was not so.

There was an air of deliberation about Meyers which seemed to be very far from the sort of feeling with which a man would get up in the night who thought his house was attacked. Nor did he look at all about him, as one might naturally have supposed he would under such circumstances. On the contrary, he proceeded as though he had some perfectly definite object, which could not have been the case in the event of a mere night alarm.

Both Claude and Jack were puzzled to know what to think about this odd conduct of the Jew.

"Patience, and let us watch him," whispered Claude. "There is no other resource; we shall perhaps find out something very curious and interesting by a close attention to his movements."

The more they watched Meyers, the more they were convinced that it was not the alarm of the bell ringing that had got him up at such an hour, and the more curious did they become, to know what on earth he could be about, stalking through his house at such a time, with a large and formidable-looking knife in his hand.

In the course of a few minutes he reached the landing where they were, and then he paused, as though to listen.

"Hist—hist!" he said, in an odd, half articulate voice. "Hist! all is still. He won't like it much; and what if he do?—ah, what if he do?"

As Claude looked carefully at him, an idea came across him, and he whispered to Jack, saying—

"He is asleep. Conscience has been exercising her power over that man, and he has arisen in his sleep."

"Do you really think so,"

"Look at him, and you will not doubt it."

Jack looked earnestly in the face of Meyers, and then he said—

"It is so; as you say, Claude, he has arisen in his sleep. No doubt the



noise of the storm and the bell mingled with some visions of his slumbers, and he has risen to repeat, perchance, some event of his former waking life."

"Some crime?"

"Doubtless a crime. Such a man's life is made up of crimes. Hush, he speaks again—let us hear him."

"Yes," said Meyers, "blood is real—but what of that? Many things are real as well as blood, and no one fears them. It is but a pang, and then all is over. He must die some time, and when he does I may not have the diamonds, but if he die now I do have them. Hush—hush—softly—hush!"

"A murder!" whispered Jack.

"No doubt of it."

"To be sure," added Meyers, "he is one of my own people, but my own people must die some time—I will do it."

"A pretty rascal!" said Claude.

"Follow him—follow him."

Meyers opened the door that was next to that through which Claude and Jack had just passed, to get out of his way, and in a moment he had left the landing. There was no difficulty, however, in following him, for he left the door wide open, so both Claude and Jack slipped into the room.

It was a large and handsome bed-chamber. In the centre was a great old-fashioned bed with costly hangings, and a great plume of feathers at each of its corners. All the appointments of the room, too, were of the first description, as they could very well see by the light which the Jew carried.

He continued muttering something to himself now which they could not very well make out, and then he placed his light upon a table and approached the bed, but he paused before he reached it, and said—

"Is all right below?"

After waiting apparently in a state of indecision for a few moments, he went to a part of the room where there was a door, and opening it he disclosed a large cupboard. He stooped to the floor of it, and appeared to be making a great effort to lift something.

It was a wonder that the exertion did not awaken him, but at length he got up the lid of a hole in the cupboard, and then he rose muttering to himself—

"Yes, yes, down there he will be safe. Let the dead consort with the dead. It has received others, and it shall receive him. He came to sleep here for security with his diamonds, and lo! he dies the death, and the bright gems become mine—yes, all mine!"

He then went to the table, and got the light, with which he advanced again to the trap-door, and holding it so as to give as much light as possible into the depth below, he stooped and looked down.

"What a grave!" he said. "But he is not the first—no—no—no. How should I be so rich if he were the first? I shall be rich enough some day to go to the East, and be a prince among my people. Yes, I shall be great in Jerusalem, if I am rich, and all will bow down to me. Oh, yes, I must have the diamonds. How deep down will he go?"

"About that depth," said Claude, as he put up his foot and sent the Jew headlong down the trap entrance.

"Good God!" said Jack,

One shriek came up from the depths of the abyss, and then all was still.

"Now, Jack," said Claude, "I have not taken this Jew's life for any sort of quarrel that I had with him, or for any romantic feeling that I was doing an act of justice towards society by ridding it of a bad member; but it is for your sake I have done it."

"For my sake?"

"Yes. Has not this man been as it were an incubus upon you? Has he not completely made you his slave? Has he not confounded all your faculties,

and so overpowered your judgment and your imagination that you know not yourself?"

"Yes—oh, yes."

"Then you are firm?"

Jack drew a long breath before he spoke, and then he only said,

"I hope so."

"You only hope so. Are you not sure?"

"No, Claude."

"Where are your doubts?"

"I have been so accustomed to think this man something more than human, that although I have seen him disappear down that hole, I should not feel at all surprised at his reappearance."

Claude laughed.

Jack shook his head, as he added,—

"Wait a bit—wait a bit."

"Well, well, Jack, at all events I suppose the house is our own, and we had better take advantage of the opportunity and fill our purses, if we can. Come. It is most probable that we shall find what we want in some strong box, which your ingenuity will be taxed to open."

"My experience," said Jack, "of these matters has taught me to believe that it is in the bedrooms of such as Meyers that their principal moveable valuables are kept, and to such a perfection has the science of robbery got, that there are cracksmen in London who will tell you in which drawers in a chest of drawers money is most likely to be kept."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and they are mostly correct. Come on, if we are to do anything."

"Ah, Jack, you are yourself again, now that you have got rid of the terror of that man."

"I feel better."

Jack smiled now in something of his old way, and he and Claude at once proceeded up stairs to the bedroom of the Jew, which they easily found. Claude was rather surprised to find no one else in the house, but Jack told him that Meyers was in the habit of only employing an old woman in the daytime to attend upon him, and that she did not sleep upon the premises.

"Then we are absolute masters here?" said Claude.

"I presume so."

In the Jew's bedroom they were nearly being foiled, for nothing of any value of a portable character could they for a time find. At length close to the head of the bed Claude saw a small keyhole in the wall, and he at once pointed it out to Jack, saying,—

"There, there; can you do anything with that?"

"Ah, you have found it."

"You think so?"

"I am certain of it; and it will be a lock indeed that will resist the means I have here of opening it. Hold the light, Claude, and if this be the Jew's strong box, I think we shall soon obtain a sight of its contents."

Jack produced his skeleton keys, and commenced operations, but the lock was certainly an ingenious one, for it resisted his efforts a considerable time. At length, with a sudden click it was thrown back, and in another moment a small iron door in the wall creaked upon its hinges, and showed a tolerably capacious chest, let into the solid brick work of which the wall was composed.

Claude eagerly looked into the receptacle of some of the Jew's wealth, and the strange miscellaneous collection of articles rather puzzled him, inasmuch as there was everything but cash.

Watches, rings, necklaces, bracelets, and every ornamental article of jewellery was to be found, and no doubt all of value, but the difficulty of disposing of such things was well known both to Claude and Jack.

"What are we to do?" said the former.



(Lucy, Claude's deserted mistress, about to commit suicide.)

"We must take what we can get," said Jack. "I should advise that we do not take too much at once, but come back again from time to time. Of course, by making a great sacrifice, we can manage to dispose of such property as we see here."

"Oh, yes."

Acting upon this advice, Claude and Jack each took some of the jewellery, and carefully putting it in their pockets, after which they began to think of closing the secret box, and quitting the house.

The lantern that Jack had placed upon a chair that was near the bed-side, and before he closed the Jew's strong box he sat down to trim the light a little.

The moment, however, that he was fairly seated in the chair, down it went through the floor like a flash of lightning, conveying Jack and the light with it, and leaving Claude in total darkness.

This was so sudden and so totally unexpected that Claude was quite staggered at it, and nearly fell forward through the opening which he supposed was now in the floor. He had not time to recover from his first surprise before another awaited him.

He felt the whole floor of the room vibrate for a moment, and then he was confident that it was slowly ascending. He could hear the creaking of pulleys by which this mechanical feat was executed, and as the speed with which the ascending floor went increased, a horrible fear came across Claude at the fate which awaited him.

"I am to be crushed," he cried, "between the floor and the roof. Oh! what a horrible fate. Help! help! help!"

The sound of his own voice roused him to that native dignity of courage which he possessed, and folding his arms, he, with a heroism worthy of a far more exalted sphere of action, prepared himself to meet one of the most horrible deaths in silence.

In that total darkness he suffered more than death with the horrible expectation of its approach in such a form as it now presented itself to him. But the floor ascended much less rapidly than he had imagined, or his imagination made him think the distance less. But at all events a very few moments more must settle the dreadful business.

During that brief interval nearly the whole of the most striking events in his career rushed across the fancy of Claude, from the moment when he had knelt by the gallows tree upon which hung the remains of his father, to that in which Cicely had told him she would be his.

It was the thought of her that inflicted the severest pang upon him, and made him indeed groan in spirit.

"Farewell, my Cicely," he said, "farewell for ever. If ever life had a charm for me, it is now in your love; but I must leave thee to the great world and all its sorrows alone. Oh, death, thou hast indeed a pang now, and such a pang as I have in my pride thought thou would'st never have to me, for I had looked upon thee in many shapes, and feared thee not until now. Cicely, dear Cicely, dearest, a last farewell."

His head sunk upon his breast, and but that his more manly nature revolted against such an act, he could have wept.

For a few moments then he was quiet, for each instant he expected that the death stroke would come. He lifted up his hands to try if he could touch the ceiling, but he felt nothing, and then he thought that the movement of the floor was not so rapid.

Hope—that radiant angel—came up in his heart again, and he began to fancy that after all he might be saved.—O what a soft delicious feeling was that!

"I may live yet—may live yet," he exclaimed, "but let my life be lengthened to as long a span as it may, never shall I forget the feelings of this dreadful hour."

He now became convinced that the passage of the floor of the apartment through the air had ceased, and he heard a voice which sounded startlingly near to him, say,

"Who art thou?"

"Whoever has had the strange power that is evidently possessed by some one here, ought to know," responded Claude.

"Who art thou?" said the voice again.

"Claude Duval."

"The robber?"

"Well, you might have chosen a more delicate mode of putting it; but have it your own way. I am Claude Duval the robber."

"And afraid to die?"

"No."

"Yes.—What will you give for your life?"

"In truth, I have said stand and deliver to many men, but never yet had it said to me. Since, however, you put it in that light, I will give what I am worth, and the more readily because I cannot see my foe, and know not his power. Who art thou?"

"One with power enough to crush thee. Thou hast walked into the trap, and must pay the penalty."

"What trap? what penalty?"

"Walk on."

Claude had two pistols about him, and holding one in each hand, he stood profoundly still, saying—

"No, I wait my time."

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE DEATH OF THE DESERTED.

AN event took place on that same night during which Claude Duval was exposed to such great peril, which deserves narration at our hands. It was this:

Those who are in the habit of considering human beings in a wholesome kind of a way, when there has occurred any lapse of what may be called the moralities of life, may take a lesson from the sad fate of the young girl who had for a time held the unenviable post of Claude's mistress.

We speak of her whom he had familiarly called Poll, and who with so much love and so much jealousy, had followed him from place to place, and sought to win him back to her.

At her last interview with Claude her manner had been strange, and she had exhibited symptoms almost approaching to a derangement of intellect. Such catastrophe might fairly be expected to occur, if no better or calmer feelings should soon find a place in her heart during the next few hours.

For a time she stood gazing after him, the way that he had gone, and then, with a gasping sob, she ran a few yards after him, and then she paused again, as some sudden alteration of feeling came over her.

"No, no," she said. "He has cast me off, and I will beseech him no more. He has cast me off for ever, and I will cast myself off—it is time for me to die now."

After the utterance of these mournful words she walked on in the way that she had been going, but it was with an uncertain and staggering gait, so much so, indeed, that any one would have supposed her intoxicated, but such was far from being the case.

Her soul was full of bitterness and woe, and as she went all she could continue saying, was—

"He has cast me off for ever, and I will now cast myself off."

These words to her mind had a fearful meaning. They spoke a sentence of death, which she was resolved to carry out against herself.

But still, before she bade adieu to this world, and "all the vanity and vexation of spirit," which had been hers while a dweller within its cities, she felt that she had something to do, yet a something which to leave undone, would be to cloud the death to her with double bitterness.

The rain came down in torrents soon after she had left Claude, but she walked on at the same pace, as though she were completely unconscious of the state of the weather, and no doubt she was.

She walked on until she came to a narrow street in Somers-town, and seeking a house in that street, which was of the most squalid character, she knocked at the door.

Before it was opened, she put her hand into the breast of her apparel, and took out some money, wrapped in paper.

The door was not opened, but a window above it was thrown up, and a woman called out—

“Who is that?”

“Ah, is that you?” said the wretched girl. “Don’t you know me, Mrs Green?”

“Gracious goodness!”

“Why do you say gracious goodness? Alas! I have much need of grace and goodness too.”

The window was closed, and in a few moments the street door was opened, when Mrs. Green, gasping in an odd manner as she spoke, said—

“Why, why—did you—never leave—your address?”

“My address?”

“Yes, it is a month since you have been here to see after your child you gave me to nurse.”

“Yes, a month. I always, you know, come once a month to pay you. Here is the money.”

“Yes, but—but——”

“But what?”

“You know you have always refused to let us know where to find you.”

“Believe me, I had my reasons.”

“You have been away a month.”

“Gracious God! why do you continue repeating that!”

“Because, because——”

“Because what? You will drive me distracted. Speak to me, woman. Because what, I say?”

“During that time, your child——”

“My child? my child? Did you say my child?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Go on, go on, or I will kill you.”

“During that time your child has been dead——”

“Oh, no, no, no!”

“And buried.”

“’Tis over. Thank—thank God. ’Tis over.”

The wretched mother dropped the small sum of money that she carefully laid by to pay for the child’s keep. It fell upon the pavement with a dull heavy sound, and the poor bereaved mother staggered from the place. Again in a rushing torrent came down the pitiless rain, dashing into her face, while the insulting wind dragged from her head the frail soddened bonnet that she wore, and scattered it to fragments.

She heeded nothing—she cared for nothing, but no doubt quite unconscious of what had occurred, she still staggered on, and it was strange that she seemed to know, even in the midst of all her mental agony, whither she was going.

She hurried up and down streets evidently with a design. It would almost seem as if some unseen hand were leading her to destruction or to peace.

“All is lost!” she said. “All is lost!” and those were the only words she uttered, as through the storm of wind and rain she took her way—to the river.

Yes. That was her destination.—Winding her way up the long straggling thoroughfare of Gray’s Inn Lane, she reached Holborn, which she crossed, and diving into the intricate neighbourhood of Fetter Lane, she soon found herself in Bridge Street, Blackfriars, close to the old bridge.

The storm of wind and rain had cleared the streets of all who had houses to go to, and it seemed to that unhappy creature, so few persons did she meet, as if every one kept out of her way, as they would out of the way of something dangerous or loathsome to sight or touch.

That was her impression. Alas, poor creature! She had deserted herself and

now she found that all human kind deserted her. She was about to leave the world, which henceforward contained for her no charm, and so she, with a pardonable error, thought that it was leaving her.

She was certainly seen and remarked upon by two or three persons as she went, but then, in London, to look woe-begone and spirit-broken, is to bespeak that shrinking and shunning with which the more cheerful and prosperous are but too apt to treat their less fortunate brothers.

It is a melancholy fact that there is nothing from which human nature revolts so much as from the sight of the misery of its fellows.

Of course there are many noble and brilliant exceptions to this state of things.

An old watchman, who happened to awake, looked out of his box just in time to see the pale, wan, heart-stricken being pass him. Her face happened to be just upon a level with his as she flitted by.

He thought it was a ghost, and dropped to the bottom of his box in an agony of apprehension at having such a personage upon his beat.

"Lord forgive us!" he muttered. "It's a ghost of some one who has met death by some unfair means, and there has been no crowner's quest in the parish."

She passed on, and now the surging noise of the rain upon the river could be distinctly heard. She looked up the steep ascent of the bridge, but not a soul was to be seen. Black, heavy masses of cloud obscured the fair face of Heaven, and the starry host, which else would have made such a glorious canopy above her head, and all between that and earth was the pelting of the storm, that seemed to know no abatement.

The water came down in a stormy shower, and the mist of it came up in a seething cloud.

All was miserable, cold desolation.

The miserable creature, who walked upon the margin of eternity, did not weep—If God had granted tears to her, she yet might have found a something for the love of which to cling to life, some faint hope to which she might have held, as the wrecked mariner grasps at a floating reed, to sustain him amid the roar and the dash of a raging sea.

But she had no tears and she had no hope. Her heart was a desert, over which the simoom of wild passion had passed, and left not a green spot behind it, to mark that there had ever been verdure or beauty.

No, all was despair.

And now she has climbed up the steep ascent of the bridge, and she stands near to the parapet of the centre arch. Her arms are resting upon the cold wet stone. Those arms which will soon want no rest, knowing no fatigue.

The wind scattered about her shoulders the dishevelled masses of her hair, and her poor tattered garments are tossed in confusion by the stormy breeze.

She paused a moment, and a sort of shuddering horror of the deed she contemplated doing, crossed her mind.

"Oh, heaven forgive me," she said. "It is known above that if I were not so truly desolate as I am, I would not thus seek to die."

She paused as though she almost expected some distinct and not tangible answer to her appeal, and then in a few moments she spoke again as if she were really holding some discourse or argument concerning her condition with an invisible and all powerful being.

"My child is no more," she said, "oh, then, what have I to live for? He whom I have loved has cast me from him. Another supplies the place in his heart that once was mine. Why then am I urged to live?"

She leant her face upon her hands, and shook as with a convulsion of grief, but she shed no tears, and then she spoke again in a most melancholy and wailing tone of voice, that must have gone to the heart of any human being, if such had heard the mournful tones.

"Yes, I was once virtuous; I once had friends who looked upon me with eyes

of love, and almost veneration. They said that I was beautiful too, but what am I now? I ask what am I now, that I should see to live?"

She gazed wildly around her, as though from the spirits of the storm that hustled and wailed around her, she expected some answer in confutation or acquiescence with the words she had last uttered to vacancy.

The rain beat in her face, and the blustering wind scattered about her hair, now blinding her as it was dashed across her eyes, and then streaming wildly like some strange banner far from her.

"Claude—Claude," she gasped, "where are you now? Oh! where are you now, Claude?"

Suddenly she shrunk into one of the recesses of the bridge. A party of drunken men were coming from the City side of the river, and chanting on their way some rude Bacchanalian lay, which they thought it necessary to give utterance to at the top of their lungs.

The rain and the wind did not affect them. They were in the seventh heaven of a drunkard's felicity. The headache and the repentance of the morrow never for a moment crossed their minds, as they came swaggering on, occupying nearly the whole of the carriage way.

They passed on without seeing the young girl, who shrunk from their observation as fearfully as if anything, in her then frame of mind, could harm her.

When they were gone—when their tipsy chant had decreased, in the distance, to a faint murmur, she rose shivering from the corner where she had hidden herself.

It was strange at that moment what a sudden lull came over the tempest that had been raging around her. The rain dropped, and the wind only came in small scattering misty gusts. She looked up, and through a crevice in the clouds she saw a small portion of a young moon.

Oh! never had it in her eyes looked so beautiful, and so full of calm and serenity.

The exquisite beauty of that cloudy canopy, the fair planet that shone through it, filled her whole soul.

She wrung her hands as she cried, frantically—

"Oh, if I dared to live—oh, if I dared to live."

The clouds, envious of so much calm majesty and beauty, swept again over the face of the young moon. Again, with a sullen roar, the wind arose, and the rain came down like an avalanche upon the devoted head of the poor wanderer.

The partial light that had shone for a moment upon her soul was gone again, and like the elements around her, her mind became once more all wild commotion.

She passed her hands several times across her face and brow, as to free her vision from the tangled masses of her hair, which ever and anon flaunted in the breeze, and half-blinded her. Then she spoke—

"Farewell," she said, mournfully. "Farewell to all whom I loved—farewell to all who love me. My little child is in heaven, and wants no prayer, but my last words to the great Master of all things shall be for thee, Claude Duval. May you be yet blessed—yes, yet blessed."

She looked hastily around her; no one was nigh. For all the sight or sound of human habitants that met her hasty observation, she might have been in a city of the dead.

"Claude, Claude," she cried. She waved her arms frantically in the murky air. "Farewell, Claude."

There was a rushing sound, a shriek, a plunge in the water of the Thames, and all was over. The tide rolled over the life and the sorrows of that erring one, who yet will not be despised of heaven.



## CHAPTER XLV.

## FINISHES CLAUDE'S ADVENTURE IN QUEEN STREET.

WE left Claude Duval in one of the most extraordinary and perilous situations it was his fortune to be in during the whole of his eventful career.

The command which had been given to him to advance, he by no means felt inclined to obey. He was as yet, so far as he knew, standing upon solid ground, but he could not tell how much danger a single footstep forward might place him at once into.

Hence was it that with his pistol in his hand, upon which he knew he could rely, he declared his intention of not obeying the command which was given him.

If we were to say that under such totally unprecedented and extraordinary circumstances in which Claude was now placed he did not feel any amount of terror or uneasiness, we should be saying that he was not human, but certainly he felt no fear, properly so called.

After he had breathed the sort of defiance that his last words implied, there was a pause of some moments' duration, and the same voice said—

“Claude Duval, think again.”

“About what?” said Claude.

“Advancing.”

“No; I shall remain where I am.”

“You are a doomed man.”

“I will believe that when it happens,” said Claude, “but I decline putting faith in it before.”

“Cast down your arms and yield.”

“When I am better convinced of the power of my enemy I will take that course into consideration.”

“Fool, are you sick of life?”

“No, idiot, are you?”

Claude thought he heard the stealthy footstep of some one close to him.

This was an idea that in the intense darkness with which he was surrounded was none of the pleasantest, and he bent all his attention to listen for any confirmation of the supposition.

In the course of half a minute he felt quite sure that his senses had not deceived him. He could hear, he thought, the suppressed breathing of some one.

“Do it,” said a voice.

A stealthy footstep approached nearer still, and then all was quiet. Claude doubled his fist and launched out his right arm with violence.

He was not mistaken in the result, for some substance gave way before the blow, and there was a great scuffling upon the floor of the place.

A suppressed voice uttered at the moment some of the most diabolical oaths that he, Claude, had ever in all his life heard.

“Stand off,” he cried. “Stand off, I say, or advance another step at your own peril. I am armed, and never yet scrupled to defend myself.”

All was still.

Claude stooped as low as he could, and then he heard a low voice say,—

“Where is he?”

“Hush!” said another. “Question him where he is. Claude Duval, attend to what shall be said to you. You are adjured to do so by the bones of him who suffered at Hampstead for the crime that was another's.”

“What more?” cried Claude. “What more can you say or know upon that subject? You may enchain my attention as surely as that of a three year old child with a nursery tale, if you can tell me more than I myself know upon such a subject.”

“We can tell all,” said the voice.

"All? All?"

"Ay, all, from the first to the last."

"Speak, then, I charge you."

"Advance."

Claude in his anxiety to hear what he could on the subject of his father's condemnation and execution for a crime of which he was certainly innocent, was upon the point of stepping forward, but a moment's reflection made him pause, for it convinced him that nothing more had been as yet said but what might be known to many.

"I will hear what you have to say from my present position," he added, coldly.

"You are incredulous," said the voice.

"As well I may be, until I have more proof."

"Well, listen. Your father was accused of the murder of Sir Lionel Faversham's steward at Hampstead. The principal witness against him was Sir Lionel himself. Your father was innocent of the crime."

"Well?"

"He suffered, and was hung in chains upon Hampstead Heath, but you, while yet a boy, and in company with your only sister, May Duval, revenged his death. On a stormy, blustrous night, you shot Sir Lionel Faversham close to the gibbet of your dead father, and he rolled down a steep declivity a dead man, and lay a mangled corpse at its base."

"And that is all?" said Claude.

"Is it not enough?"

"Yes, for your knowledge, but not for your purposes. You have sought to make an impression upon me, by detailing some particulars of my poor father, but well I know where you have gleaned them."

"That is impossible. The secrets of occult science are not to be discovered so hastily."

"There needs no occult science in this case. You have got a poor dupe, whose enfeebled intellect, I regret to say, has made him too readily fall into your hands. You have gleaned from Sixteen-string Jack all that you have just told me."

"Wretched man, your death be upon your own head unless you agree to our terms."

"Ay, what are they?"

"A league of mutual benefit. You will be protected upon all serious occasions, and even restored to life again if you should suffer at Tyburn, provided——"

"Ay, provided," said Claude. "What is the condition? I think I can guess it."

"The consideration is, that you bring here a portion of your gains regularly."

"In fact, be your journeyman instead of my own master. That is the affair as I take it."

"Do not reject too lightly."

"Nor accept too lightly."

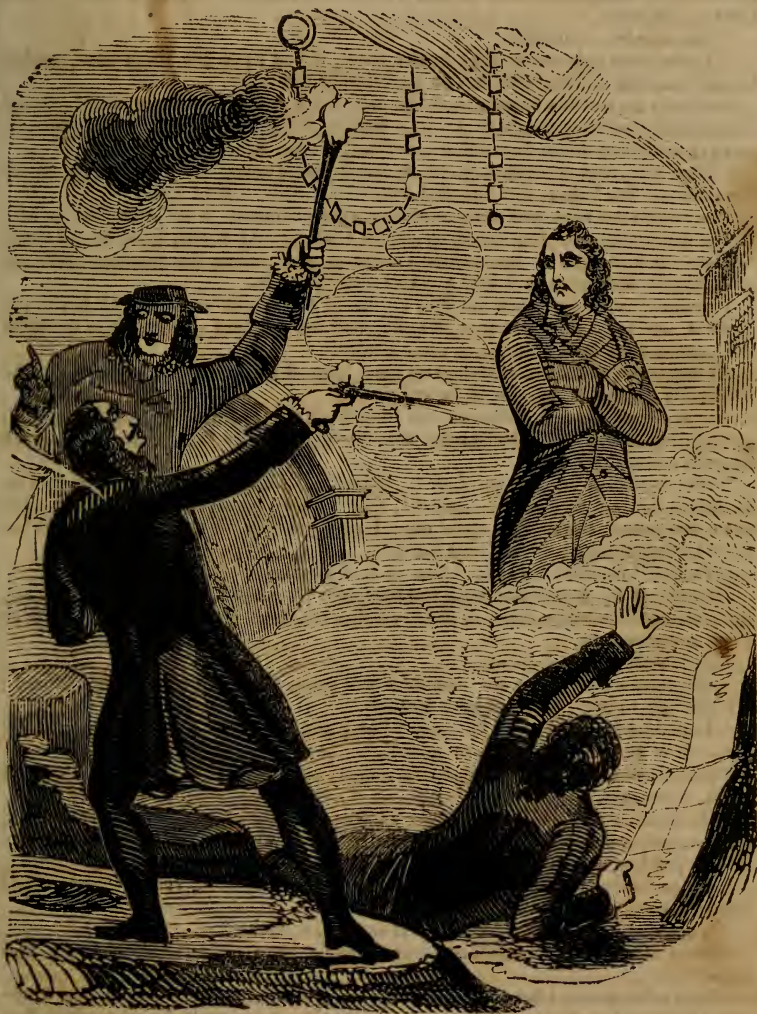
"Hark you, Claude Duval; you are upon the point of giving what you will call a haughty defiance, and a hasty passionate answer to this proposition. Remember, however, that it is only made to a few, and if any one to whom it is made refuses it, we never allow him to leave this place alive."

"Indeed!" said Claude. "Then it is time we began operations."

During the course of this little dialogue, Claude had bent all his energies towards coming to an accurate judgment as to where the person was standing with whom he was conversing, and he considered that he felt fully certain upon the subject.

Immediately after he had uttered the last words, he levelled his pistol in the direction he thought would be certain to give him a fair chance in the dark of hitting his unknown enemy.

"Hark you," he added. "I have a pistol here, double-barrelled, and with a good spring bayonet attached."



(Claude Duval in the Cellars of the Jew's house.)

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed some one. "Two barrels, say you? Ha! ha!"

"Yes, and there's the contents of one of them."

As he spoke, he pulled the trigger, and a stunning report subdued all other sounds for the moment.

"Murder!—murder!—murder! Oh! oh! oh!" cried some one. "I'm done for at last!"

"Glad to hear it," said Claude, as he dashed furiously in the direction of the speaker. "Only let me get hold of you, and I'll soon put you out of your misery,

you infernal scoundrel. You thought, I suppose, you had such a man as poor enfeebled Sixteen-string Jack to deal with, but I suppose you have now found out the difference."

"Oh, murder!—murder!"

"There were only three slugs in the pistol, if you have got them all," added Claude making another dart in the direction of the voice.

Suddenly he lost his footing, and the only thing that for half a moment stayed his fall down some deep pit, was a rope that he fell across. He had just time to seize it, and then down he went at a very rapid rate, hanging by it.

"Ha! ha!" said the voice, quite in composed accents. "I shouldn't at all wonder, my fine fellow, but you will break your neck. Ha! ha!"

The rope must have met with some sort of impediment in its progress, or else it would have been of but small service to Claude. As it was, however, it saved his life, for although he came swiftly to the ground, it was feet foremost, and not with force sufficient to give him a very tolerable shake.

It was not to be supposed but that he would feel a little confused at his rapid descent, and for a few moments, if policy had not dictated silence, it is doubtful if he could have found breath to utter a word.

At length he recovered a little, and gave himself a shake, to ascertain that he had really sustained no serious injury.

All was impenetrable darkness, and Claude stumbled on for some few paces, until he heard or fancied he heard a deep groan, and then before he could speak himself, a voice said—

"Oh! is this to be the end of all? Better had I died upon the scaffold! Oh, far better had I died upon the gallows, than thus be preserved to linger out a life of torture here. Spare me! spare me! I pray you, by killing me at once. What have I done to merit this at your hands?"

"Surely," thought Claude, "that is Jack's voice."

He did not by any means wish too hurriedly to commit himself in speaking, so he listened for some time, in the hope that the voice would renew its real or mock supplications.

In a few moments it did so.

"Oh, have mercy upon me; indeed I will bring all plunder faithfully," it said; "I only ask to live; I will reserve nothing."

"It is Jack's voice," said Claude, "but I really wonder how far I may trust him. Has he played me false or not?"

Claude hesitated for a few moments longer, and then the voice of Jack came again to his ears,

"What have I done that I should be thus condemned? I know your power! I know that you have wonderful, and in all respects miraculous resources, but why should you try to crush me?"

"If you betrayed another," said Claude, in an assumed voice, "you would betray me."

"Another? Betrayed another? What do you mean?"

"Your old friend and comrade Claude Duval; have you not offered to sell him to us?"

"I—I offer to sell Claude Duval?—now I understand you. I am to be murdered because I would not do so, and your making it my fault, by pretending that I yielded, is but one of those bliter pieces of irony, in which you are so great and profound. But if I am to die, or to suffer torments worse even, for not betraying Claude into your hands, it must be so; I am weak in many things, but upon that I am as firm as a rock."

"Jack," said Claude, in his natural voice. "How do you find yourself, my old pal?"

"Oh, joy, joy! is it you, Claude?"

"Yes to be sure, and alive and kicking. Never fear, old fellow; we shall do well yet."

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## THE FIGHT IN THE CELLARS OF THE JEW'S HOUSE.

For a few moments after Claude uttered these last words, Sixteen-string Jack was silent, but it was the silence of excess of joy at finding Claude was safe and uninjured. He could not forbear shedding tears of gratification.

Alas! poor Jack, he was a very different being indeed, now, to what he was before his execution. No one had been more firm, bold, and full of spirits than he; but that awful event, although it had not resulted in depriving him of life, had completely crushed and broken down his spirits.

He was, indeed, according to the phraseology of religious fanatics, a new man, and he had gained nothing by the novelty, as Claude and all who knew him could well perceive.

"Come, Jack," said Claude, "don't be whimpering and snivelling there like a girl, but stir yourself up, and let us see or feel, for this place is horridly dark, what we have to do."

"Yes, Claude, I am here."

"Well, I know you are there; all I ask of you, is to be a man."

"I will do whatever you tell me, Claude. You have but to command me, and I will obey. We are not safe here though."

"How do you know that?"

"Some one spoke to me, a few minutes since!"

"Oh, never mind that," said Claude, who knew that it was to the short colloquy he himself had had with Jack in an assumed voice he now referred. "Never mind that, Jack; can you give a guess as to where we are?"

"We can be nowhere else than in the vaults of the Jew's house, as I think."

"And can we get out?"

"No!" said a loud stern voice, that was not Jack's.

"Oh, good gracious," said Jack, "we are lost."

"Silence," shouted Claude, "silence, I say; who was that who just now said, 'No?'"

"One who can say more, and as much to the purpose if he will," added the voice; "take that."

Bang went a pistol, and Claude felt the ball just touch his cheek as it passed him.

"Blaze away!" he cried in a voice of the greatest unconcern, as he immediately fired in the direction where he had seen the flash of the weapon. "Blaze away."

Crack went another pistol shot at Claude, but it missed him as before. His usual luck did not now desert him upon the occasion.

"All right," he cried; having taken the precaution during his previous brief conversation with Jack to reload the discharged barrel of his pistol, he was able instantly to return this second fire, somewhat to the amazement of his foes.

A deep groan came upon the air of the place after the echo of the firing had ceased.

"Oh, said Claude, "I had one of you, had I?"

He sat down upon the ground to reload his pistol, and he had while in that position satisfactory proof that it was the safest he could assume, for another shot was fired which just passed over his head.

By the flash of this last shot he saw Sixteen-string Jack, not far from him, with something glittering in his hand.

"What is it you have, Jack?" said Claude.

"A sword that I have just picked up," replied Jack. "I hope I shall be

able by its use to convince you, Claude, how very willing I am to fight for you."

"All's right, I am ready again. Blaze away."

His foes did not seem so ready as before to fire at one who really seemed to have a charmed life, and he rose from the ground to a standing posture with the double-barrelled pistol ready for immediate action, without having another shot tried upon him.

Suddenly a faint light illuminated the most distant part of the strange cavernous place in which he and Sixteen-string Jack were, and from which their escape seemed to be difficult, if not very doubtful under the present aspect of affairs.

Claude fixed his eyes upon the light, which looked more like that reflected from some centre of illumination, which was sought to be hidden, than light especially intended to be directed to that part of the cavernous place.

At all events, let it come how it might into the place, Claude by its assistance saw the crouching figure of a man.

After the numerous shots that had been fired at him, it was not to be supposed that he would feel much delicacy with regard to returning them. To fire at the figure was the work of a moment.

"A miss. Try again," cried a voice. "Ha, ha!"

Claude, contrary to his usual calm practice, suffered himself at the moment to be irritated into firing his other barrel, so that he held in his hand a discharged pistol.

It would appear, that this was just the state of things he required, for in a moment a voice shouted—

"On to him. Cut him down—cut him down. Do something so that he do not leave this place alive."

Four men immediately rushed from out the darkness upon Claude, while a fifth emerged from behind a door, and held up a lighted flambeau, which cast a radiant glow over the whole scene.

At any other time, no doubt Claude would have felt some curiosity to look about him, and see what sort of place he was in, but now to defend his life was the sole thought that came across him.

The only weapon of defence or offence he had was that spring bayonet attached to the pistol, which he had spoken of; a touch made that ready for use, but it was a poor defence against four resolute armed men.

What force, however, will not do, finesse will sometimes accomplish, and in Claude's situation of danger, any course of action was allowable.

Suddenly he flung himself upon the floor, and in a strange squatting attitude, and rushing forward, he caught two of his enemies by the legs, and flung them upon their backs before they were aware of what was going to happen to them.

Springing to his feet, then, with a celerity that was truly astonishing, he made another of them by far too intimately acquainted with the power of the little bayonet to be at all pleasant, and as that one staggered back, Claude wrenched from his hand a sword with which he was armed, and stood upon his defence:

The ruffian who had hitherto escaped the result of the encounter, stood for a moment or so, like a man petrified, but it would appear as if he possessed courage, for he advanced upon Claude with some show of determination.

"Be it so," said Claude as their swords rung together, "you and I, if you please, without any tricks, will fight it out."

It was well for Claude Duval that among his minor accomplishments he included that of a good knowledge of the use of the broadsword, or he would now have found more than his match in the man to whom he was opposed.

As it was, the fight appeared to be about as fair a one as regarded equally matched opponents as could very well be imagined.

Neither party gave way an inch, and the swords clashed together with a vehe-

mence which proved them to be right good steel to stand it. No wound had as yet been given or received.

But Claude was not for many minutes to be left to such a fair stand-up fight. The two vagabonds who had been upset by Claude, at the commencement of the fracas, were not very likely to amuse themselves by sitting upon the floor for a longer period than they could possibly help; and now they both rose and advanced to the attack with a serious celerity, that really threatened mischief towards Claude.

The man who stood aloft with the torch, began to think that he might as well have a hand in the affair; accordingly, rushing forward, he dealt Claude a blow upon the back of the head with the flambeau that brought from it, the torch, such a shower of sparks as confused everybody, while it nearly stunned Claude.

The regular opponent who was fighting with Duval did not take any advantage of this circumstance, but one of the others who had been so ignominiously upset did so, and approaching Claude, he was upon the point of making a blow at him, when very mysteriously at the moment down he fell with a fractured skull.

This mystery, however, did not last above a moment, for when the fellow fell, Claude saw Sixteen-string Jack standing close at hand brandishing a sword, and looking absolutely furious.

"Come on," he cried, in a voice that was as different from that in which he usually spoke, as thunder is to a penny whistle. "Come on, you vagabonds, come on, and I'll soon make-mince meat of you. Come on, you thieves and murderers, face me if you dare."

"Bravo, Jack!" cried Claude.

The man with the torch made a blow at Jack with that most bewildering weapon, but Jack thrust at him with his sword, and the point of it going into his mouth, made such confusion among his teeth that he howled again, and danced about in the most ludicrous manner imaginable. But Claude had too much real work upon his hands to find time to laugh at what Jack was doing.

"Come on," cried the man who had been fighting him, "keep it up for a few minutes."

"What do you mean?" said Claude.

"Fight me till three in the morning, if you please."

"You are an odd fellow, what do you mean?" said Claude.

At this moment the only other person of the attacking four who was in a condition to do so, made a blow at Sixteen-string Jack, which brought him to his knees.

"Claude—Claude!" he cried, "Claude!"

"Coming, Jack," said Claude, and making two steps towards him, he clave the man's skull open with one blow of the broad sword he had in his hand, and Jack struggled with a confused look to his feet.

"Hush! hush!" suddenly cried the man who had been fighting with Claude Duval, "there's the chimes of some church clock going; it's three. Hip, hip, hip, hurrah! I'm out of his service at last."

The fellow threw down his sword, and cut such extraordinary capers, that Claude was lost in astonishment, and did not see for a moment that the man with the torch, notwithstanding his wound, and that he had cast the flambeau to the ground, where it lay spirting and burning, was attempting to make his escape from the scene of action.

"Stop him," cried Sixteen-string Jack, pointing to the man who had held the flambeau, "stop him, Claude."

"Right willingly," said Claude; "if I mistake not, my friend, you came behind me with your torch, and very nearly put me beyond further troubles."

"Oh, no—no—no," cried the fellow, as he darted on. "No, it was not I—it was not I."

"Indeed, but it was though. Defend yourself."

"Take that, then," said the fellow, as suddenly turning, with a large horse pistol in his hand, he fired, or rather pulled the trigger of it in Claude's face. The weapon only flashed in the pan.

"Thank you," said Claude, "I believe that was very well meant, but it strikes me that your powder could not have been dry. You see how dangerous such negligence is."

One blow with the sword stretched the fellow at Claude's feet, and then turning he saw the man with whom he had been so recently engaged, and who in such a mysterious manner had suddenly left off fighting at three o'clock, clapping his hands, and apparently quite enjoying the scene that was taking place.

"You are a strange fellow," said Claude to him. "Pray what is the meaning of all this?"

"All what?"

"Why, your fighting against me with such hearty good-will at one moment, and then throwing down your sword the next."

"Oh, it was three o'clock."

"But what has that to do with it?"

"Everything in the world."

"Indeed. Pray explain."

"Why, I made a bargain with the Jew to serve him well and faithfully for three months, you see, and to fight his battles for him and so on, without asking any questions, and that bargain was made exactly three months ago at three o'clock in the morning, when I was hard up."

"Well?"

"Well, don't you see I was bound to cut away at you or anybody else that he was at war with, until my time was up, surely."

"You are a strange fellow."

"I don't see anything strange in that; a bargain is a bargain, surely, and I was bound to do it."

"Well, you handle your sword well, and it was a good thing for one of us that three o'clock did come. But now that you are a free man, I presume you have no objection to tell me where I am?"

"None in the least. You are in the extensive cellars of the Jew's house. They extend under-ground a long way, and come out at a little marine-store dealer's in Wild-street."

"A fence you mean?"

"It's the same thing."

"And who are you?"

"A prig. Who are you?"

"Claude Duval."

"What! the famous highwayman they call Gentleman Jack?"

"Yes," said Claude with a smile, "but you very nearly settled my affairs with that sword of yours, my friend."

"Lor! only to think now that I was doing my best to put a stopper upon you of whom I have heard so much, and so much wished to see and make acquaintance with. Well, it's all for the best, I dare say."

"That's a comfortable enough doctrine," said Claude, "but in my opinion it will be better still if you can conduct me out of this place at once."

"Oh, yes, I can do that."

"Come, Jack," cried Claude, "I hope you are not hurt."

"Not at all," said Sixteen-string Jack. "My head is pretty hard, but I advise that we beat a retreat as soon as we can, for there is no knowing what may be the amount of mischief the Jew may yet do to us. He is fertile enough in expedients."

"Why, you don't suppose he will trouble any of us any more?" said Claude's new acquaintance, as he dashed away the charred end of the flambeau, and made it give a better light.

"Why not?" said Jack.



"Why not just look at him?"

He pointed to the dead body of the man who had carried the torch, and when Jack advanced and looked closely at him, he exclaimed—

"By heavens! it is indeed the Jew. Claude, I am free, and you will find in me again what I was."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### THE BALL AT ST. JAMES'S PALACE.

"Is he indeed no more?" said Claude.

"Well," said the man, "I think so. You have let daylight into his brains and that ought to do for him."

"By-the-bye, what's your name?" said Claude.

"Why, sometimes one thing and sometimes another, but among those who, know me I always answer to the name of the marquis."

"The marquis of what?"

"Oh, nothing at all. Only the marquis."

"Well, then, marquis, as soon as you can find it convenient with your civility to guide us out of this place, I shall be much obliged; come on at once."

"Certainly. I have an appointment of some importance at four o'clock, and am in no humour to delay it. This way, if you please, gentlemen. Follow your noses and you can't go wrong, so long as they point towards the flambeau."

Neither Claude nor Jack were at all willing to stay one moment longer upon the premises of the Jew than was absolutely necessary, so with all the good will in the world they followed the marquis, who led them through a labyrinth and wilderness of dark cellars that they never could have found their way among without a guide, unless they had been favoured by all the accidents that could possibly happen to lead folks right instead of wrong.

At length they reached a small flight of rough wooden steps, and the marquis turning to Claude, said—

"These steps lead into the shop I spoke of in Wild-street."

"The marine-store dealer's?"

"Yes; the man and his wife who kept it are sworn friends of the Jew, but there is a pass-word which I know, and which will prevent the necessity of knocking them on the head."

"Just so," said Claude.

The marquis led the way, and raised a trap door above the flight of steps, when a loud voice suddenly cried—

"Hilloa! what's that?"

"Ask again," said the marquis.

"The old story?"

"Yes to be sure. Here, there, and everywhere."

"Oh, all's right here; is anything wrong in Queen-street?"

"No. There was, but there ain't now. Is your door open, or are you going to get up?"

"Now do you fancy I have my door open, after taking in all sorts of swag all day? Might not some dishonest person take advantage of my being asleep and take something?"

"Ah! there's a good deal of thievery in the world."

"I believe you. Hilloa!"

"What's the row?"

"You have got somebody with you."

"Yes."

"Who are they?"

"Pals—open the door and don't be a fool, you know me, and that's enough for you. God bless me, you are as particular as if you were to be hung for it. Upon my life you won't do for this place long."

"There's no occasion, markis, to put yourself in a passion," said the man, as he unlocked the shop door. "I only asked, and you know him as pays the piper is rather particular, and I shall have to tell him who has passed this way."

"You will have to bawl pretty loud, then."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh just that and nothing else. Good night."

The marquis and his two friends passed through the shop door into the street, and the man, as he fastened his place up again, muttered to himself—

"I shall have to bawl pretty loud, shall I—what the deuce does he mean by that now, I wonder? Anything amiss with the governor? Lor! if I only thought he'd croaked, wouldn't I cut with all as was here pretty quick, and no mistake, that's all. But there ain't no luck for honest people, let 'em strive ever so much; he's all right enough I'll be bound."

"That danger is passed," said the marquis.

"Was it a danger?" asked Sixteen-string Jack.

"Yes, that fellow is one of the most unscrupulous in the world, and, though no doubt in a scuffle, of course, we should have got the better of him, he would have settled the affair of one of us. But now, gentlemen, what are you going to do? I will not conceal from you that I am busy."

"Is it a fair question," said Claude, "to ask you what you are going to be about, that occupies you so much?"

"Certainly; I am going to St. James's Palace, where a ball has been going on since twelve o'clock at night, to celebrate some nonsense or another about the old noodle of a king."

"And you are going?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, I have no reason why not, I would rather ask you why?"

"Well, that's the reason I'm called the marquis, because I go to the royal establishments and the nobility's parties."

"You surprise me."

"I do a great many people. Whenever there is anything very out of the way, in the shape of an entertainment at the palace, where so many are invited that it is impossible but there should be a number of strangers, I call myself the marquis of something, and go—"

"On the grabbing lay, of course?"

"Oh, of course, and brought away on the last occasion nine gold watches, a whole handful of brooches, and three diamond bracelets, besides a snuff-box set in brilliants, and a necklace worth one hundred pounds."

"The deuce you did."

"Yes, just wait for me a moment."

The marquis popped into a doorway, and was absent about two minutes, when he returned so entirely transformed, that well might Claude and Jack stare at him in utter amazement.

He had thrown off a coarse kind of wrapper that he wore, and got rid of some leggings, likewise, and beneath he exhibited a court dress of the most fashionable and elegant description.

"Excuse me keeping on my boots over my morocco shoes," he said. "The street is rather damp."

"This is indeed a transformation," said Claude.

"Why, yes, when one goes into the presence of royalty, however, in its individual instance, it may be contemptible, one is forced to conform to the fashion."

"Now of all things in the world," said Claude, "I should like to go with you."

"At a word," cried the marquis, "do you mean it?"

"With all my heart."

"It's settled, then. You shall go."



CLAUDE DUVAL OBTAINS THE BRACELET FROM THE ROYAL PRINCESS.

"And I," said Jack.

"You likewise, if you like. But mind it's a part to play."

"I know it. Only let me go with Claude Duval, I shall be able to get on very well indeed."

Claude laughed as he looked at himself and Jack.

"We talk of going to a court ball, Jack," he said, "but we forget that we are not, like our friend here, provided with the necessary trappings for the occasion; we cannot, as he has done, cast our skins, and from poor crawling worms rise up gorgeous butterflies."

"Yes you can," said the marquis.

"As how?"

"I know where to find you the clothing. Having made up your mind to go, all you have to do is to follow me, and all the minor difficulties will soon vanish from before you."

"I'll follow you with pleasure; but how do you gain admission to the palace without a card?"

"I walk in with a smile and a bow."

"And does no one stop you?"

"Sometimes."

"And then?"

"Oh then I elevate my eyebrows and say, 'Why, my good sir, it was you whom I begged to recollect me, for that I should be back again when I had given orders concerning the marchioness's carriage,' and then the fellow stammers out some excuse, and on I go."

"And you have never failed?"

"Never once. But mind I never venture into small assemblies; there must be a crowd when I go."

"I can understand that; I can clearly enough see likewise that the vulgarity of your manners and language, while we were in the Jew's cellars, were only assumed; you have been——"

"A gentleman."

"I guessed as much."

"Say no more upon that head, but suffer me, as it may at the moment suit my wayward humours, to seem to know much or little. You will, no doubt, be much gratified by your visit to-night to St. James's. The place is well worth the seeing of, the people are quite the reverse. If you have never been present at such a scene it will be sure to make a lasting and pleasing impression upon you."

"Well," said Claude, "this adventure pleases me; but don't let me at all influence you, Jack. How do you feel?"

"As if I should like to follow you."

"But there is peril, and there is much caution required; I speak as a friend, Jack. Do you think you are equal to it?"

"I do, Claude."

"Then come on. Is this the costumier's?"

"You may call it by that fine word if you like," said the marquis, "but I call it a clothes crib. Come along, you shall soon have a court suit that will pass you anywhere."

"If like yours, it will do."

"All's right."

The marquis took up a handful of very small gritty dust from the road, and cast it at one of the windows of a dingy looking house, before which they stopped. In the course of a few moments a head was projected from the window.

"All's right," said the marquis; "it is only me, No. 42, old clap; you know that, I suppose?"

"The marquis?"

"Yes. The marquis. Come down, we want something in your way, and quickly too, or it won't do."

"Coming," said the voice, and the head popped in again, the window being closed with a bang. In less than a minute the street-door was opened, and the marquis and his two friends entered the house. The door was shut again and secured, after which a flickering blue flame appeared in the passage, and a lamp was lit, which showed Claude a man of mean appearance, who was half dressed, and who, with an odd side-long sort of bow to the whole party, said—

"Your humble servant, gentlemen; what am I to do?"

"Look at me," said the marquis.

"With great pleasure," said the man.

"Well, these two gentlemen want court dresses, for we are all going together to an acquaintance, who is giving a little dance to-night."

"Humph! the palace?"

"Well if it be at the palace, what then? We know very well that that is not the most respectable place to go to, but in this world one must not be too particular."

"Certainly not. Certainly not. Bob, Bob, Bob! I say."

"Here you is," said a sleepy voice.

"Go and get a coach and bring it to the door. It will be wanted in about a quarter of an hour."

"Ah! that's well thought of," said the marquis.

The man led his visitors into a tolerably well furnished room, and after walking round and round Claude and Jack several times, he said—

"I'll be with you in a few moments, gentlemen."

He was as good as his word, and in less than ten minutes they were both attired in elegant court suits; and if Sixteen-string Jack did not quite come up to one's ideas of a nobleman, certainly Claude looked a most distinguished personage, and would have, without the shadow of a doubt, passed as somebody in any court in Europe.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### CLAUDE AND THE ROYAL PRINCESS.

"Now I suppose," said Claude to the marquis, "after all, one has really the most difficult part of the business to go through."

"Difficult?"

"Yes. We have to gain admission to the palace."

"Pho! I look upon that as settled. Come along, I hear the coach at the door."

"Gentlemen," said the costumier, "I will wait up for you, if you so please."

"Do so," said the marquis; "come along."

Claude and Sixteen-string Jack followed him to the door, and they all three got into a roomy coach, and were in another moment proceeding at the usual hackney-coach rate, of two miles and a half an hour, to St. James's.

"Being three of us, the trouble of getting in," said Sixteen-string Jack with a sort of groan, "will be great."

"Not at all," said the marquis. "I tell you how we will do it. All that is required in the whole affair, consists of what they are well used to about courts and palaces."

"What is that?"

"Impudence."

"Certainly," said Claude. "I don't suppose there is any lack of that commodity in the quarter to which we are now proceeding."

"There is not indeed. Let the proceedings be conducted as I shall point out, and I will answer for success."

"You shall decide."

"Very well. Now we will get out of this carriage at the outer gate. I know the right path to take, and will guide you. Any delay on the route would betray us at once. All you have to do, is to follow me at about a dozen paces off, and bow and smile, and accede to anything I may require of you. It is you, Claude Duval, who I fully expect to have presence of mind sufficient to aid me in the affair."

"You will find," said Claude, "that I shall not fail in that particular."

"Good; here we are, and I shall be much obliged to your friend to say nothing."

"I will not spoil anything, you may depend," said Jack; "if I cannot feel quite sure that anything I may say will be to the purpose, you may rely upon my silence."

"That is right. Here we are!"

"Right through the gates, gemmen?" said the coachman, in an inquiring tone, as he drew up close to the old Palace of St. James's, at which there was much bustle.

"No, we alight here, and you wait for us, at the corner yonder, where that house is being repaired. There is a guinea for you, and mind you take no other fare but us, or you won't get the other."

"The other, sir!" said the coachman, opening his eyes to an uncommon width. "Sir—sir, you is a gemman, and no sort o' mistake. There ain't no fear o' me taking another fare, you may take your davey!"

"Very well!"

The marquis walked on in the most easy and unconcerned manner in the world, while Claude, with Sixteen-string Jack upon his arm, followed at a few paces distant.

The sentinels offered no sort of opposition to their progress, as it was not their duty to do so. It was in the first vestibule of the Palace that the ordeal had to be gone through.

The air of the marquis as he went on, was most admirably calculated to deceive any one. He wore an appearance of the most perfect self-possession and ease, and indeed, might well be mistaken for some man of quality who was rather careless than otherwise regarding what his inferiors thought of him.

The only thing that eclipsed the marquis in point of personal appearance, was Claude Duval, and no one could possibly look a more perfect gentleman than he as, with Jack upon his arm, he followed the marquis into a small octagonal hall, where a number of the yeomen of the guard were stationed in full dress.

These offered no opposition, but at the further end of this room was a common baize door, at which stood some of the gentlemen ushers, and several officers of the Lord Chamberlain's office.

To pass these was the only difficulty, as their duty was to be specially strict as to who was admitted, and who was not, to the saloons.

The marquis now perpetrated one of the most brazen pieces of assurance that could be conceived; just as he was a few steps from the baize door, it was flung open by one of the attendants, and Lord Clarendon came out rather hastily.

He almost ran against the marquis, who with the most admirable presence of mind caught him by the hand, exclaiming—

"Ah! Clarendon, how are you? I have been looking for you all the evening."

Lord Clarendon was confounded by the familiarity of the address, and thought it surely must be some member of the House of Peers, whom he did not at the moment recognise.

He actually said—

"Very well, my lord. I—I—really—don't exactly——"

"No!" laughed the marquis "Ha! ha! ha! Are you in haste, Clarendon?"

"Rather."

"Then I won't detain you a moment. Don't upset the duke as you go out. Ha! ha! ha!"

Clarendon was so confused at not recognising who it was that talked to him so familiarly, that he did nearly fall into the arms of Claude, and having heard him called the duke, he said—

"I beg your Grace's pardon."

"'Tis I am in fault," said Claude, with a most courtly bow, which was returned by the minister, who then passed on, more astounded than ever that he did not know one of the dukes.

All this passed very rapidly; but none of it was lost upon the officers of the Lord Chamberlain's office, and the few gentlemen ushers who were upon the spot.

The baize door was opened most obsequiously for the presumed intimate friend of Lord Clarendon, and the Duke of Something, who no doubt had some other nobleman upon his arm.

"Confound me!" whispered one of the Chamberlain's officers to another, when Claude and his companion had passed on. "Confound me, if I know one of them; and yet Clarendon called one of them, your grace."

"Oh, yes, yes."

"Do you know them?"

Now this other Chamberlain's officer wanted to appear knowing, so he put on a cunning look, as though he could see an amazing distance further into a millstone than any of his neighbours, and said—

"Know them? To be sure I do."

"Ah!—who are they?"

"Mum's the word."

"Well, but——"

"I'll tell you another time. Here's somebody coming."

Claude could hardly now believe even in the reality of the fact, that he had actually passed all barriers, and was within the ancient palace of St. James's an admitted guest.

After going through the baize door, they came upon a short passage, brilliantly illuminated with wax candles, and covered with a rich piece of tapestry carpet. At the end of this passage or corridor, was another door, at which were stationed two of the yeomen of the guard, and one gentleman usher.

These persons were not, however, expected to exercise the smallest amount of surveillance with regard to who went either in or out. All that was supposed to be done in the outer vestibule; so the door was opened, and Claude, Jack, and the marquis, were passed through, as a thing of course.

They were now in a handsome room, at the farther end of which was a large space from floor to ceiling covered by a crimson velvet curtain. They could plainly hear the sounds of music and of voices.

Claude now took the lead, at the request of the marquis, and flung aside the curtain wide enough to allow a person to pass; he walked through the aperture and found himself in the old throne-room of the palace.

The scene which now burst upon Claude's view was most magnificent. The immense apartment was brilliantly lighted and adorned, and crowded with all the rank and beauty in London, that is to say, all the beauty which happened to have the good fortune to be united to rank.

George the Third sat upon an arm chair at the end of the room farthest from the entrance, looking as stupid as usual, while Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Charlotte, was busy in conversation with some German baron, who, like herself, had a gold snuff-box in his hand.

"What do you think of this?" whispered the marquis.

"Very different from the Jew's cellar," replied Claude.

"Rather."

"How do you feel, Jack?"

"Dumb-founded," replied Sixteen-string Jack.

The marquis laughed.

"Do not let anything tempt you, Claude," he said, "to stay above an hour. Let us all three meet in the entrance room at exactly one hour from now."

"Agreed."

"During that time, mind that you make good use of your fingers, or we shall have taken all our trouble for nothing; and let us keep out of each other's way. Look at this."

"A handsome gold watch!" said Claude, as the marquis showed him one.

"Yes; Lord Clarendon had it in his pocket before he met us in the vestibule."

"Is it possible?"

"Ay, to be sure. Ten to one if he misses it until he gets fairly home, and he will never know how he lost it."

"Nay, I am certain."

"Perhaps."

"Well, I wish you more luck."

"Thank you. We must work for ourselves. Don't be idle. They are getting up a couple or three sets of quadrilles. I shall look out for some old woman to dance with."

"Old woman?"

"Ay, to be sure, covered with diamonds, my boy. There is sport for one. You don't seem to be half awake."

Claude laughed as the marquis walked away.

The next moment the music sounded the notes of a quadrille, and although there was not much hilarity in the way the dance was executed, there was a vast amount of affectation, and what no doubt was thought dignity.

"Well," thought Claude to himself, when the quadrille was fairly over. "As yet I have done nothing, but as the marquis truly says, we must not be idlers."

While he was now considering in what manner he had best commence operations, another dance was called, and observing a rather silly-looking female sitting upon a low seat, Claude went up to her, and in the most insinuating manner, said—

"May I hope for the pleasure of your hand in the ensuing dance?"

"Oh—I—certainly, sir, certainly."

The lady rose, and Claude was wonderfully attracted by a bracelet she wore, and which his practised eyes assured him was of real diamonds. It must have been worth a few thousand pounds, and Claude thought that if by fair means or by foul he could get possession of it, it would answer exceedingly well for his share of the evening's plunder.

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

### THE REFRESHMENT ROOM.—THE BRACELET.

CLAUDE had not the least idea of the rank of the lady he had asked to dance. How should he? It was not until he actually stood up with her in the dance that he saw a diamond star on her breast.

Then, indeed, he began to have some vague surmises as to who she was, but he felt how highly impolitic, under these circumstances, it would be for him to show any hesitation or doubt regarding who it was that had done him the honour of accepting his invitation to the dance.

The music struck up, and Claude and his partner were soon engaged with the figure.

"The heat is rather oppressive here," said Claude, as they rested while others were engaged.

"It always has been the fault of this room," replied his partner; "although we have done all we can from time to time to remedy it."

"We!" thought Claude. "Who the devil can this be?"

At this juncture an officer in a splendid uniform approached them, and said—

"The queen would speak to your highness."

"Say I am occupied with the dance."



"If your highness would excuse me."

"Well, sir?"

"The queen is very imperative."

"It is in the family, sir."

"Your highness?"

"I say, sir, a little obstinacy and imperativeness is in the family; and so again I am engaged. You have your answer, sir."

The messenger bowed and walked away.

"Humph!" thought Claude. "One of the royal princesses, it seems, has so far honoured me."

Before he could frame a sentence which he thought it would be advisable to utter, it became the turn again of himself and partner to lead the dance; and certainly the figure and steps were performed by the princess with a vigour that showed that she was not in the sweetest of tempers.

"I must say the right thing just in the right place," thought Claude, "or else, I see, there is a devil's own temper here that will soon leave me in the lurch, and destroy all my hopes of the diamond bracelet."

The slight flush of passion that was upon the face of the princess gradually subsided, and Claude spoke to her.

"What a happy hour is this!"

"Sir?"

"Forgive me, your highness—I thought aloud."

"There was nothing offensive in—in your saying this was a happy hour."

"It gilds even the golden lustre of the hour to hear you say so much. Your highness is, by birth, a princess; but were you the daughter of the humblest of your father's subjects, you would still be one of the princesses of nature."

Gratified vanity beamed from the eyes of Claude's partner, and he thought to himself, "Princesses are only women, after all."

"Sir, this is strange language."

"Is it strange, madam?"

"Yes, in courts."

"Ah, the atmosphere of courts, then, is not favourable to truth telling, madam."

"Possibly not."

"I know not by what miracle I am inspired by so much boldness as to speak as I have done. Will it please you to walk, for the dance is over?"

Another personage connected with the court came up to the princess, and after a low bow, he said—

"Her majesty the queen desires your highness to retire from the ball-room."

"Retire, sir?"

"Those were her majesty's words, not mine, madam."

"You could scarcely suppose that, for one moment, I imagined them yours. Tell the queen that I will not be guilty of rudeness to one of her guests."

"But your highness will be pleased to observe——"

"No, sir, I am not."

"That her majesty the queen does not know the gentleman whom your highness has honoured to dance with."

"Nor ever will, in all probability, sir."

"But—but——"

"Is your message ended, sir?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then oblige me by getting out of the way."

"Oh!"

The courtier retired, evidently chagrined, while the angry colour came again to the brow of the princess.

"How much I regret," said Claude, "that my happiness—for a real happiness it is to me to be a short time only in your society—is only to be purchased at the expense of some annoyance to you in other quarters."

"Oh, it's no annoyance, sir. They ought to know by this time that it is of no use speaking to me."

"You show, indeed, a most becoming spirit."

"I hope so. Are you long at Saint James's?"

"Not very."

"I don't suppose you will be honoured with another invite to the palace. You can call upon me on a reception day."

"How can I express my thanks? Where does this door lead to?"

"To a refreshment room; and if there be any cheese-cakes there, I shall be glad to see them. They keep me out of cheese-cakes as much as they can, and I know it is only done just to spite me, because they know how fond I am of them."

"Is it possible?"

"It is, indeed; and they do many more things, too, just to spite me. You are the young Duke of Reteley, who has been for so long on the Spanish Embassy, I think?"

Claude bowed.

"Well, if you want favour at court you had better at once forsake me, and go to the queen's circle."

"I want nothing but the joy of being near you, and of hearing you speak."

"Do you really mean what you say? Oh, here are some cheese cakes, and such fine ones too. Oh, here is a treat indeed. Do you like cheese cakes?"

"I will have one for the pleasure of taking something with you."

"Will you really though? He! he! he!"

There was a silliness about the laugh that jarred upon the ears of Claude most disagreeably, and he thought to himself, "Ah! how infinitely superior is my Cicely to this piece of vulgarity and vanity, born a princess."

But Claude had more important business in hand than making comparisons between the favourites of fortune and the favourites of nature.

The possession of the diamond bracelet was what he looked to as the reward for the violence he did his feelings in saying complimentary things to his royal companion.

Yet how to get from her wrist the costly bauble he knew not, but summoning all the assurance he was master of to his aid, he said—

"What a happiness it will be to me to wait upon you, as you so kindly suggest."

"Well I shall be glad to see you, for to tell the truth I do like cheese cakes and fine men."

"Charming simplicity," thought Claude. "How the deuce shall I get the bracelet and then be rid of the brute, I wonder."

"You will be sure to come," added the princess, as she spoke quite indistinctly with her mouth full of cheese cakes.

"Oh, can you doubt me?"

"Well, I don't know. Perhaps somebody will call upon you, and tell you you must not come, as I ought not to receive visitors out of my own family; but never you mind that."

"So," thought Claude, "it has happened before."

"You may depend upon no one frightening me," he added, "I am not made of such pliant materials."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that. But how shall I be sure it is you?"

"How do you mean?"

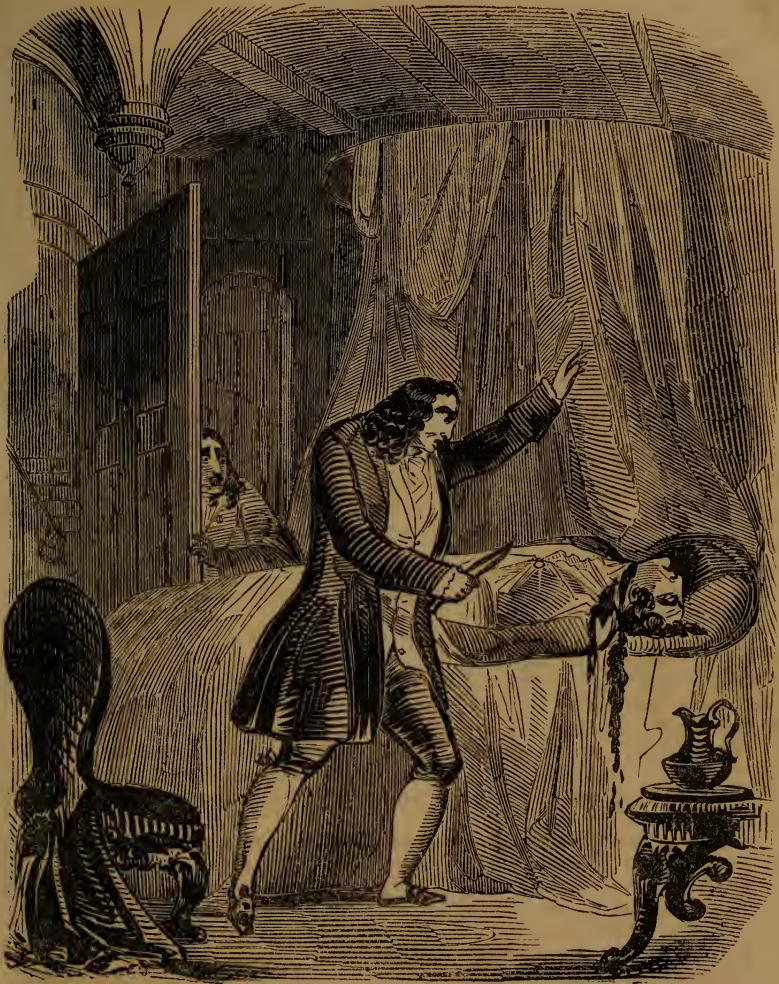
"Why—why—once before when somebody was to come to see me, the name was announced, and I ordered him to be introduced, when who should come but the Bishop of London."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Do you know it had been found out, and they sent the bishop to give me a lecture."

"Is it possible?"

"Oh, yes."



CLAUDE WATCHING THE MURDER COMMITTED BY THE MARQUIS.

"And what did you do?"

"What do you think, now?"

"Well, really I can't say."

"I gave him a foot ottoman at his head, and if you had but seen the powder come out of his wig, you would have stared indeed."

"I have no doubt I should."

"Oh, that you would, I'm sure. But I see all the cheese cakes are gone."

The princess heaved a sigh, that, like Hamlet's when he took leave of Ophelia, seemed to—

"Shatter all her bulk,"

and then she was anxious to get away to some other room, where more of her favourite delicacy could be had.

"Listen to me," said Claude.

"Well, what is it?"

"It is not very likely, but just possible, that some spy may find out that I am coming to see you, and so you may again be imposed upon. Now, could not something be done to prevent it?"

"What?"

"Well, I am thinking what. Suppose when I come I send in something, that you may be able when I am announced to be sure it is no trick?"

"Yes, that would do. But what will you send?"

"It ought to be something that you know well the moment you see it."

"Oh, yes."

"Otherwise you would run the risk of being again deceived, you know."

"Certainly—certainly."

"Well, then, I will take this bracelet for the purpose. You will be quite certain to know that again, for I dare say you are sufficiently familiar with it."

As Claude spoke, he did not allow the princess a moment for consideration, but unclasping the bracelet from her wrist, he transferred it to his pocket. She certainly looked a little astonished, and after a moment's pause, she said, in a hesitating manner—

"Would not something else do?"

"Yes; but it is not worth while changing the articles."

"But—but——"

"Ah, charming princess."

"Yes, but——"

"Hush, somebody is coming. Let us get back to the ball-room. Who knows but our absence has already been ascertained? Let us come into the ball-room again at once. It is the only way to avoid suspicion."

"Well, but——"

"Yes, exactly. This way—this way."

Claude would not give Her Royal Highness any time for further reflection, or opportunity for speaking about the bracelet; but hurrying her into the ball-room, he kept interrupting her whenever she began to speak.

"Hush—hush! Not a word—not a word. We had better now separate, and then we shall not seem to have any understanding together. Remember the bracelet. In a quarter of an hour I will manage to get round to where you are, and then we will talk it over again."

So saying, Claude glided away from the astonished and rather suspicious princess, who, however she admired cheese cakes and fine men, had a large share of the family avarice about her, and dreaded the loss of her diamond bracelet.

"Now," thought Claude, "after this it would be sheer insanity to attempt any petty speculation which might possibly have a disastrous result, and so include in its consequences the loss of the diamond bracelet."

With this idea, Claude began to think it would be as well to leave the ball-room as speedily as possible; so he slowly, without putting on the appearance of any hurry, made his way to the curtains which shut out the ante-room, and in which he was to meet his friend, the marquis, and Sixteen-string Jack, according to arrangement.

Before, however, he could reach that point, some one touched him lightly upon the arm, and upon turning to see who it was, Claude observed a gentleman in a full court suit, standing close to him, who said—

"Sir, you will pardon me if I request a few moments' conversation with you."

"You will pardon me if I delay doing myself that pleasure," said Claude, "until I have given some orders to my servants; I shall be about five minutes."

"But, sir, the business is rather urgent."

"So I should suppose, as we are perfect strangers to each other, sir."

"I regret the disagreeable necessity."

"Don't name it, sir," said Claude, as he walked on.

The person in the court suit bit his lips, and looked for a moment or two irresolute. Then he suddenly turned round, and with more speed than decorum, made his way through the throng of guests in an opposite direction to that which Claude was pursuing.

"There is not a moment more to be lost," thought Claude to himself. "What is the matter or what amount of suspicion has been excited, I know not, but I feel pretty certain that this is no place for me now, and that if I linger I shall find myself under arrest in a few moments."

This was anything but an agreeable reflection, so that Claude now became as unceremonious in pushing his way through the throng of guests towards the ante-room as had been his late interrogator in proceeding in the other direction, no doubt to give an order concerning him, which would turn out to be anything but pleasant.

Some of the royal guests looked a little annoyed at the rather uncourteous manner in which they were pushed right and left by Claude; but he was past before anything could be said or done.

He reached the curtain, and drawing it aside, he at once, with a sensation of thankfulness, passed out of the ball-room at St. James's.

But he was yet far from being clear of the precincts of the palace. He was in hopes that the hour which he had agreed with his companions, should be the limit of their stay in the palace was past, and he looked eagerly about him for Jack and the marquis.

Neither of them were to be seen. He would gladly enough have waited for them, but his own danger was much too imminent to enable him to do so. Accordingly he walked on, and passing the yeomen of the guard and the gentlemen ushers, he was soon in the court.

There he paused a moment to breathe the cool air, and seeing close at hand a deep, dark, arched doorway, he plunged into it, resolved to wait there until he should see Jack and the marquis come out of the palace, unless he should see reason to doubt the safety of his so doing.

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## CHAPTER L.

### A COMPARISON OF PLUNDER.—THE FATE OF THE MARQUIS.

CLAUDE kept his eyes fixed upon the doorway through which he had made his exit, so opportunely as it would seem, from the palace.

His hope and expectation was speedily to see his companions, but although for a short time he was disappointed in that, too, yet he saw enough to convince him that his own hasty retreat was a wise enough measure.

In the course of about three minutes the same person who had spoken to him in the ball-room made his appearance, accompanied by four others, with drawn swords. Two of the four were stationed at the door, while he with the other two ran to the great gate with all the speed they could muster.

There was immediately a commotion among the guards there stationed, and Claude heard the sound of high voices.

"Perhaps, after all," thought Claude, "I am in their toils."

He looked anxiously towards the door at which the two persons with drawn swords stood as guards, for he waited to see what sort of scrutiny those who now came out were subjected to. It might be one that Jack and the marquis could not satisfactorily stand the brunt of.

Several persons came out, and Claude had the satisfaction of seeing that they

were only looked at, so that he had no longer any doubt but that it was his arrest that was sought, and that a description of him had been given.

Presently the individual who, either of his own authority and suspicions, or as the agent of another, had made all the racket, came slowly from the outer gate, accompanied by an officer of the foot guards then on duty.

They passed close to where Claude was hidden, so that he heard the officer say quite plainly—

“You must not rely, my lord, upon the sentinels.”

“Well, but,” replied the other, “they can answer a plain question, sir, can they not?”

“Certainly they can, my lord. But I repeat that you must not, in such a matter, altogether rely upon a soldier’s report of who he has seen and who he has not seen.”

“Indeed, sir?”

“Yes, indeed, my lord.”

It was evident that the officer was somewhat piqued at something the other had said.

“Accept my apologies, sir,” said he who was called my lord, “if, in the hurry and excitement of this business, I have in any way offended you. I can only avow that I had no such intention for a moment.”

“That is more than sufficient, my lord,” said the officer frankly.

“I am glad to hear you say so.”

“You see,” added the officer, “the sentinels have a general order to take as much notice as possible of any one, at all times, who may pass their posts; but on such an occasion as this, when so many are going to and fro, it is really asking of them more than their not over-bright brains are equal to, that they should recollect any one in particular.”

“True, true.”

“Nevertheless for what it is worth, you have their word that no one answering the description of the person you mention, has passed out.

“Which is very improbable.”

“Very indeed, since, as you say he had ample time to do so before you reached the gate.”

“Oh, ample. I could, of course have secured him in the ball-room, but I did not like to draw general attention to the affair. Besides, the king is rather strange to-night.”

“Is he really?”

“Oh yes, anything that gives him a sudden fright, or indeed any sort of intense excitement, Dr. Lees assures us, would upset the small amount of mind that remains to him.”

“That is a bad state of things.”

“Oh, very—very.”

“Well, my lord, all I can do now is to regret very much that you have not secured the fellow.”

“And I regret it extremely, and like you, can do no more. I wish you good night, sir. Of course your men will detain such a one should they see him?”

“Of that, my lord, be assured.”

They bowed and parted, but Claude, who had heard every word of the conversation, was anything but pleased at the prospect before him. He was not one, however, who was likely to sit down and despair while he had his faculties about him, and he set about thinking how he could better his condition, instead of deploring it.

“The only description they could give of me,” he thought, “is one of dress, and surely I am ingenious enough to make some alteration in that, if needs be.”

The moment this idea was started, Claude set to work to carry it out. The coat he had on was of chocolate-coloured velvet, richly trimmed with silver lace, and it was lined throughout with pale gray silk.

“Ministers and courtiers,” said Claude, with a smile, “are much in the habit of

turning their coats upon occasion ; I don't at all see, therefore, why I should not turn mine."

As he spoke he took off his coat, and turned it cleanly inside-out, and put on that way.

To be sure it did not look quite so well as when it was the right side outwards, but common soldiers were not likely to be very great connoisseurs in the matter, and the first glance at a light gray silk coat would most probably lead them to look no further at him, when a dark velvet one had been described to them as worn by the man they must stop.

His height he thought might betray him, so he determined to assume an appearance of age, and stoop a little.

He had just completed the necessary arrangements to carry out this plan of escape, when he saw Sixteen-string Jack and the marquis come out into the court-yard.

It was evident from their manner that they were in some sort of anxiety about him (Claude). They stood together and conversed eagerly, after which they walked towards the gate, and went out into St. James's-street.

"I shall soon be with you," said Claude to himself, "or if I am not, these sentinels are very clever fellows."

The last proposition was not a very likely one to come true, and Claude issued from his hiding place with every assurance upon his own mind of escape.

Bending himself down, he slowly approached the gate. A sergeant of the guard was there, whose duty it undoubtedly was to look closely at whoever should pass ; but one glance at Claude seemed to satisfy him.

He bowed, and Claude passed on.

It was not till he got clear out of the gate that he chose to increase his speed, for no one was more alivd than Claude to the proverb of not hilloaing until one is fairly out of the wood.

Accordingly, if anything, he rather decreased than increased his pace, but still he kept Jack and the marquis in view.

When, however, they had turned a corner, and he had done so likewise, there was no occasion for caution, so he quickened his pace and made up to them, and when he got sufficiently near, he cried—

"I arrest you both in the king's name."

It was quite ludicrous to see the jump they both gave, and Claude was very near paying for his joke by the loss, for that evening, of his comrades, for they both set off at good speed down Pall Mall.

"When Claude chose to run, however, there were few indeed who could cope with him, and he soon caught the marquis, upon which Sixteen-string Jack turned, and presenting a pistol at him, cried—

"Let go your hold, or you are a dead man,"

"I hope, Jack," said Claude, in his natural voice, "that I am worth a great many dead men yet."

"Good God ! is it you ?" cried the marquis.

"Yes, to be sure."

"Well, I never was so deceived," said Jack.

"Nor so frightened," laughed Claude.

"Oh, yes, I have been."

"But I have not," said the marquis, giving himself a shake. "I thought my time had come at last, sure enough. What, in the name of all that's abominable, made you serve us such a trick?"

"Only a thought of the moment."

"Confound your thoughts of the moment. But when did you leave the palace?"

"Before you both."

"Before us?" said Jack. "We looked in vain for you."

"Yes : and I am happy to say some other people looked in vain for me."

"Ah! you were in danger?"

"I was, indeed."

"Tell us all about it, Claude. Tell us all about it, do. I said something was amiss when we did not meet you in the ante-room according to agreement."

"You might have sworn that, Jack," said Claude.

He then related to them all that had happened; and when he had concluded, the marquis said—

"You beat us, Claude."

"As how?"

"In your booty. We have spoils of conquest in the shape of a few watches and snuff-boxes, but a diamond bracelet from the wrist of a princess must indeed be something worth having."

"I hope so."

"You have beat us. You are lucky."

"Yes; I think we are lucky to-night."

"We, did you say?"

"I did."

"Humph!"

"Why do you say humph?"

"Well, I say humph, because you say *we* are lucky, whereas, you are the only one much in luck, with your diamond bracelet."

"Do you take me for a pig?" said Claude.

"A what?"

"A pig."

"No; I—I won't say you look much like a pig. Why do you ask so extraordinary a question?"

"Because I think none but a pig would go on such an expedition as this in company, and not share the result."

"Do you mean to say you will share with us?"

"I thought that was quite understood," said Claude, coldly, as he walked on.

"I should be content," said Jack, "with what I have; Claude, you want money, I know."

"Which is no reason for my taking yours, Jack, or yours, marquis; so, without any further words or bother about it, remember we all three share and share alike in this matter; so now come on, and let us forget that the discussion ever arose."

was quite clear to Jack that Claude was much hurt at what the marquis had said, and the conversation now was rather constrained until they got near to the house of the old costumier.

Then the marquis paused, and suddenly confronting Claude, he held out his hand, saying—

"Claude Duval, I have offended you. Will you forgive me and forget it?"

"Willingly," said Claude, as he took the proffered hand. "You are a clever fellow, marquis, and I owe you much, for without you, we evidently might have had no small amount of difficulty in escaping from the Jew's cellars; but the only unfortunate thing was, that you did not know me well enough to feel no doubt of my honour."

"Well—well; let it pass."

"Right willingly."

"You must know," added the marquis, dropping the previous subject of discourse. "You must know that the old costumier we are now going to, is an excellent judge of jewels."

"Is he so? Then he shall see the diamond bracelet, if you think he may be trusted."

"You may depend upon him. Honour among—"

"Thieves," said Claude, with a laugh.

"Well, there's truth in the proverb, Claude. In his youth he has often told me he was an apprentice to a lapidary, so that he got a good knowledge of precious stones. You may be assured he will put a right value upon the bracelet."



"Can he purchase?"

"I think not."

It turned out to be precisely as the marquis had predicted. The old wardrobe keeper was sitting upon his stairs, much wondering at the non-arrival of his customers. He admitted them with alacrity, and holding up a candle, he cried—

"What luck? What luck?"

"Tolerable," said the marquis. "I am famished."

"Which way? With hunger or thirst?"

"Why, I don't mind admitting to you that I could drink something."

"Come in, all of you," cried the old man; "I have not been unmindful that you might want something. This way—this way. Poor fare, but a hearty welcome, I am quite prepared to offer to you. This way—this way."

He led them to a small room at the back of his house, where a table was neatly enough spread.

"Hilloa!" cried Claude. "Do you call this poor fare, my friend?—may we never have worse."

"What is there?" said Jack.

"Look—a ham—a couple of fowls—some claret, and about half a dozen bottles of champagne, as I take it."

"The deuce," said the marquis.

"Well, gentleman, the least I could do," said the old costumier, "was to provide you with a little bit of supper."

"We are much obliged to you," said Claude, "and I for one don't think that you will exactly lose by it."

"You may be quite assured of that," remarked Jack to the old man, "if he (pointing to Claude) says so."

"Well, gentlemen, you are welcome; fall to."

"But there are only three chairs here," said Claude; "come, you must sit down with us at all events, my friend."

"Oh, I have had mine."

"Not off this table, for the ham and the fowls are uncut, and not a cork has been drawn; come, come—sit down."

Thus urged, the old man fetched himself a chair from the shop, and they all four sat down together, as merry as kings, ay, and much merrier than any king. The ham and fowls were cut up, and the wine proved excellent.

"Now," said the marquis, "where's your bracelet, Claude?"

"Here—here. They tell me, my old friend, that you are a judge of jewels?"

"I was a lapidary," said the old man, "and ought to know something of them; I hope you have something worth an opinion."

"He has," said the marquis.

"I think myself something of a judge," said Claude, "but of course I defer to those who know better than I do; what now is your candid opinion of that little toy?"

He tossed the bracelet across the table to the old man as he spoke.

The old costumier took it in his hand, held it up to the light, and his countenance changed, as he said,—

"Sir, here is a rarity."

"Good, are they?"

"The correct value of these diamonds I should estimate at not less than three thousand pounds sterling."

## CHAPTER LI.

## THE ATTEMPTED MURDER.

AFTER this candid declaration of the old costumier, regarding the immense value of the diamond bracelet, there was a pause of some minutes' duration.

Claude Duval was rather astonished, Sixteen-string Jack looked, as he really was, very much pleased, while the marquis, from feelings best known to himself, but in reality not at all suspected by his companions, looked as pale as death itself.

"Three thousand pounds?" at length he exclaimed.

"Yes, at at the lowest, without saying one word of the gold, and the general workmanship of the article."

"How pleased I am, Claude, for your sake," said Sixteen-string Jack; "you will be able to do several things now, that I know you much wish to do."

"There is a difficulty," said Claude.

"There is indeed," said the old man; "I can guess very well what difficulty you mean. You allude to the trouble there will be in disposing of such an article."

"I do."

"But yet that surely may be done," said the marquis, eagerly, and fixing his eyes upon the bracelet.

"There is but one man in London," added the old costumier, "who will have anything to do with it."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, but one, and even he may find it is rather a serious affair, you see."

"It is—it is."

"You must not calculate upon such a price for it as I have named."

"Nor anything like it, I suppose?" said the marquis.

"Well, I think, under all the circumstances, you may fairly enough expect one-third of its value."

"One-third?"

"Yes; you see whoever buys it, no doubt, will lay it by for a very long time. Perhaps it may not see the light again for years, if the individual diamonds should be suspected to be known. If not, it can be taken to pieces and worked up into some other costly trinket."

"That would be the best way," added the marquis. "You may depend that nothing would pay so well as pulling out the diamonds and parting with them separately, to any one who would give a fair price."

"It might be tried," said the old man.

"Well," said Claude, rising, "I will meet you here to-morrow in the latter part of the day, marquis. At present, I must own, I am in some need of repose."

"You will not think of leaving my house, gentlemen," said the old man. "I have plenty of sleeping accommodation at your disposal here, and I can truly say that you will be safe, and although I say it, you will be decidedly comfortable."

"No doubt of that," said the marquis. "I accept your offer with all the pleasure in life, for I am as tired as I can very well be."

"And I," said Jack.

"Well," said Claude, "if it is not putting you to any inconvenience, I must confess that I would rather have a few hours' rest here. It is quite morning now; so if you will have the goodness to awaken me in about four hours, I dare say I should be all right again."

"As you please, sir."

They all rose, and Claude said with a laugh—



(Astonishment and Terror of the Marquis at Claude's Sudden Appearance.)

"You must give me some room that I can thoroughly darken, for unless I can persuade myself that it is night, I shall not be able to get a wink of sleep."

"Very well, you shall have a room at the back of the house, where there are Venetian blinds, so you can make it as dark as you wish."

"That will do exactly," said Claude. "But how knocked up you look."

"Who? I?"

"Yes, you seem half asleep."

"How can that be?" cried the marquis, and as he spoke Claude saw, or fancied he saw, the marquis cast a very significant look at the old man.

"I don't know how it is," said the latter, "but—I—I am certainly just a little——"

"A little what?" roared the marquis angrily.

"A man may surely," said Claude, "be a little anything he likes, in his own house."

"I think so too," said Jack.

"Oh yes. Yes—yes—of course, only I could not think what was the matter with him."

"Nothing, nothing," said the old man, speaking thickly, "I shall go to bed now—yes, I—I shall go to bed—tumble to bed."

"It's well you said tumble," remarked the marquis.

The marquis was right enough, for in truth the old costumier did rather tumble than walk to bed, for he appeared hardly able to keep his feet as he went, and had only just power to show Claude which was his room, and Jack which was his.

Chagrin was evident upon the countenance of the marquis, but why he should be so amazed at a little drop of wine overcoming the old costumier, was best known to himself.

As for Claude and Jack, they could not make out what it could matter to him.

He made an effort, however, to recover something like good humour, or the semblance of it, before they all parted for the night, and he laughed as he said—

"Good night, Claude Duval. Good night. I hope you will sleep soundly after your royal adventure."

"I generally do sleep pretty well," said Claude, "if all is quiet about me. The worst of me is though, the merest trifle will awaken me."

"Will it?"

"Yes indeed, a something which would have no effect upon the slumbers of any one else."

"Well take care of the bracelet."

"I mean to do so."

"That's right. Good night—good night, Jack. You ought to sleep the sounder to-night for having completely got rid of the torments in which the Jew held you."

"I hope I shall."

Claude walked into the room assigned him and closed the door. There was a night bolt on the inside of it, which he at once fastened, and then placing his candle upon the table, and sitting down upon the side of the bed, he said—

"I don't know how it is, but I certainly feel anything but comfortable to-night—Some feeling that all is not right in this house, seems to come over me, I don't know why."

The more he thought over his condition the less he seemed to be able to come to any satisfactory conclusion with regard to the suspicions that beset him, and at last he gave it up.

He carefully closed the Venetian blinds so that when he did blow out his candle the room was quite dark, but that he did not do until he had taken off his coat and thrown it upon a chair. The rest of his apparel he kept on, and the diamond bracelet, which was worth whatever care he could bestow upon it, he placed securely between the bed and the mattress.

"Well," he said, "I will not keep myself awake because of some vague suspicion of I don't know what. I must have rest somehow or other, so here goes to sleep, although I don't much like your manner, master marquis, and although I do think you are up to a something you would be very sorry for me to suspect."

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Claude had fallen into a slight sleep, which no doubt would have been the precursor of a much sounder one, if nothing had happened to disturb it.

It had not, however, lasted above ten minutes when he was awakened by a something, he knew not what, but certainly to his perception it was a sound in his chamber.

Although he opened his eyes he made no sort of movement, but lying perfectly still he listened attentively. In a few moments he was rewarded for his caution by hearing a stealthy footstep, and it seemed to him as if it approached the bed.

He had no arms within his reach, so he thought the best thing he could do was not to call out, for fear of provoking an immediate attack, or to remain quiet and receive one, but to give some indication of being awake, and leaving whoever was creeping about the room to make the most of it.

Accordingly he executed an exceedingly natural sneeze, and then said, in a low voice—

“Confound it. I have got a cold, I think.”

The effect of this was immediately apparent, for with a shuffling noise some one left the room very precipitately, no doubt not a little alarmed at finding Claude so unexpectedly wakeful.

“Now, whatever can be the meaning of this,” thought Claude. “To say the least of it, it’s devilish suspicious. It must be seen to. Farewell sleep, I think, in this house.”

He rose instantly, and feeling about in the very dim light of the room for his coat, he got his pistols out of the pocket where he had left them. Then, without touching the blinds, he made his way towards the door.

Contrary to the state in which he had left it, it was only just closed, and not at all fastened. How any one from without had contrived to remove the night bolt he had no leisure to inquire, but opening the door just wide enough to allow him to do so, he stepped out into the passage and looked about him.

A dim ray of light came from the crevice of a slightly opened door opposite, and treading lightly across the landing, Claude put his eye to the slender opening and looked in.

To his surprise he saw, by the aid of a rushlight that was upon a table, the old costumier in bed, and apparently in a sound sleep, while the marquis, fully dressed, was shaking him by the shoulder, and speaking in a hurried low voice.

“Confound your blunders,” he said. “How was it that you took the drugged wine yourself, instead of giving it, as you intended, to Claude Duval? Awake, awake.”

An inarticulate murmur was the only response.

“It’s of no use,” muttered the marquis. “How very provoking to be sure; well arranged, too, as it was. The idea of the old fool drugging the wine for another, so that he and I might cut his throat comfortably and get the bracelet, and then by some unaccountable and strange accident taking it himself.”

“A pretty escape,” thought Claude.

“And now the confounded fellow is awake,” continued the marquis, “and heaven only knows how long I may have to wait before I can do the job.”

“I think,” said Claude to himself, “you will have to wait a long while before you catch me asleep again here.”

“And,” added the marquis, “it was all owing to the botheration in getting off the night bolt. He must have been suspicious, or he would not have fastened it.”

“Time, too,” thought Claude.

After a few moments’ consideration, Claude’s active brain thought of a plan of operation which might bring a kind of retribution upon the old rascal of a costumier, as well as defeating the marquis. By the light that straggled through the door he saw a pair of boots on the landing, and as it was a well staircase beneath, he dropped them into the passage below.

## CHAPTER LII.

## A SERIOUS MISTAKE.

IN that quite hour of the morning, when all the house was so still, and every one in it was rather anxious to contribute towards its noiselessness, the clatter that the boots made as they descended into the passage below, was really something prodigious.

No wonder that they startled the marquis, for, although he knew so well what produced the uproar, Claude felt a little startled himself.

The marquis in a moment came out of the room occupied by the old costumier.

Claude would have been detected had he not taken the precaution of retreating just within his own doorway in time. He managed just to see the marquis, however, through a slight opening.

Alarm was in the would-be murderer's face, and after listening for about half a minute in silence, he cried in a voice of terror—

“What, in the name of all that's troublesome, was that, I wonder?”

Making inquiries of himself, however, was not by any means a likely mode of discovering the truth, so after a few moments spent in not the most pleasant reflection, he muttered—

“I must go down and see what that was before I proceed with what I have to do above stairs here. What on earth could it be.”

In his hurry—and indeed we may say his fright—he had snatched up the rush-light that had been burning in the old man's room, and now with it in his trembling grasp, he proceeded down the stairs, looking very cautiously before him at each step he took, and evidently impressed with an idea that he was upon the point of seeing something that would be not at all of an agreeable character.

It was something truly ludicrous to be situated as Claude was, and see a man going down stairs with so much circumspection and caution, after a pair of old boots that lay in the passage below.

But Claude had no time to spend in making useless reflections. Already in his mind had he matured the plans he intended to carry out, and when the marquis had got sufficiently down the stairs, that it was not likely he could hear anything that took place above, Claude immediately commenced operations.

He glided into the old man's room, and when there he found that the daylight had quite sufficiently advanced for him to see clearly and distinctly any object within it.

His first movement was directed to ascertaining if the old villanous costumier, who with the marquis had plotted his murder, was really in a sound sleep.

Claude shook him violently, but that had no effect upon him. Then he whispered in his ear—

“Awake—awake. What is to be done with Claude Duval? What is to be done with Claude Duval?”

The old man at first only replied by an inarticulate sort of grunt.

“What is to be done with Claude Duval?” again was vehemently whispered in his ear.

This time he replied—

“Cut—cut—cut—”

“What?”

“Cut his throat in the dark.”

“That will do,” said Claude. “I am truly much obliged. And now, my friend, we will see if something of a similar fate cannot be shifted on to your shoulders.”

As he spoke, he stooped over the bed, and lifting the old man in his arms, he

carried him out of the room, and across the landing to the room he had himself so recently occupied, and so providentially escaped from.

To lay him in the bed, and cover him with the clothes, was the work of a moment.

"Now," said Claude. "I dislike the taking of a life, or anything in the shape of bloodshed, as much as most men, but if these two scoundrels like to practise any such proceedings, it will be quite as well that they should do so upon each other instead of upon me."

These operations and changes were just completed, when Claude heard the marquis creeping up the stairs again; and as he came, muttering the most diabolical oaths that the mind of the most profligate could conceive.

Claude went into the room lately occupied by the old costumier, and got into the bed, covering himself nearly all over with the bed-clothes.

He hoped that if the marquis did come in he should be able, in that dim light, to sustain the character of the old man for a little time.

The rushlight gave but a miserable illumination to the room as the marquis entered it. Indeed, the struggle that it inefficiently maintained with the rapidly advancing daylight made the obscurity greater than as if the light had been extinguished.

And now a most singular circumstance took place—a circumstance which made a deep impression upon Claude at the time and often afterwards.

The marquis approached the bed, and in a whisper said to the supposed old man—

"Are you awake?"

Claude returned no answer, and then, in the very words that Claude himself had used, he said—

"What is to be done with Claude Duval?"

"Cut—cut—his throat," said Claude, "in the dark."

"I will."

The fellow glided from the room, leaving Claude with the rushlight.

"Is not this more than belongs to a common circumstance?" said Claude.

"Surely Heaven has taken its own way of punishing these wretches!"

He rose, and creeping softly to the door, and then to the landing, he listened attentively. All was still as the grave, and he went as far as the door of the room that had been his, and fairly entered the apartment after the marquis.

The Venetian blinds all remained closed, and the place was profoundly dark. He heard the marquis run against a chair, and then utter a curse.

No doubt the projected murderer thought that that slight noise would awaken Claude, whom he imagined to be slumbering there, for he paused and listened for a time, after which he muttered to himself—

"He sleeps sound enough now, at all events, for my purpose. The bracelet will be mine, and then hurrah for America, as England will assuredly be too hot to hold me after to-night's work."

"It will, indeed," thought Claude.

The fellow crept now slowly along the floor towards the bed. His eyes were getting more accustomed to the semi-darkness of the place, and he got on with more precision towards the bed than at first.

Claude did once ask himself the question of, "Shall I or shall I not interfere to stop this act?"

He had not much time for consideration. Perhaps it was a pity that he decided as he did decide; but so it was. He determined upon a system of non-interference, and upon letting things take their course.

And now, as he stood near to the door of the room, the only sense he could well bring to bear upon the proceedings of the marquis efficiently was that of hearing.

To be sure, he could just see the dim outline of his figure as he stooped over the bed; but that was all.

There was then a rustling sound, a short struggle, and then a deep and dreadful groan.

"It is done!" cried the marquis, turning from the bed-side, and speaking in a tone of fright. "It is done! Where is my reward?"

Claude was silent. A feeling of horror crept over him. He heard a strange gurgling sound, and he felt quite confident that the old man was yet dying, and that those sounds were what he was constrained to make as he gasped for breath.

He heard, too, a splashing sound—drip, drip upon the floor, and he knew, as though he had seen it, that it was the blood of the murdered, weltering forth from some gaping wound, and dripping from the bed.

It was truly horrible!

Claude, perhaps, would not have recovered himself quite so soon, but he heard the marquis speak again, and that roused him.

"The bracelet—the bracelet!" he said: "I must have the bracelet! What is the use of the murder without its gains? Light—light! I must have a light to look for the bracelet!"

Claude felt that it was now necessary, if he would know what further steps the murderer intended to take, to get out of the way.

The diamond bracelet which had been the instigation of the dreadful crime, he had securely in his pocket, so that the marquis might search in vain for it, as the reward of the horrible deed he had just committed in the chamber.

Whether at once to confront him and charge him with the deed, or yet to wait and watch him, was a matter of doubt in Claude's mind.

He decided upon the latter course, and as the only mode of getting out of his way effectually, he retreated before him across the dark passage and into the chamber of the old man.

The rushlight had burnt low by this time, and lent but a flickering light to the room. Some clouds seemed to have interposed themselves between the earth and the sunrise, for certainly there was not so much appearance of that event as there had been a quarter of an hour previously, when Claude had watched the dimly coming light.

Concealment was easy, for, as the marquis entered the room, Claude allowed the opening door to make him a hiding-place behind it.

But any one might now have got successfully out of the way of that agitated man. He was trembling fearfully, and all he could say was—

"A light! a light! I must have a light! How can I see the diamonds if I have no light?"

"Alas!" thought Claude, "what a cup of wretchedness you have filled to the brim for yourself!"

Approaching the mantel-shelf in a strange, staggering sort of manner, he grasped at the light, which had been by Claude previously removed there from the table, and then abruptly he left the room with it.

And now, indeed, commenced a part of that retribution which was surely to overtake the murderer; for, although he fully believed that the object for which he had taken the life of a sleeping man was now to be had for the going for, he stood trembling in the passage, and could not gather even courage sufficient to walk into the room.

Well he knew the sight that would there present itself to him, and no wonder he shrunk back aghast from encountering that horrible and gory spectacle.

Claude watched him as he stood shaking upon the stair-head, and muttering to himself the awful suggestions of a disturbed and guilty fancy.

"'Tis done, 'tis done!" he said: "Oh yes! I have done the dreadful deed! It is the first deliberate, cold-blooded murder I have done! 'Tis true I have taken human life before now; but it has been in the heat of conflict and in self-defence. This is a murder—yes, this is a murder! Dare I go into that room?"

He shuddered perceptibly: then, after a pause, he added—

"And yet shall I leave the reward of my crime to be laid hands upon by others?"



Shall I sow in blood that they may reap in sunshine? No, no, no. I must have the bracelet. The diamonds must be mine, and mine only. As mine was the whole criminality, so mine must and shall be the whole reward."

He advanced timidly another step or two.

"Hush—hush!" he cried. "What was that?"

Some imaginary noise had disturbed him, and he stood and shook like an aspen leaf.

"Truly, truly," he added, "I heard something; yet all is still again. The opium draught keeps one quiet who sleeps upon the floor, and the knife has put the other to eternal sleep—what have I to fear?"

After a moment or two he spoke again, saying—

"The old man recommended the death of the other; he said it would not be safe to let one go. I must now take the life of Sixteen-string Jack. He sleeps above—I had better settle him first, and then perhaps I shall be better able to look for the necklace."

Claude had just time to dart back into the room from which he had emerged, when the marquis, full of his new idea, turned to ascend a narrow staircase that led to the chamber of Sixteen-string Jack.

It was not likely that Claude would now abstain from an active interference, when the life of his old friend was thus menaced. He allowed him, however, to ascend the stairs in peace, if the wretched trembling state he was in deserved such a name.

Claude hurried after him, and indeed so little caution did Claude use in ascending the attic stairs, that it was quite wonderful the marquis did not hear him. Nothing, however, could show more forcibly the state of mind he was in that this fact that he started in dismay at imaginary noises, and was completely oblivious to real ones.

Claude was in a fright lest Sixteen-string Jack should suffer some harm before he could get up to the stairs, but the moment he got on the landing, he pushed past the marquis, and stood between him and a door immediately opposite, and which no doubt conducted to Jack's chamber.

"Hold!" cried Claude. "Have you not already to-night imbrued your hands in blood enough?"

The flickering unsteady light from the miserable candle carried by the marquis fell full upon the face of Claude Duval, so that at a glance he must have been recognised.

It did not strike Claude at the moment, so anxious was he for Jack's preservation, that the appearance of him to the marquis must be most horrible, as that individual had all the reason in the world to believe that he, Claude, lay weltering in his gore below.

The first exclamation of the marquis, however, made him aware of this.

A shriek burst from his lips, and he cried—

"Mercy! mercy! The dead—the dead!"

He fell backwards down the staircase, candle and all, leaving Claude in the dark on the attic landing.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" cried Sixteen-string Jack, from his room. "Who is there?"

"'Tis I, Jack," said Claude. "Get up as quickly as you can. This is no place for us."

## CHAPTER LIII.

### THE TRIAL OF MARKHAM BRERETON.

CLAUDE spoke in a loud voice, so that Sixteen-string Jack should have no difficulty in recognising who it was. The answer of Jack showed that he had heard Claude and knew him at once.

"Yes—yes," he said. "What do you want, Claude?"

"I want you."

"I am here then. Is anything amiss?"

"A trifle," replied Claude.

"Why, you speak strangely," said Jack, as he appeared putting on his coat as well as he could see to do so. "You are, I think, for once in your life, surely alarmed."

"I am, indeed, Jack."

"Is it possible? I did but jest."

"And many a true word is so spoken, Jack. Come down stairs as quick as you can, and let us admit all the light we can into this house."

There was a window upon the staircase, which Sixteen-string Jack had noticed as he came along. It was only secured by a small hook, that is to say the shutters of it, and Jack at once opened it.

A stream of daylight made its way into the house, and never did Claude feel so grateful for anything as for that soft, mild, morning light that fell upon his face, after the night of horrors he had passed through.

Jack," he said, as he laid his hand upon the arm of his old friend, "you would have been a dead man in another minute."

"If what?"

"If I had not interfered."

"Claude, I owe then my life, as well as everything else, to you?"

"Don't think of that. There has been murder here."

"The marquis?"

"Yes."

"By Heaven, I did not like his looks last night at supper, and I had a half suspicion, do you know, that there was some sort of understanding between him and the old wardrobe man, that we knew nothing of."

"If you had a whole suspicion that way tending, Jack, you would not have been far out."

"Is it possible?"

"Ay, possible and true."

"But what—what was the motive?"

"This," said Claude, holding up the diamond bracelet.

"But it was settled the marquis was to share in the produce of that costly piece of plunder."

"Yes, Jack; but the marquis has a stomach that would digest it all, you see."

"The villain."

"The worse than villain, Jack."

"How mean you?"

"Come on, and I shall be able, I think, to show you a sight that will truly astonish you, if it does not, as I think it will, absolutely shock you."

As Claude spoke he hurried down the staircase as quickly as he could, and the first object that met his gaze at the bottom of the first flight was the insensible form of the marquis, who had struck his head heavily in the most awkward and dangerous backward fall.

"Good God! who is this?" cried Jack.

"Look."

Jack did so, and recognised the features of the marquis.

"Is he dead?"

"I think not," said Claude.

"But you have not looked at him."

"No, Jack. I formed my opinion upon the simple belief that if ever a fellow was born to be hung it was this one. Am I right now?"

The marquis uttered a groan.

"We will soon recover him," said Jack. "I will get some water and dash in his face. I dare say that will put him to rights quickly enough. He don't seem much hurt."



GENTLEMAN JACK DISGUISED AS A CLERGYMAN IN THE COFFEE ROOM.

Jack ran up stairs, and in a moment or two brought down a jug of cold water, which he threw with all the force he could into the face of the marquis.

"Murder—murder! Oh! murder!" he cried.

"A word you ought to be the first to avoid and the last to pronounce," said Claude. "Look, villain, and behold how you have been defeated."

The marquis did look up with a shudder, and for some moments he looked at Claude with an expression of perfect astonishment.

"Can this be?" he said. "Oh, no, no; it is all a dream."

"I wish it was," said Claude.

"But—but. Let me touch you. Are you a living man?"

"I am."

"And—and—and who—who—?"

He pointed to the chamber in which he had perpetrated the dreadful deed of blood, and looked beseechingly at Claude for answer to his inquiry.

"You would ask," said Claude, "who it is you have in that chamber sacrificed to your rage and to your avarice?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"You thought to take my life while I slept; you thought to kill me, even after I had told you that you should receive a full and equal share with myself of the proceeds of my exertions to-night."

"Yes, but—but—"

"Hear me. You were not satisfied with much more than your proper deserving, but, in order to stifle my claim wholly, you would have cut my throat."

"No, no."

"I say yes. It is useless now adding falsehood to your rascally Judas-like conduct, and then, when you thought you had cut my throat, it occurred to you that, for fear of the consequences, you must perform the same operation upon my friend here."

"Do not torture me."

"What? Do you talk of torturing?"

"Yes, yes. This is worse than throat-cutting. Tell me, I implore you, who is it that lies in yonder room. Speak, oh, speak."

"Who should there be? Look at us."

The wretched man looked full at Claude, and then at Sixteen-string Jack, and then he passed his hand across his brow, as though he were in too confused a state to tell exactly who had been in the house, and who had not.

"I—I think," he said, "I think it still is all a dream."

"Do you?"

"I hope so."

"Ah, that is quite another thing. I only wish it was. But he whom you find missing from the supper party, who sat down so securely an hour ago, will most probably never sup again."

The marquis rose slowly to his feet. He cast about him one bewildered look, and then he made a rush, not to escape, but into the chamber where the victim of his avarice lay.

"Let us follow him," said Jack.

"As you please," replied Claude. "Come on."

When they entered the room, they found the marquis with the most frantic eagerness drawing up the venetian blinds, which shut out the daylight from the room, and when he had done so, he turned towards the bed.

The moment he looked upon the horrible sight which was there—and a truly horrible sight it was, for the head of the old costumier was almost severed from his body, and he lay in a pool of blood—he commenced swearing in the most horrible manner.

"Gracious heaven! what does he mean by that?" cried Jack. "He cannot be so tender-hearted, or he would not have used the knife so effectually."

"Why, what extra villany," said Claude, "consists in this murder above all others?"

The marquis gasped for breath, as he spoke slowly, saying—

"He—he was my father!"

As he uttered these words, he fell forwards upon his face among the blood.

Claude recoiled with terror, and the face of Sixteen-string Jack was blanched. Little had they, either of them, suspected such a revelation as this, and for a time it quite froze up their faculties. Claude at last spoke in a tone of bitter regret—

"I could have prevented this deed. I shall never think of it without regretting

that I did not do so; but I looked upon it as a sort of retribution upon both of them, without for a moment suspecting its awful extent of severity."

"It is dreadful," said Jack. "What shall we do?"

"What can we do?"

"It is a question that I cannot answer."

"We must both answer it, Jack, by one word, and that is, nothing. This poor wretch will suffer enough, without human laws interfering with him; and if we were ever so much inclined to call down the penalties of the law upon him, we are in no position to do so."

"Then we had better come away at once, Claude."

"I think so."

"The sooner the better, then, for I am sickened by looking upon this scene."

They both turned from the room, and in a few moments had left the house to the dead and the murderer.

"Will you go out of town at once?" said Jack.

"No, Jack, I cannot. To-morrow is Friday, and I have great reason for thinking that the trial of Mr. Brereton will come on, in which case I shall not be very far from the Old Bailey."

"A dangerous vicinity, Claude."

"Yes. But absolutely necessary to hold me to-morrow. What do you purpose doing?"

"Can you ask me? Have I not already expressed a wish to join my fortunes to yours, Claude? If you do not insist upon sending me from you, my place for the future shall be your side in danger or in safety."

"Be it so, Jack; I am grateful to you. There are but three persons in the world for whom I think it worth the living."

"And those, Claude?"

"Are Cicely Brereton, my sister May, and yourself."

Jack looked the thanks which he could not speak, and they both proceeded at a very rapid rate from the house of the costumier, which they never wished to see again.

They proceeded at once to the Old Bailey, where they put up at an hotel, and Claude said to Jack, when they had duly arranged about their accommodation—

"I shall be here the first thing in the morning, Jack. But I shall be so changed in appearance, that the people here will not know me; I think, without any danger of recognition, I shall be able to attend the court."

"Be careful, Claude."

"I will, Jack, for more sakes than one; so now good night, or rather good morning. It is now six o'clock, and I shall be with you at nine, and if the trial of Mr. Brereton does come on, I shall be able perhaps to astonish the folks a little."

It is scarcely necessary to state that Claude had had an interview with Cicely, at which he again assured her that the safety of her brother should be his utmost care.

It was likewise necessary that he should procure money for the defence of Brereton, which he did by borrowing a hundred pounds, for he had no hesitation in doing that, feeling as he did, that when he had leisure to dispose of the bracelet he should find no difficulty in repaying it.

And as regarded that bracelet, and the hands it had come from, it may be truly said, that although Claude Duval never robbed any but the rich, he never appropriated any portion of another's property to his own purposes with less compunction than he did that.

## CHAPTER LIV.

## THE TRIAL OF BRERETON.

THE circumstances attendant upon the accusation, by Tom Brereton, of his cousin Markham, of the robbery which he, Tom, knew perfectly well had been committed by Claude Duval, were of so peculiar a character, that it becomes necessary, now that the trial of Markham is on the *tapis*, to recapitulate them.

That these circumstances had a visible connection with the original circumstances, in which that part of the Brereton family, whom we have taken the greatest interest in, is concerned, will be sufficiently obvious.

It will be remembered that Markham Brereton, Cicely, his sister, and his mother, were subsisting rather penuriously in London, when they heard tidings of the death of Tom Brereton, the only son of Mrs. Markham's late husband's brother.

This event placed them in a position of heirs-at-law to a small freehold property at Guilford, which, believing the circumstantial tale of the death of Tom Brereton, they did not hesitate to take possession of.

The anomalous condition of the branch of the Brereton family to which Markham belonged may be easily accounted for. Tom's father, who had become a well-to-do man in the world, had been angry, or chosen to affect that he was so, at his brother's—that is Cicely and Markham's—father's marriage, so that the two families had not been for years in a state of communication with each other.

Hence it arose that the Breretons, whom we may call our Breretons, did not even know Tom by sight.

It was quite, then, a surprise to them when that vulgar and most erratic personage suddenly made his appearance at Guilford, when they had made themselves just comfortable, and in his coarse way announced who he was.

Fortunately Mr. Markham Brereton was at home, and his reply was what the ep'y of any reasonable man would have been under similar circumstances.

"Prove your identity," he said, "and we will yield you up quiet possession of that which we innocently, in the belief of your death, have taken possession of."

To this Tom Brereton was compelled to assent, and hence we found him travelling from Guilford to London with the Breretons in the old family coach, upon the occasion when Claude Duval stopped the vehicle upon Hounslow Heath, and instantly robbed Tom of his pocket-book, containing all the documents he possessed, to prove that he was the person he had represented himself to be.

Now, as we know, it had happened, that with a thorough disgust at the companionship of Tom Brereton, Markham had ridden on before, and actually himself been stopped by Claude Duval before the attack was made upon the carriage; and it was from the circumstance of Markham having gone on in advance, that it was thought by Tom and his advisers there would be good ground for fixing the robbery upon him.

But of course Tom had a sufficient motive for all this, and that motive was this.

There had been a third brother in the Brereton family, who had gone abroad to better his condition, and it appeared that he bettered in an extraordinary degree, for he became a very rich man indeed, and when nearly on his death-bed he had sent a person to England, to make certain inquiries concerning his relatives.

This person had in due course acquainted him with the alienation between his two brothers, and in a freak of fancy he chose to leave the bulk of his fortune to Cicely his niece, merely because she was named Cicely.

This was a fact that had come to the ears of Tom, through a low attorney who acted for him, and who was named Newcourt, and then arose between them the anxious question of what could be made of the knowledge before the executors of

the deceased Mr. James Brereton became energetic in taking means to carry out the conditions of his will, which he had made at Calcutta.

It was thought that if a marriage could be knocked up between Tom and Cicely, it would answer all the purposes, and the attorney got from him a contingent bond for £10,000 as his share of the plunder, in case the marriage should be brought about.

While Cicely was in complete ignorance of her fortune, it was thought that an offer from Tom of marriage, and the settlement of the Guilford property upon her, would look amazingly generous, and be snapped at by the Breretons; but to the annoyance of both Tom and the attorney, the former's offer was refused with a considerable portion of superadded contempt.

Under these circumstances, then, it became necessary to adopt some other plan, or to give the matter up as an impracticable job. That was what neither of them felt inclined to do, and the end of the cogitation was, that the charge of robbery against Markham should be got up.

The following were the advantages expected from this plan of operations, which was certainly well projected.

The great affection subsisting between Cicely and her brother was well known, and it was thought that by playing upon her fears arising from that affection, she might be forced into a consent to the projected marriage, and so save him.

Hence, then, the attorney, Newcourt, had made every possible exertion to get up the meagre evidence in such a way, as to interlope Markham in its folds, while at any time, provided Cicely consented to what was proposed to her, he could back out of the prosecution by pretending he had satisfactorily found out that he was mistaken in the identity of the robber who had deprived Tom of his pocket-book.

The sudden and most mysterious disappearance of Cicely somewhat discomfited the plotters, but still the criminal proceedings against Markham would be public enough; they thought that if anything could possibly make Cicely show herself, they would.

From the first, the attorney taking the scanty and limited view of human nature incidental to his profession, and in accordance with the impulses of his own mind, had not for one moment imagined that any danger was to be apprehended from the appearance of Claude at the trial, inasmuch as for him to come there would compromise his own safety.

Lawyers and such clients as Tom Brereton cannot very well comprehend the motives that actuate such men as Claude Duval.

It was, however, soon discovered as a probability that Claude would, at the instigation of the sister, attempt something for the preservation of Mr. Markham Brereton, and hence the letter which was to confound Claude in court, was written to the Governor of Newgate, who, for a consideration, had evidently lent himself and his influence to the transaction.

How Claude had frightened the governor, with reference to the forged document, we are already well aware, but that he run the very greatest possible risk in case he should think proper to make his appearance in court, was a proposition quite clear to his mind, and to the minds of all concerned.

Poor Cicely, now actually wedded to Claude, awaited in concealment most anxiously the termination of an affair which involved the safety and happiness of the two beings most dear to her in the world. No wonder that under the circumstances in which she was placed, her mind was torn and distracted by conflicting emotions.

Such then was the state of things upon that eventful morning, when Markham Brereton was to be put upon his trial for an offence of which no one could be more innocent.

The trial and the style of evidence which went towards the production of its result, will sufficiently show what has often been much insisted upon, namely, how easy it is, upon the most slender and apparently upon the most inefficient

train of circumstances to place an innocent man in a position of the most exceeding peril.

It will show how small an amount of conspiring villany is sufficient to jeopardise an existence, and with a shuddering apprehension of the truth of the idea, we cannot help thinking how often the innocent must have suffered the pangs, mental and bodily, of death on the scaffold.

Thus far having made certain conditions of circumstances clear and intelligible to the reader, we at once proceed with the incidents of our tale in due order.

Sixteen-string Jack in vain endeavoured to snatch a few minutes' repose at the inn in the Old Bailey, while Claude Duval was absent from him. The stirring scenes he had so recently gone through, combined with his great anxieties upon Claude's account, effectually succeeded in driving slumber, although not fatigue, from his system.

Finding, then, that it was quite out of the question for him to get any rest, and that he only tortured his imagination by being alone, Jack descended to the lower room of the inn, relying upon certain changes, which, by the advice and aid of Claude, he had contrived the day before to make in his personal appearance, to prevent recognition.

There can be no doubt but that he and Claude were quite as safe, if not safer, from any danger of being known, in the Old Bailey, than anywhere; for who would for a moment have expected to find either of them there?

The very existence, too, of Sixteen-string Jack was unknown, so that even a fancied strong resemblance would have failed to induce any of the officers to say anything to him. He, therefore, might be considered to be doubly safe from any consequences of showing himself in such a quarter.

Jack, when he got into the coffee-room of the inn, found that much of the conversation of the parties there was upon the expected trial of Markham Brereton, and, knowing as he did from Claude, the real truth of the affair, he was both amazed and confused at the different versions he heard from various persons of the story.

Not one of these versions came near at all to the truth, and the whole affair set Sixteen-string Jack thinking of how imperfect an idea, after all, the courts of law can have of the cases upon which they decide. He could not but sigh to think what might be the result of the approaching trial of Mr. Markham Brereton.

"Alas!" he said, "I much fear, indeed, that poor Claude will, with his romantic feeling, consider himself called upon to make some dreadful sacrifice, in pursuance of his promise to his sister and to Cicely, that, at all risks, he will save Markham."

At this moment, a gentlemanly-looking man, attired in rather ecclesiastical-looking garments, made his appearance, and, after glancing round the room, took a seat close to Sixteen-string Jack.

The hair of the new-comer was like Hamlet's father's,

"A sable silvered,"

and altogether he looked one who had seen much of the world, and profited by what he had seen. An aspect of fixed seriousness was upon his face, and the only thing that struck Sixteen-string Jack as rather odd about his face, was the thick eyebrows, of a gray colour, that he had.

"Sir," said the stranger to Sixteen-string Jack, "are you able to tell me at what hour the trials come on opposite?"

"At nine," said Jack.

Now Jack fully meant by a short, brusque manner, to stop any further conversation, but the new-comer had either too much obstinacy, or too much perseverance, to be so put off, and he looked earnestly at Jack, saying—

"I think, sir, I have heard your voice before?"

Sixteen-string Jack felt the perspiration break out upon his forehead, as he replied as firmly as he could—

"I do not think it possible, sir. I am a stranger here."

"And so am I," replied the other.



Jack merely bowed slightly.

"Humph!" said the ecclesiastical-looking personage. "The more I look at you the more convinced am I that I know you; I have the faculty of not forgetting those whom I have once seen."

"Confound your faculties," muttered Jack to himself, and with perfect desperation he said aloud to him—"Pray then, sir, for whom do you take me?"

"For Sixteen-string Jack, the notorious highwayman."

Jack sprang to his feet.

"Hush! hush!" said the ecclesiastical-looking personage, "hush, no more; surely a discovery of identity is as dangerous to Claude Duval as to Sixteen-string Jack in such a place as this."

These last words were spoken in Claude's natural tone, and Jack then for the first time knew him.

"Good God," he said, "is it possible that you have the faculty, Claude, of thus effectually disguising yourself?"

"Yes, Jack, I almost think I must have such a faculty, since it seems that even you did not know me; but it gives me the satisfaction of feeling that my disguise is very perfect—I must leave you now and go over to the court at once, for Brereton's trial will assuredly come on."

## CHAPTER LVI.

### THE TRIAL AND ITS RESULTS.

THE court of the Old Bailey was densely crowded. Scarcely could any one person, in addition to those who already filled its rather confined area, be wedged in, so closely packed together were people of all classes and conditions, anxiously brought there to hear the trial of Markham Brereton.

The case had been much commented upon by the press for some weeks previously, and the consequence was, that considerable amount of public curiosity had resulted, and many more times the number of persons than in the court would have been glad to be present at the judicial proceedings.

As the trial was expected to be a long one, it was placed first upon the day's list, so that when the Recorder of London, and the authorities whose duty it was to attend the sessions, were duly seated, the accused, but most innocent young man, was brought from his cell in Newgate and placed at the felon's bar.

Markham Brereton was very pale, but he was firm, and in his aspect there seemed a struggling indignation, that he with difficulty kept down, while the clerk of the arraigns was gabbling over the words of the indictment in the manner incidental to such official characters.

When asked if he pleaded guilty or not guilty to the indictment, he replied in a clear loud, voice—

"Not guilty, and they who institute this prosecution well know it."

"Prisoner," said the judge, "you are adopting a foolish course. That was not the proper manner of pleading to the indictment."

"Not the usual manner, you mean, sir," said Markham; "let conscious guilt or slavish fear, cringe and whisper, but conscious innocence will speak out."

"You do yourself an injury."

"Which it is for the jury to decide and not the judge," said Markham, in a tone of voice that did not exactly please the recorder, who, however, made no further remark, but allowed to proceed at once.

A notoriously unscrupulous barrister was retained for the prosecution, and rising amid the most breathless attention of the densely crowded court, he spoke as follows:—

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury—

"I shall, as briefly as I consider to be consistent with my duty, detail to you the circumstances which will be put in evidence, before repeating the charge against the prisoner at the bar.

"It is not my province as representing the prosecution to amplify in any shape or way, or to aggravate the charges brought forward in the indictment. I shall only be too happy if my learned friend, the Attorney-General, who is for the defence, can invalidate the facts which I shall feel it to be my duty to lay before you."

It was not news to the court that the Attorney-General had a brief for the defence, for it had been whispered upon the bench; but it certainly was to the present body of spectators. The fact is, Claude had placed the whole one hundred pounds he had borrowed for Markham's defence in the hands of a respectable attorney, and a fifty pound brief had brought the Attorney-General into Court.

If this information amazed the spectators, it really much more amazed Markham Brereton, who came into court under the full impression that he was undefended by counsel upon the painful occasion—

"Pardon me," he said, "there must be some mistake."

"If I am to be interrupted," said the counsel for the prosecution, to the prisoner at the bar, "I must appeal to the court to take some measures to put a stop to such indecorous proceedings."

"The prisoner's conduct is disgusting."

"I protest against that expression," said the Attorney-General.

All eyes were immediately fixed upon the eminent lawyer who at the period filled that important post, and the recorder's face suddenly reddened as he glared upon him.

"I protest against that expression," continued the Attorney-General. "Coming from the bench, it is of moment. Had such a remark come from a private individual, whose temper and capacity no one respected, it would have been of no consequence; but if that individual, so contemptible, is by some rare chance which no one comprehends, made a judge, even his follies and his petulance become of importance."

This reproof to the recorder was listened to with the profoundest satisfaction by the bar, and by the whole body of spectators, while the learned individual, although he dared not take to himself the direct application of the Attorney-General's words, fully felt that the hypothetical case was intended for him.

From that moment he made up his mind to condemn Markham Brereton if he possibly could, and by a strong effort he recovered his composure sufficiently to say—

"It is far beneath the dignity of this bench, to wrangle with an advocate who, of course, wishes to make a favourable impression upon a jury; but this court cannot view these interruptions by the prisoner with favourable eyes, nor will they in the mind of any unprejudiced person benefit him in any way."

"It is due to me, then," said Markham Brereton, "that I should be allowed to state the words of the interruption. I was naturally astonished, having not the mean of seeing even a solicitor, to find so eminent a counsel standing up in my behalf in the court, as His Majesty's Attorney-General."

"Is the attorney here?" said the recorder.

"Yes, my lord," said a gentlemanly-looking man, "it's all right and regular."

"Very good. Pray proceed with the prosecution."

"It is not for me," continued the counsel for the prosecution, "to interfere with any little episode which the prisoner or his friends and advisers may think likely to benefit him; and, therefore, without the smallest amount of acerbity consequent upon the interruption that has taken place, I proceed. The prisoner at the bar is accused of a crime only second in its capital nature to the highest crime in the calendar. The crime of robbery, attended with personal violence upon the King's highway. It appears that a Mr. Thomas Brereton became, as



heir at law of his father's possessed of certain premises in fee simple at Guilford; and having occasion to go upon the sea, either for pleasure or for profit, as his own good will, there arose a report that he was dead soon after his departure, whereupon, without taking any legal or proper steps upon the occasion, or even waiting a reasonable time, the prisoner at the bar, his sister, and his mother, rushed to Guilford, and took possession of the property. Now Mr. Tom Brereton, as it appears he is most frequently called, who had in the phraseology of the old ballad not been dead at all, came back, and with some surprise found relatives who had never spoken a kind or even commonly civil word to him in their lives, in posses-

sion of his property. He, of course, demanded a surrender, upon which they put him upon proof of his identity forthwith, and at the end of rather a stormy interview, they consented to accompany him to London to see what a solicitor would say to the documents which he, Tom Brereton, had in a pocket book, and which he showed to his kind relations, as those which would enable him to prove his identity. They all proceeded in a coach from Guilford to London; that is to say, Mr. Tom Brereton, the prisoner's mother, sister, and a young person calling herself May Russel, but of whom more hereafter, while Mr. Brereton, the prisoner at the bar, rode on horseback by the side of the carriage. Now it appears that the family party which was with Mr. Tom Brereton drew the conversation much to the subject of highwaymen, so that he was quite unable to get a word in edgeways, even upon any other, and so they went on till, at a most dangerous part of the road, the prisoner at the bar announced his intention of leaving the party and riding on alone. To this Mr. Tom Brereton made no objection, for he did no share in the fears of the others respecting highwaymen; and for some time the carriage proceeded in safety, until stopped by a mounted man, much disguised. And now, gentlemen of the jury, mark what occurred. This mounted man—his highwayman, singled out Mr. Tom Brereton for attack, and he took from his pocket-book containing the papers which went to prove his claim to the Guilford property, and without which he might be involved in endless litigation. He was quite courteous to the ladies, and some words of absolute recognition passed between him and the young person named May Russel, who made a pretence of giving up her purse to the highwayman. My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, in this highwayman, Mr. Tom Brereton from the first recognised the prisoner at the bar, his cousin, and hence has arisen this most just and necessary prosecution.

"It will be left in your hands, gentlemen of the jury, to decide whether or not the evidence I shall bring before you, will suffice to support the allegations contained in the indictment, which you have heard read, and to which the prisoner has pleaded 'Not Guilty.'"

The counsel for the prosecution sat down, and evidently not much fault could be found with his speech, for he was really himself deceived by the attorney into a belief that Markham Brereton was guilty.

The first witness was Jane Smithson.

"Were you a servant at the little estate in Guilford during the occupancy of Mr. Markham Brereton, and his mother and sister?"

"Yes."

"Do you recollect who else was in the house?"

"Oh, yes; John Adams, the gardener, Phebe Lowes, the housemaid——"

"But I mean with, and upon an equality with the family?"

"Oh, you mean Miss Russel?"

"I don't mean anybody, I merely ask you a plain question, and want a plain answer, that is all."

"Oh, yes, Miss Russel was there."

"Did you, or did you not, ever see this person at the bar pay marked attention to Miss Russel?"

"Marked?—marked?—I never saw him mark Miss Russel. He only courted her now and then, I should say."

"Oh, very well. Did you see them all start for town, after the visit of Mr. Tom Brereton to Guilford?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure. There was Mrs. Brereton, Miss Cicely, Miss Russel, and Mr. Tom in the carriage, and Mr. Markham on horseback."

"On what coloured horse?"

"A dark bay."

"Very well, you may go down."

"Nay, not quite so hasty," said the junior counsel, who with the Attorney General, was for Markham. "Not quite so hasty—I wish to have a little conversation with this young lady."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Jane, bridling up at the compliment.

"Well, Jane, what was Miss Russel's christian name?"

"May."

"Should you have liked to go to London in the carriage?"

"Oh, yes; but there was not room for more than four."

"But tell us how it came about that Mr. Markham so violently prevented Mr. Tom from riding on horseback?"

"Lord bless you, sir, you have got the wrong end of the story. Mr. Markham says to Tom, 'there's a good horse; ride to London, and we will follow you in the carriage, which will just hold four.' But Tom, he says, 'oh, dear no, I can't ride,' says he, 'let me go in the coach,' whereupon in he goes, and Mr. Markham rides."

"Oh, I suppose if Tom had ridden on to London, and Mr. Markham had been in the coach some miles behind him, he could not very easily have robbed him on the king's highway."

"How could he?"

"Ay, how indeed? That will do."

Down went Jane, having damaged the prosecution considerably, by her revelations concerning what passed.

The attorney, Newcome, bit his lip, and whispered to the counsel for the prosecution, who turning over his brief, called—

"Thomas Matthews." And a rough-looking, half boy, half man, in the costume of a groom, or coachman and groom, made his appearance, and was duly sworn.

"Now, my friend," said the counsel for the prosecution, "did you drive the Brereton family from Guilford to London, upon the occasion named in the indictment?"

"No."

"No?—Here is some mistake surely. Is your name Matthews?"

"Ess."

"Then do you mean to tell me you did not act as coachman upon that occasion?"

"Never axed me that afore. Axed me if I druv family—never did that."

"What did you do then? You drove the coach, I suppose?"

"No. I druv the osses—osses dragged the cuch."

A roar of laughter in the court at Matthews's doggedness and singular style of speech rather discomposed the counsel, who, however, made a laugh of it, quoting from Hamlet, and saying—

—"We must speak by the card,  
Or this knave will ruin us with equivocation."

Matthews looked doggedly serious, while the court was in positive convulsions of merriment upon his account, and it was some minutes before business could be proceeded with.

## CHAPTER LVII.

### THE TRIAL CONTINUED.

If anything in the conduction of a trial, criminal or civil, can be more than another annoying to counsel, it must certainly be to have the laugh turned against him, and the barrister who was conducting the prosecution fully felt the awkwardness of his position.

But if anything can be more fatal than another, under such circumstances, it is to make abortive attempts to recover the laugh.

This the counsel was by far too old a stager to do, and with a face of the most imperturbable gravity, he continued the examination.

"Very well, it is admitted that you drove the horses that pulled the coach that contained the persons mentioned."

"Ees."

"Did anything particular happen upon the road previous to the coach being stopped by a highwayman?"

"Ees."

"What was it?"

"Near oss cast a shoe."

"Anything else?"

"Ees."

"Well, what was that?"

"Nothin'."

Another roar of laughter disconcerted the counsel, who fancied that the mode of examination he was pursuing would never in this world elicit from the witness the information he wanted. He accordingly changed it to quite another course, and in a loud and clear voice, he said to him—

"Did you recognize the highwayman who stopped the coach?"

"Wrong agin—didn't stop the cuch—stopped me, and I stopped osses."

"Did you know him?"

"No."

"Was he, or was he not the prisoner at the bar, to the best of your belief?"

"Don't know."

"Then you know nothing?"

"Why you and me is much of a muchness."

"You are the most incomprehensible idiot I ever met with."

"Ees."

"Stop," said the counsel for the defence. "Was the highwayman on a bay horse of any peculiar tint?"

"Culiar? I should think not. There's lots o' bay osses. What is there 'culiar in a bay oss?"

"Very well. How many persons would the coach hold?"

"Four. How many did you want it to hold, stupid?"

"Not one more, I assure you," said the counsel, with a laugh. "You may go down now."

"Well, ain't I going?"

"Silence," said the crier of the court.

"Silence yourself. Nobody makes half the noise you does."

"Turn that man out of court, officers," said the judge. "He has given his evidence, and we certainly do not want any further annoyance or interruption from him."

Thomas Matthews was duly hustled out of court; and so far as the trial had gone, it was certainly all in favour of the accused person, for no jury could for a moment have thought of convicting him upon such meagre evidence as had already been adduced, but the principal witness was certainly to come.

"Thomas Brereton," said the crier of the court, and Tom made his appearance in the witness box.

He had evidently made up his mind to produce what he hoped and fully expected would be a favourable impression on the court by his style of dress, which was a vulgar caricature of the fashion.

He looked pale, despite the assurance of his character, and there was about his manner an evident determination to go through any ordeal rather than flinch from that which he had made up his mind to do. Even the counsel for the prosecution looked at him with an expression of disgust, and did not seem half to like the side of the question he was on.

Tom was sworn, and when that ceremony was over his examination at once commenced.

"Who and what are you, sir?"

"My name is Brereton, and everybody knows I'm a gentleman."

"Well, well; have you some property at Guilford?"

"Oh, yea."

"Pray relate how you came to be temporarily out of possession of that property?"

"Why, you see, the little place came to me naturally when the governor went off the hooks, but I found that my previous cousins had laid hold of it, and were making themselves snug enough."

"What does he mean?" said the judge. "What governor does he allude to?"

"His father, my lord."

"Oh, oh; very well. Go on. I am sorry to hear the governor met with so dreadful a death."

"Eh?" said Tom, "what dreadful death? He died in his bed all comfortable enough, I heard say."

"In his bed?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"I thought you mentioned that he had to be got off some hooks?"

A scream of laughter followed this remark, and it was some minutes before the gravity of the court could be at all restored.

"Lord bless your reverence," said Tom, "I only meant he had died, that's all. It's my funny clever way of speaking; don't you see?"

"Oh, indeed. Go on, then."

"Well, Mr. Brereton," continued the counsel, "you found your patrimony in the hands of your relations; what did you do, therefore, sir?"

"Why, I naturally enough asked 'em how the deuce they came there, and all I could get out of 'em was, some cock and bull story about my being drowned, so I told 'em to move off at once."

"And then?"

"Oh, they said they had no particular objection if I would prove who I was, so I showed 'em all my papers in my pocket-book, letters from the governor, my own baptismal register, and so on, but they wouldn't say it was all right before anybody but a lawyer; so you see it was agreed we were all to come to London, and go to one, when the matter was to be settled."

"Now, sir, will you be so good as to answer the question I am about to put to you as precisely and clearly as you can? Was there, before starting from Guilford to London, any proposition made to you to ride on in advance, and meet the family in London?"

Tom winked his eye in a peculiar manner, and then with an air of the very greatest effrontery, he said—

"No."

"Nothing of the sort?"

"Oh, dear, no, nothing of the sort. Markham Brereton rode on, and I went in the coach with the women folk."

"Very well, sir; now favour me by detailing to the jury what happened during the journey, of a noticeable character?"

"Well, they began talking about highwaymen, until they nearly made one's hair stand on end, and particularly the old card pitched it strong, pretending to be all of a flutter every minute."

"The who?"

"The old woman."

"But you said something about an old card."

"Oh, that's my funny way."

"I wish," said the judge, "you would change your funny way for a natural way."

"Well," continued Tom, "as I was saying, they pattered away about highwaymen, and when we got at a good distance Markham rode on at a brisk canter and left us to take care of ourselves. After that, Miss Cicely and the young person

they called May Russel, were always looking out of window, and would not hardly answer me when I said anything funny. At last there was a bit of a row, and a fellow on a horse came to the window, and pretended to be mighty civil, while he coolly tells us we are to be robbed."

"The ladies, I suppose, were very much alarmed, Mr. Brereton?"

"Well, I don't know—they took it pretty easy; but I was, I can tell you."

"What happened?"

"The fellow and I had a bit of a squabble, and he took away my pocket-book with all my papers, and it seemed to me that he didn't care for much else."

"Did he rob the ladies?"

"Not a bit of it. There was some nonsense about a little purse, but it was quite clear to me that he and Miss Russel knew each other."

"Well, Mr. Brereton, oblige me by looking at the prisoner at the bar."

This was rather an ordeal for Tom to go through, but he did manage to turn round and look upon the pale, thoughtful countenance of Markham Brereton, who had listened with ineffable disgust to the examination. It was only for a moment that Tom looked at him, and then he was glad to turn away his eyes from the stern contempt of the glance that he encountered.

"Now, sir," pursued the counsel, "is the prisoner at the bar the person who robbed you of your pocket-book in the manner you have related?"

There was a death-like stillness in the court, pending the reply of Tom, who almost gasped out the word—

"Yes."

"Liar!" said a loud voice from amid the dense body of spectators who were closely packed upon the floor of the court.

So thoroughly astounded was everybody by this most audacious interference, that for some moments not a word was uttered—judge—jury—counsel, and spectators seemed to be electrified with astonishment, and even Markham Brereton's countenance wore a sudden flush, and he looked curiously in the direction from whence the bold denial had proceeded.

The recorder half rose, and with an angry gesture, cried—

"Officers, bring that man before me."

A great bustle ensued. The numerous officers connected with the court rushed here and there among the crowd, but no culprit was forthcoming.

"Is it possible," said the recorder, "that a person who has thus unsettled the court cannot be found? Do your duty, officers, and bring him before me directly."

This was much easier said than done. The officers were quite in an agony to lay hold of somebody, and they did seize several persons, but the indignant remonstrances and asseverations of those close at hand forced them to let them go again, with the full conviction that they had made a mistake.

"We can't find him, my lord," said one.

"Not find him?"

"No, my lord."

"Then I shall take care to have every officer of this court reported for inefficiency. Proceed with the examination of your witness, sir."

Tom Brereton was very pale, and holding for support to the rails of the witness box. It was quite clear that the bold denial given to his evidence had had a remarkable effect upon his nerves. He guessed pretty accurately from whom it came, and he was vainly casting about in his own mind for the best means of getting out of the rather difficult position in which he found himself.

"Now, Mr. Thomas Brereton," said the counsel, recalling him to a recollection of where he was, "I trust this most unseemly and criminal interruption of the court will not in the least intimidate you?"

"Oh, no—no—I—I—oh, no."

"Well, sir, I wish to ask you if you have the least doubt or mental reservation in the shape of a doubt, concerning the identity of the prisoner now at the bar, with the person who stopped the coach in which you were travelling from Guilford to London upon the occasion now in question?"



"How should I?"

"But have you? That is the question."

"Oh, dear no; not the least."

"And you have not recovered your pocket-book, containing documents of so great importance to your personal interests?"

"Certainly not."

"Very well, sir. I do not see that there can be any necessity for my troubling you with any further questions upon minor points, when your testimony upon the main particular is so clear and so distinct that the jury can come but to one conclusion upon the subject matter of the inquiry before them."

"Then I may go?"

"Oh, certainly, unless my learned friend for the defence thinks that anything can be done in the way of cross-examining you."

"He will try," said the attorney-general, rising.

"Oh, very good, very good."

"Ain't I to go?" said Tom.

"Not yet, sir, if you please, however unwilling I am to detain you," said the attorney-general.

"I wish you would excuse me; I ain't very well."

"Extremely sorry, but the pleasure of your company here in that box for a short time longer is quite indispensable to my happiness, so you will be so good as to remain where you are, and answer me a few plain questions."

Tom saw there was no escape, so he made an effort and mustered up all his courage and impudence to endure the cross-examination, which everybody felt certain would be in his case no joke.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### THE DEFENCE.

THE auditory shifted its position, and there was not a person present who did not look for something very troublesome to Tom Brereton from what the attorney-general was about now to commence with.

Tom looked him as steadily in the face as he could summon courage to do, and then the attorney-general said, in quite a familiar tone—

"How do you like horse-racing, Mr. Brereton, eh?"

"Horse-racing?"

"Yes, horse-racing. Don't you think now it's a pretty and gentlemanly-like amusement?"

"Well, I—I. Really, I—don't exactly—"

"Oh, nonsense; did you not win the ladies' cup once at Hatcham-park races by riding a horse called Skyscraper?"

"Lord bless you! I ride a race?"

"Did you not?"

"Come, you are on a wrong scent now. Why, what have you got in your head? I ride a race and win a plate? Well, that is a good one."

"But you are a great horseman, as witness the celebrated steeple-chase you rode last year. Come, come, you won't deny that?"

"Yes, I will, though. What do you mean by bothering me about horse-racing and steeple-chasing? You know, I dare say, well enough, that it's all nonsense. I don't like riding at all."

"Oh, you do."

"I tell you I don't. I always avoid it."

"Nonsense."

"It's you that's talking nonsense. Don't aggravate me. I tell you I am no rider, and I don't like riding at all."

"Aggravate you? You are enough to aggravate me. Why, when Mr. Markham,

at Guilford, asked you to ride his bay horse to London while he followed in the carriage, you didn't pretend to be so frightened at riding."

"Why should I? I don't want anybody to get the laugh of me."

"Oh, stuff."

"Besides, Cicely was there, and the other girl, and somehow, if girls don't think you can do everything, they turn up their noses at you."

"Ah, very likely. I wonder how my learned friend feels now?"

As he spoke, the attorney-general cast his eyes towards the counsel for the prosecution, as he was biting his lips, for Tom had been seduced into admitting what he had in the most positive manner denied, namely, that Markham Brereton had offered him the horse to proceed to London with in advance of the carriage.

"Very well," added the attorney-general, who, now that he had gained his point, had no wish to waste further time upon the question of Tom's horsemanship.

"We will look upon that as quite settled. You stated in your examination that the conversation in the coach turned upon highwaymen?"

"Yes. Oh, yes."

"Was any particular highwayman mentioned?"

"No."

"You are quite sure of that now?"

"Oh, yes, quite sure."

"Very well, it's of no consequence. Was it before or after your accusation of her brother, that Miss Cicely Brereton contemptuously rejected an offer of your hand?"

Tom looked horribly confused, as he stammered out,—"I—really—don't recollect."

"Was it before or after?" cried the attorney-general, in a loud voice.

"Well, it was before, then."

"Oh, you admit that, do you? Come now, sir, you know you were very much hurt and enraged at this young lady's refusal of your offer in the contemptuous manner in which she did refuse. Between you and me, don't you think that that contempt arose in a great measure from your expressions of fear, while in the coach coming from Guilford, of being robbed by the notorious Claude Duval?"

"How do I know?"

"But it might have been."

"Well, have it your own way."

"I am pretty well having it my own way, I think; I don't know what may be the opinion of my learned brothers."

"The witness is a fool!" cried the counsel for the prosecution.

"Save me from my friends," said the attorney-general with a laugh.

Tom looked confusedly from one to the other, not very well aware of how far he had committed himself, and yet quite confident that he had done so in some rather alarming way to make his own counsel so bitter against him. The attorney-general, amid the amusement of the whole court, continued his cross-examination of the thoroughly exposed and discomfited Tom Brereton.

"Now, sir," he said, "you have distinctly, and without doubt or reservation, sworn to the identity of the prisoner at the bar, with the person who robbed you of your pocket-book on the highway?"

"To be sure I have."

"Well, how came you to know him so well?"

"How came I?"

"Yes, how came you? Surely, that is a simple enough question to answer, even for you."

"Why, by his looks, of course."

"What? Do you mean to tell me that a man parted with you at Guilford, and then was fool enough to rob you at Ealing Common, trusting that you would not know him again?"

"Oh, but he was disguised."

"Oh! indeed. Well, you penetrated his disguise, I suppose?"



"Of course."

"How did you do that?"

"God bless me, by taking a good look at him, to be sure. How else could I, I should like to know?"

"Well, if you took a good look at him, you know what he had on. How was he attired?"

"He had a scarlet coat on."

"What else?"

"A lace cravat, white breeches, and tall boots."

"Oh! What luggage did Mr. Markham Brereton carry with him when he left the coach and rode on before to London?"

"Luggage! How could he have luggage on a horse?"

"Why, he must have carried his scarlet cloak, the lace cravat, the white breeches, and the tall boots somehow, you know, if he were the robber."

"Well, I don't know."

"Of course you don't."

"Well, don't ask me, then. You are enough to bother a man's life out, you are."

"Oh, dear, no. You are by far too complimentary. Come, now, Mr. Tom Brereton, you have sworn that the young lady named May Russel was not alarmed at the highwayman, but, on the contrary, appeared to know him."

"Yes—oh, yes."

"Do you know who that young lady is?"

"No."

"Have you ever heard or suspected who she is?"

"No. How should I?"

"Very well. Now, of course, you felt highly indignant at the refusal of Miss Cicely, your first cousin, to marry you. It was enough to aggravate anybody, I can well believe."

"Well, you would have been aggravated yourself."

"I should, but—but, Mr. Tom Brereton, I should not have been so ungentlemanly as to taunt her with keeping about her as a bosom friend the sister of a highwayman, which you told me you had ascertained Miss Russel to be. Oh, Mr. Tom, you should not have said that."

"Well, I don't see much in that; when a man's aggravated he will say things that he wouldn't upon other occasions. You ought to know that."

"I do know it. And now, sir, first of all you swore distinctly that no offer had been made to you to ride on before the carriage upon Mr. Markham's bay horse, and then you admitted you had refused such an offer.—Perjury No. 1. Secondly, you swear that, during the conversation held in the carriage, no name of a highwayman was mentioned, and then you admit that Claude Duval, one of the most notorious of the whole fraternity, was mentioned as the subject of your dread.—Perjury No. 2. Thirdly, you swore that you knew nothing further of Miss May Russel than that she was Miss May Russel, and then you admit that you taunted Miss Cicely Brereton with the fact of her being the sister of a highwayman.—Perjury No. 3!"

Tom looked aghast. The counsel for the prosecution shut his eyes and leant back in his seat, affecting to be half asleep, and quite wearied by the tiresome proceedings of the Attorney-General, while the Recorder looked anything but pleased, for he seemed to have come into court with quite an animus against Markham Brereton. The jury looked puzzled, as juries look usually, and the spectators were delighted.

"I suppose I may go?" whined Tom.

"Not yet."

He was compelled to remain, although it was quite clear that he was in an amazing state of fidget, and had an awful dread of what would next be said to him, during that most remorseless cross-examination.

"Now, sir," said the Attorney-General, "did you or did you not upon the thirteenth of this month visit the Governor of Newgate in his private apartments situated in that prison?"

"The thirteenth, did you say?"

"Yes."

"Well, I—I really don't know about the exact date."

"But you did visit him?"

"Ye—ye—yes, I suppose if you say so, I did."

"You are highly accommodating, Mr. Tom Brereton; but I ask you, sir, upon your oath, did you or did you not visit him?"

"Very well—I did."

"What passed on that visit?"

The perspiration poured down Tom's face, and he fidgetted about. At length, when the question was repeated in a voice of thunder, he said—

"I want to ask him to give what indulgence he could to Markham Brereton, because, bad as he was, he was still my cousin."

The Governor of Newgate, who was present, drew a long breath of exquisite relief, and not a little amazed was he at the sudden display of ready wit upon the part of Tom Brereton.

"Well, what else?" said the Attorney-General.

"He said he would do all that was consistent with his duty."

"Very good: and then, when you left him, who did you meet in the street?—who did you go into a public-house with?—who did you give a certain written paper to, which I have now in my hand—a written paper which contains a confession that you were getting up the prosecution of Mr. Markham Brereton solely from malice, and that you knew the robber on Ealing Common was no other than Claude Duval?"

"Really," said the counsel for the prosecution, rising, "any man may write any paper and sign it, if his life probably is to pay the penalty of his refusal."

"Yes," said Tom; "that was it; I deny everything."

The Attorney-General shook his head at the counsel, as he said—

"How well you know that this interruption is most scandalous, and contrary to all professional practice. But you have succeeded in putting words into your witness's mouth, although I have proved that nothing he says can be relied upon for one moment. I trust I have proved that."

The Attorney-General sat down.

"May I go now?" said Tom.

"Oh, yes; you can go now," said the counsel for the prosecution.

"Stop," said the recorder.

Tom looked the picture of distress.

"Do you still distinctly swear to the prisoner at the bar as the person who robbed you upon Ealing Common of your pocket-book?"

"Yes—I do."

"Well, I apprehend, gentlemen of the jury, that that, after all, is the point."

"And," said the Attorney-General, "I protest against the gross interference on the part of the judge with these proceedings."

"I apprehended," said the recorder, "it is always competent on the part of the court to ask a question of a witness, Mr. Attorney-General!"

"Yes, but not to draw an inference."

"I regret differing with you, Mr. Attorney, but I am not aware that I have gone beyond the province of a criminal judge."

"A long way, my lord."

"We differ upon that point."

"As it appears, my lord; and we are likely to continue so to differ; but I trust that the jury will dismiss from its mind an indiscretion, although it does come from a high place, and hedged round with the authority of a judge's robes."

"This is scarcely proper, Mr. Attorney."

"There we differ again, my lord."

"Let the trial proceed."

"Most willingly, my lord; most willingly. I shall endeavour to make the truth apparent, even in spite of your lordship."

"I cannot sit here, Mr. Attorney, and allow the office I hold to be thus insulted in my person. This conduct is most indecorous indeed."

"If I have said anything indecorous to or of the office, I humbly apologise; but, my lord, it was the man holding the office I spoke of, and permit me to say that, after all, it is he alone who can desecrate and insult the office."

There was a pause of a few moments' duration, after which the counsel for the prosecution said—

"That is the case against the prisoner, my lord, and I shall call no more witnesses."

"The court adjourns for an hour," said the recorder.

## CHAPTER LIX.

### THE DEFENCE OF THE PRISONER.

DURING the short period that the judge and the official personages who had seats upon the bench left the court, not one of the spectators made an effort to quit his or her position. If they had done so, they had a very strong opinion that there would be no such thing as getting back again.

Markham Brereton took the opportunity of casting his eyes scrutinizingly around the court to see if he could observe any one he knew, or any friendly face which could give him assurance that, after all, he should not be made the victim of false evidence.

In a remote corner, half hidden from him by a column supporting the roof of the building, was a small knot of persons; and among them he caught a glimpse, and only a glimpse, of May Russel.

The extraordinary disclosure made by the counsel, to the effect that May Russel was the sister of a highwayman, had caused him infinite pain, and as he saw now but a small portion of that delicate and pretty cheek, he could not bring himself to believe that any species of criminality could find a home in one so nearly allied to her.

"No, no," he thought to himself; "all that will be contradicted. That May is poor there can be no doubt, but that she is disreputable I will not believe."

The brief period of rest, however, was quickly over, and the recorder again entering the court, accompanied by the Lord Mayor and both the sheriffs of London, resumed his seat upon the bench.

The Attorney-General and the prisoner's counsel for the defence held together a brief consultation, after which the former rose, amid the most marked silence of this court, and commenced the defence.

"My lords and gentlemen of the jury," he said, "I must confess that I came into this court with a strong feeling upon my mind that there really was something like presumptive proof of the guilt of the prisoner at the bar to be fought against, and that the evidence would be such as to seem to carry with it a probability of his participation in the crime of which he is accused. But, gentlemen, no doubt you are equally surprised with me at the glaring want of common, every-day, presumptive evidence in this case, so cruelly and scandalously got up against an innocent man. It was to be expected, gentlemen, that the footsteps of Mr. Markham Brereton would almost have been reckoned upon the night in question. It was to be expected that if there was a difficulty in saying positively he was at the robbery, there would have been an attempt to prove that he was nowhere else; but, on the contrary, what does the evidence for the prosecution amount to? It is rather a strange thing, gentlemen of the jury, that the evidence for the prosecution divides itself in the most natural way in the world into two portions—one portion that can be believed, and one that cannot. What is true is favourable to the prisoner, and what is false is not. All that was with difficulty wrung by my learned friend and myself from the perjured witnesses for the prosecution was favourable to the prisoner, and so diabolical an attempt to torture and transfigure the truth, I never, during the whole course of my experience, met with in a court of justice. But to return to our question—what does the evidence amount to? Look at it fairly, and it comes to this, and no more. Mr.

Markham Brereton, owing to an erroneous belief in the death of the prosecutor, takes possession of certain property. Well, the prosecutor, of whom it is admitted they knew nothing personally, appears and claims his property, to which Mr. Markham makes the natural reply, 'Come to a civilian, and let us settle the business in a regular way. If you prove to the satisfaction of a respectable solicitor, that this property ought to be surrendered to you, there it is at once without further let or hinderance.' Well, this was too reasonable even for Mr. Tom Brereton to object to, and after rejecting the use of the horse, he rides in the carriage, which would hold no more than four, so that one was necessitated to ride on horseback. We have it upon his own evidence that he might have ridden to town but for his cowardice. Did that look suspicious? Well, gentlemen, there was nobody else to take the horse but Mr. Markham Brereton, and so the party proceeded. An attack is made by a highwayman upon the carriage, and the conclusion you are sought to be persuaded to come to is, that the attack was made by Markham Brereton. You are to be told that having, accidentally, mind, been compelled to ride to London, he then conceives the idea of robbing his cousin; a scarlet coat, white breeches, boots, and lace cravat, fall upon him. one must suppose, from the skies, and he is equipped as a knight of the road. Can anything be a greater insult to the understanding of Englishmen than this? Well, but the identity of Mr. Markham Brereton, we are told, with the highwayman, is duly and distinctly sworn to. It is—but by whom? By a man whose whole evidence was a complication of perjuries; by a man who, as sure as I live, shall be indicted for perjury before this criminal session is over; by a man who for cowardice, cringing manners, and rascality, scarcely has his equal. It is upon the evidence of such a man alone that you are asked to commit one whose character is far above stain or reproach. It is upon the evidence of a man who swore point blank that he was never asked to ride at all, and then admitted he refused upon the ground of incapacity. It is upon the evidence of a man, who swore distinctly that he never knew anything whatever of a certain person, but her name, and then admits that he had reproached somebody else for keeping company with her on account of what he had heard. But why pursue the falsehoods and inconsistencies of such a man as Thomas Brereton? They lie transparently before the jury, and it is impossible—impossible, I say, conscientiously to convict any man of any offence upon such testimony. Gentlemen, I look upon the prosecutor's case as so complete a failure, that I am certain I might safely leave the affair in your hands at this point; but, nevertheless, I will call some witnesses, who will further satisfy you. Call Job Harley."

A most singular-looking specimen of humanity was pushed into the box and duly sworn. He wore a rough great coat, and had an enormous red face, with a profusion of whiskers.

"Well, Job, do you keep the turnpike gate at Acton Green?"

"Yes, I do."

"How long have you kept it?"

"Me and my son has kept it a matter of five years."

"Then, of course, you know such persons as frequently pass through it?"

"Rather."

"Do you remember on the night named in the indictment—the 17th—any one of a noticeable character passing through the gate?"

"To be sure, I do."

"Who was it?"

"Claude Duval, the highwayman, on his bay mare, to be sure. He went through at a sharp trot, and I said to myself—'Look out, whoever happens to be upon the road with a well-filled purse.'"

"Have you any doubt about its being him?"

"Lord bless, you, no. I know him as well as I know myself. It was Claude, and no mistake, as was on the western road that night; and, besides, he came back again, and then I saw him, too."

"Very well, that is sufficient for me, Mr. Job. I shall not trouble you any further."

"Stop a moment," said the counsel for the prosecution, as Job was about to leave the box, "stop a bit; I have a few words to say to you."

"Speak up, then."

"You say you frequently saw Claude Duval, the highwayman, pass your gate. Now, did you ever make an attempt to stop the progress of so notorious a criminal?"

"What?"

"I say, did you knowingly permit such a character to pass your gate, with a full conviction that he was bent upon robbery, without making some effort to apprehend him?"

"Apprehend him? I apprehend him? Well, that's a good 'un. What's it to me, who goes through the gate? If I was to stop all the rogues I see, I should have enough to do."

"Then do you mean to tell me that, knowing a man is going on an errand of robbery and pillage, you would let him go in peace?"

"Yes. You are a lawyer, ain't you?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, I'd let you go through any time."

A laugh ran through the crowd, during which the counsel sat down, finding that nothing was to be made of the turnpike-keeper.

"Call May Russel," said the Attorney-General.

Markham started and turned pale, and there was a visible stir of curiosity in the court, when May was handed into the witness-box to be sworn. Her beauty won all hearts, and the state of agitation she was in, only imparted a greater interest to her personal appearance.

"It shall be my careful endeavour to give you as little pain as possible, in the questions it is my duty to ask you," said the Attorney-General, "and I sincerely hope my learned friend on the other side will follow my example."

May slightly bowed.

"Permit me to ask you if Russel is your real name?"

"It is not."

There was a visible sensation in court, and Markham buried his face in his hands; for he could not bear to look upon that face which he had so often pictured to himself in dreams as all that was beautiful, with now a flush of shame upon it.

"What is your name?"

"May Duval!"

Various expressions of surprise broke from the spectators, and even the counsel looked from the table curiously at the fair young girl.

"Then you are the sister of Claude Duval, the highwayman?"

"I am Claude's unhappy sister."

"How came you the friend and companion of the Breretons?"

"They took me in from charity, knowing me not. I call myself Russel. They gave me a home full of kindness—God bless them! God will bless them for it."

"Those are actions which are not forgotten. Now tell us if you know anything of this robbery upon Ealing Common of Mr. Tom Brereton?"

"The coach was stopped."

"By whom?"

"By my brother."

"You are certain?"

"Do I not know him? There is not a feature, not a slight trick of voice or gesture, that is unknown to me. As I stand before God, it was Claude who stopped the carriage, and only Claude."

"Have you anything further to add, bearing upon the case?"

"Yes. Claude owned to me the robbery. He handed to me the pocket-book, with the contents uninjured."



"Where is that pocket-book?"

"Here."

May took from her bosom the pocket-book, and handed it to the Attorney General.

"It's mine—it's mine," cried Tom, "give us hold of it. It's mine, I say. I'll swear to it any day. Give it to me."

"The pocket-book for the present must remain in the hands of the court," said the recorder.

The Attorney-General intimated that he had more to say to May, and the counsel for the prosecution rose to cross-examine her.

"So," he said, "you are the sister of Claude Duval?"

"I have said so!"

"And you have a sneaking kindness for the prisoner at the bar?"

May's countenance flushed for a moment, but she made no reply.

"I insist upon an answer."

"Which," said the Attorney-General, "I fell bound to say, in defence of my witness, you cannot do, nor will the court aid you."

"Oh, very well, very well, I will take it for granted. I suppose, Miss Duval, you are aware that your worthy brother has committed numerous robberies, and probably you think that to clap one which he did not commit upon his shoulders, will do him no harm, and your lover much good. Now answer me upon your oath, was not the pocket-book you have handed to the court, given to you by the prisoner at the bar?"

"Sir?"

"Oh, you are highly offended at the supposition; you are very sensitive, I suppose."

"I do not perhaps, sir," said May, "live in the atmosphere of falsehood and duplicity familiar to you, who may hear your oath ridiculed without construing it as an insult."

"Dear me!—I suppose you read that in some romance; but now we deal in realities. If you did not receive the pocket-book from the prisoner at the bar, you probably received it from some one to whom he handed it, and, at all events, for your consolation in this affair, I can inform you that you are liable to a criminal indictment."

"I know it."

"Oh, you know it? Now upon your oath, were you not, all of you, that is to say, you and your brother, and his sweetheart Cicely Brereton, and your love, the prisoner at the bar, and the old lady, mixed up together in a nice little plot to get Mr. Tom Brereton's property by fair means or by foul?"

"The supposition, sir, can only show the contemptible character of the imagination which could conceive it, and the shameless licence of the tongue that could utter it."

"Upon stilts again! Well, Miss Duval, I shall leave the jury to form their own estimate of your evidence, and your abilities in this transaction. I have no doubt but that you have said your lesson here in a manner that will give the greatest satisfaction to your friends and admirers. Can you tell me where Miss Cicely Brereton is?"

"No."

"Very well; you can go down, my dear."

Thoroughly vexed and embittered, far beyond anything she had ever before felt in the shape of anger, May left the witness box; but yet the cross-examination had been a complete failure, and the Attorney-General looked with a smile at the junior counsel, as much as to say, our learned friend on the opposite side is particularly unhappy to-day.

## CHAPTER LX.

## THE VERDICT.

OH, what a relief it was to May to find herself once more on the floor of the court, and out of the witness box, where, to her perception, every other word that was uttered to her came in the shape of an insult. She scarcely heard that the next person called was, Cicely Brereton. The name was vociferated through the court, but there was no response, and the Attorney-General said—"I only had a hope that this witness would make her appearance, but it seems that hope was a fallacious one, and I now abandon the call, and proceed to require the attendance of the governor of Newgate in the box."

Tom and the governor both felt a little uneasy, and to tell the truth, so did Mr. Newcombe, the solicitor, but the governor stepped into the box with an air of assurance that they thought promised well for his success, in evading disagreeable disclosures in the forthcoming examination.

"I believe, sir," said the Attorney-General, "that you hold the responsible situation of governor of Newgate?"

"I do."

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Thomas Brereton?"

"No."

"Do you swear that? Has he not visited you?"

"He has, but yet I do not consider him in the light of an acquaintance."

"Very well, you may draw as nice distinctions as you please. What we want to know is, what passed at your last interview with the prisoner, an interview which took place in your private apartment in Newgate?"

"He called upon me to request indulgence for Markham Brereton, which I promised so far as my duty would allow me."

"Did you ever intercept a letter from Claude Duval to the prisoner at the bar?"

"No."

"Did you ever receive a visit from Claude Duval, in Newgate?"

"Certainly not."

"This is too absurd," said the counsel for the prosecution; "Claude Duval, the famous highwayman, visiting the governor of Newgate!"

"There are more things in heaven and earth, sir," said the Attorney General, "than are apparently dreamt of in your philosophy." The governor here, feels the truth of my words. Now, sir, will you swear that Claude Duval and you did not walk arm and arm out of the prison together, after he had pretty well frightened you out of your senses?"

"Certainly not. Nothing of the sort happened."

"Then you know nothing of Tom Brereton—never had a visit from Claude Duval, and are in no way interested in the conviction of the prisoner at the bar?"

"Of course not."

"Now listen to this paper."

The Attorney-General then read the statement, which Claude had forced from Tom Brereton, and which ran as follows:—

"I, Thomas Brereton, declare that I am perfectly well aware that Mr. Markham Brereton was not the person who robbed me upon Ealing Common, but that it was Claude Duval who stopped the coach upon the night in question. Nevertheless, as I wish to terrify Cicely Brereton, my cousin, into accepting my hand, I made a false charge against her brother; and fearing that Claude Duval may come forward, and by owning the robbery defeat me, I have concocted with Mr. Newcombe and the Governor of Newgate, a forged letter, as from Claude to Markham Brereton, stating that for love of his sister, Cicely, he will



come forward at the trial and own to the robbery, so as to clear him, Markham.

(Signed)

"THOMAS BRERETON."

This paper was listened to with curiosity by all present.

"Now," added the Attorney General, "Mr. Thomas Brereton might have denied this statement, as being in his own hand-writing. He might have denied all cognizance of it, and it might in such a case have made no impression; but he has admitted it, and his only explanation of it is that it was extorted from him by fear."

"Doubtless it was," said the governor.

"Do you swear that you know nothing of it?"

"Certainly I do."

"Very well, Mr. Governor; you have in this affair pursued a beld course. Whether it be altogether a prudent one or not, time will show. I have done with you."

The governor lingered, but the counsel for the prosecution said—

"I have no questions to ask you, sir. The examination that you have endured has been by far too ludicrous for me to comment upon."

"My case for the defence is over," said the Attorney General. "I trust I have proved my point, which was, that Claude Duval, and not Markham Brereton, committed the highway robbery, of which the latter stands charged. The testimony of Claude's sister, May, I apprehend, must put that matter completely at rest; and the prosecutor himself would do well at this stage of the proceedings to own himself mistaken. As far as the jury is concerned, I think there can be no difficulty in returning a verdict of acquittal. I am aware that by calling witnesses, I have given my learned opponent in this case a right of reply, which I now give him leave to avail himself of, should he in the due exercise of his judgment, think proper to do so."

The Attorney General sat down, and the counsel for the prosecution rose.

"I have very few remarks to make," he said. "My learned friend looks for an acquittal triumphantly, and if the case was as the case seems, probably he would not be disappointed; but I have, I must say, too great a reliance upon the common sense of Englishmen to believe for one moment that they will allow themselves to be hoodwinked by the pretty little romance of the defence in this case. Here we have two sets of lovers. The prisoner at the bar loves the sister of the highwayman, Claude Duval, and Claude Duval returns the compliment by loving the sister of the prisoner at the bar, and all of them together have no objection to Tom Brereton's property. The prisoner commits a robbery, and Claude Duval fathers it. If Claude Duval should chance to be apprehended next week, perhaps the prisoner at the bar will have the kindness to own to the case brought against him. Gentlemen of the jury, I trust you will defeat this snug little family compact, and notwithstanding the dust that has been industriously attempted to be thrown in your eyes, you will still put the saddle upon the right horse. I leave the case now in your hands, with confidence as to the result, for however Mr. Tom Brereton may not have succeeded in winning upon your sympathies, still he is not upon that account to be robbed upon the highway with impunity, nor are a few inconsistencies in evidence elicited by the tact of counsel in a cross examination, to invalidate broad and startling facts. Of course the advancement of justice is the first consideration of us all, and I sincerely hope that your verdict will vindicate the law."

The counsel sat down, having said all he could say to damage the defence, although by the initiated it was well enough perceived that he had no great fancy for his own case, and no great reliance upon its strength. All that remained now of routine proceeding, was that the judge should sum up the case to the jury, and every one in the court was on the rack of anxiety to listen to what he would say, and the turn he would give to the evidence that had been adduced upon both sides of the question. He commenced in a low voice—

"The prisoner at the bar stands charged with the robbery of certain papers and documents from the person of Mr. Thomas Brereton on the king's highway, on the evening of the 17th of the last month. It appears in evidence that a coach in which the prosecutor with some ladies were travelling, was stopped upon Ealing Common, and the robbery which forms the subject of the indictment was effected by the prisoner at the bar, or some one so resembling him, as to induce the prosecutor to swear that he was the person. It cannot fail to be observed that the whole case resolves itself into questions of personal varacity, and personal identity. The defence has laboured to prove that the prosecutor is either perjured or mistaken, both rather serious allegations, and they prefer much the former, which

is of course by far the most serious of the two. It appears that Thomas Brereton possessed papers about him of importance to the prisoner at the bar, or rather I should say of importance to Thomas Brereton, and counter to the interest of the prisoner at the bar, and the presumption set up by the prosecution is, that it was to annoy and distress Thomas Brereton by the loss of these papers that the robbery was committed. Thomas Brereton swears distinctly, and without reservation, to the identity of the prisoner with the person who robbed him upon Ealing Common, and another witness swears as distinctly, that the robber was no other than Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman, and actually produced the prosecutor's pocket-book which she says was handed to her by Claude Duval. It is not necessary for me to say much more of this witness than that she has placed herself in an extremely delicate and painful position, for whether that which she has sworn to be the truth or not, she is most awkwardly situated. It will be the duty of the jury to endeavour to come to some sort of conclusion between the conflicting testimony of the prosecutor, whose character no one has attacked, and this young woman, who if she be herself immaculate, certainly is most unfortunate in her immediate connexions. It is suggested that the pocket-book might just as easily have been handed to May Duval by the prisoner at the bar, as by her brother Claude, and it is likewise suggested that by so doing she was saving a lover at a small expense to a brother, an expense or risk which the brother was willing to run for the sake of the sister of the prisoner at the bar. Whether or not there be such a family compact and understanding between all these persons, it is hard to say, but that among them all they had the prosecutor's pocket-book, which was taken from him by violence upon the night in question on Ealing Common, is a fact patent to the whole proceeding. If that pocket-book was taken by Claude Duval and handed to his sister, as she says, and suppose the prisoner at the bar was aware and sanctioned the proceeding, still he is not guilty of the present indictment. But if, on the contrary, he really did take it, and this introduction of the name of Claude Duval, is nothing more than a base fraud and impudent attempt to juggle justice, then is he most guilty, and most guilty are those who have aided and assisted him. Between the conflicting testimony it is for you, gentlemen of the jury, to decide, always bearing in mind that the prisoner at the bar is not to be found guilty upon any other assumption than that he was *de facto* the robber of the pocket-book, upon Ealing Common, and upon the special occasion, recited and specified in the bill of indictment. If you believe Mr. Thomas Brereton on his oath, your duty lies quite clearly and evenly before you, for then you can do nothing but find the prisoner guilty, according to your oaths upon taking your places in that box. The case is before you, gentlemen, and the court waits your decision upon the question submitted to you."

The charge to the jury was over, and although it was rather of a rambling and discursive character, no one could take upon himself actually to say that it was unfair, notwithstanding there was an evident leaning to the belief that the prisoner was guilty. The judge, however, in that stage of the proceedings, had as much right to his opinion as any one else. There was a buzz and a hum of conversation in the court.

"Silence!" shouted the crier.

All was still again, and the jury with puzzled and anxious looks, began to lay their heads together.

"You can retire, gentlemen, if it is your wish to do so," said the clerk of the arraigns, looking hard at the jury as she spoke.

"No," said the foreman, "we think we shall soon agree."

This announcement kept every one in the court motionless, and the recorder, who had partially risen to leave the court, under the impression, when the clerk of the arraigns spoke, that the jury was about to retire, resumed his seat again, and composed himself to a little patient waiting. Many eyes were turned upon Markham Brereton at this juncture, but their anxiety was not much gratified. He preserved the same look of calm dignity, which had been, with very few exceptions of an occasional character, the characteristic of his bearing during the whole

of the long and, to him, most harassing trial. Occasionally he glanced at the jury box, but it was not with that kind of feverish impatience which a guilty man might be supposed to feel, but with the feeling of wishfulness that the who affair was over, which was so likely to beset one in his position, who for so many hours had been made the gaze of hundreds. May was there, too, with her fair face hidden in her hands, and weeping bitterly ; Markham Brereton would have been glad to have been able to have shared some of those tears, but he could only see them and suffer, and his suffering from being pent up and silent far transcended hers. At length, there was a slight stir in the jury-box, and the members faced the court. Silence was loudly called for, and amid the breathless attention of all present, the clerk of the arraigns said, "Gentlemen of the jury, are you agreed upon your verdict in the case now before you?"

"We are," replied the foreman, faintly.

"Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

The short paused that follow was dreadful. It seemed as though the foreman of the jury could not find voice to speak—as though, like Macbeth's amen, the word stuck in his throat. At length, by what was evidently an effort to him of no common character, he said, "Guilty!"

## CHAPTER LXI.

### THE INTERRUPTED SENTENCE.—A STRANGE SCENE.

SURELY from what had already taken place, this verdict of guilty must have been expected by every one in the court, and yet, what a wonderful sensation it really produced ; proving what has often been asserted by those who know human nature, and its habitudes, viz., that, however we may fancy we are prepared for any event, we never in reality are so. A strange kind of groan burst from the body of spectators. Their sympathies had from the first evidently been in favour of Markham Brereton. The evidence against him had not been respectable. The conduct of the judge had not been impartial.—No wonder, then, that most of them who had remained during the whole of the proceedings had become strongly impressed in favour of the prisoner. The countenance of the recorder when the groans came from the people, first grew red and then nearly of a purple colour.

"I cannot believe it to be possible," he said, "that the officers of this court are unable to lay hands upon some one who is the cause of this disturbance, or some of it."

This was a direct challenge to the officers to produce somebody, and no wonder that they became energetic accordingly. But upon those who knew the prisoner well, the effect of course of the verdict was far more perceptible than upon strangers. A kind of half-stifled cry had burst from the lips of May, that attracted some special observation to her, and then she clasped her face in her hands, and was as still as the very grave ; she guessed what was going to happen. The effect of the verdict upon Markham, was that a look of indignation spread itself over his face, and he stood more erect than before, in the bar confronting those who had done him such injustice. By this time, however, the officers, who found, from the words of the recorder, that their reputation was at stake if they did not produce somebody, bustled about, and laid hold, of course, of the quietest person they could meet with, and hauled him forward as the author of the tumult that had made the recorder so indignant.

"Who is this?" said the judge.

"The man that made the row, my lord."

"Oh, very well. He stands committed to prison till the end of the sessions. Take him away"

"But what for?" said the man.

"Disturbing the court."

"I never opened my lips; it's all a mistake."

"He's sure to deny it, my lord," said the officer.

"Oh, of course—of course. Take him away—take him away."

"But I've done nothing," said the man, "and I won't go away. Why should I be sent to prison when I have done nothing? I won't go."

"Your present conduct," said the judge, "is quite a sufficient proof of your former guilt; you are evidently a violent man—a man of ill-regulated passions, and it is my duty, sitting here as I am, to preserve the court from the possibility of being again by you disturbed."

The officers, after a short struggle, for the man's blood was up at the idea of being committed to prison for nothing, succeeded in forcing him out of the court, and locking him securely up. Little they cared for the gross injustice they were committing, so long as they pleased the judge, and saved themselves from further reproof. There is nothing so dangerous as an officer wanting to show his proficiency. The tumult in the court was certainly quelled by this means, for those who had made the disturbance, took the fate of him who had not, as a warning to themselves, and were quiet accordingly. Some of the crowd that filled up every available corner of the place, made their way out, to announce the verdict to those who had been quite unable, either from too late an arrival or a want of physical force to push their way into the place, so that the court was by no means so densely crowded as before, and those who remained had a little breathing room. As the prisoner was not removed from the bar, it was evident that the judge intended to sentence him at once. At that time those merciful and enlightened alterations of the criminal code, which are now introduced, had not taken place, and it was death alike to commit murder, or to take a purse by violence or otherwise. There was, in fact, at that time every temptation to the robber likewise to become a murderer, for if he knocked his victim upon the head, he certainly got rid of a material witness against him. His punishment too was the same precisely. How any legislator could overlook for a length of time so glaring a defect in the laws, it is difficult to conceive; in fact, it can only be accounted for by that indifference to domestic policy which has ever characterised the parliaments of this country, except in cases which interested them and their friends in a pecuniary or pleasurable point of view. That the due amount of punishment should be meted out to crime was essentially a poor man's question, and therefore not of any importance to such noble and worthy persons as had the legislation of the country in their hands. It was a Friday upon which Markham Brereton was tried, and if the opinion of the court had been that some punishment short of death might suit the justice of the case, he would have been removed from the bar as soon as the verdict was recorded, and brought up probably on the next day for judgment; but as he remained, it was quite clear to which fate the learned recorder assigned him. A death-like stillness now prevailed, so that when the crier rose to call for silence, his doing so was a mere matter of form. Nevertheless, in the loud, cold, official tone, he shouted—

"Silence! silence!"

"Prisoner at the bar," said the recorder, "have you anything to urge why sentence should not be pronounced against you in due course of law?"

"Much," said Markham Brereton.

"Very well, you are at liberty to speak; but it is to be hoped that you will not take up the time of the court needlessly."

"The court is so very indulgent to me," said Markham, "and so full of justice tempered by every description of dignity and mercy, that I ought indeed to be most chary of taking up its time, or putting it to the smallest inconvenience."

There was a tone of such bitter irony in these remarks, that even the judge winced a little, as he said—

"The court will hear you."

"I am well aware," began Markham Brereton, "that it would be much more

pleasant to some parties for me to submit quietly to my fate, without a murmur, but I do not intend to do so. Before God, I declare that the statements that have been sworn to-day against me are false. I solemnly declare my innocence of the crime imputed to me, and I brand my cousin, Thomas Brereton, with perjury."

"Prisoner, you——" commenced the judge.

"Silence!" cried Markham. "If it be my turn to speak, let me speak; I did not interrupt you."

"Bravo!" cried a loud voice.

"This is intolerable," said the judge, as he rose from his seat.

"We have him, my lord," said an officer. "Here he is."

"Murder! murder!" cried Tom Brereton, whom they had, in their haste to catch somebody, right or wrong, laid hold of by the throat, and were half throttling. "Murder! It was not me."

It was quite evident, even to the recorder, that Tom Brereton would be the last person in the court who would have called out "Bravo!" to what Markham Brereton had said, and he was set at liberty.

"I know who it was," said Tom.

"Who?" said the judge; "point him out."

"It was a big fellow, who was close by me, but I don't see him now. He certainly was there this minute."

"If you see him again, call the officer and give him into custody. These interruptions are evidently quite systematic. It is truly surprising how the friends of the unhappy man at the bar, can fancy such a course will be of any possible service to him."

"I am not unhappy," said Markham. "You, rather, are the unhappy judge upon the bench, than I the unhappy man at the bar, for you are, knowingly or unknowingly, committing a great injustice, while I am only suffering one."

"Prisoner, this is irrelevant."

"It is."

"Proceed with what you have to say, then, why sentence of death according to the law should not be passed against you."

"All that I have to say is summed up in the fact, that I am innocent of the crime alleged against me."

"You have finished?"

"Not quite, my lord."

"Go on, then."

"Nay, why is this great hurry and anxiety shown to pronounce sentence of death against a fellow creature? The mere suspicion, ever so faint, that you may be wrong, ought to make you pause. What I have to say should at least be listened to with common patience."

"The court has no desire to hurry you."

"Well, I thank the gentlemen who have advocated my cause, for the exertions they have made, that the truth should be apparent. To the extent of their knowledge, they have done all that in them lay for me; and very properly, they have not stated things which, although truths, they could not for want of the necessary witnesses make into evidence. I, however, may state those things. What has been laid before the court, is all sufficiently true up to the point when the carriage containing my mother, and my sister, and Miss Russel, started from Guilford. I being on horseback, and Tom Brereton having my place in the vehicle, after, with all the nervousness of excessive fear, refusing the offer of a horse, I did then, certainly, upon nearing Ealing Common, ride on in advance of the coach, and I was urged by considerations to do so. The first was to escape from the society of such a man as Tom Brereton into the better companionship of my own thoughts; and the second was to see if the road was clear, as I had heard much of the depredations of highwaymen, and my mother was in but a poor state of health. I had not ridden far before I was stopped by a mounted man. It was not likely that I should allow myself to be insulted or



robbed with impunity, by one man, and the consequence was a contest, in which I received a hurt that I am not quite the better of now. I was overcome, and then told the highwayman that a carriage with ladies was approaching, and begged him to be considerate. I had, of course, no reliance whatever upon Tom Brereton affording any protection to the ladies he was with. After this I was conducted to a hut near at hand, where I remained some time, until I recovered sufficiently to take the road again. That the same highwayman who stopped me, likewise stopped the carriage, and robbed Tom Brereton, I can well believe, and that he was Claude Duval, you have heard already from the lips of his sister. But to some here who are not in the secrets of my family, it may indeed seem most strange that Tom Brereton should rather try to fix guilt upon me than upon Claude Duval.—The secret is this. He thinks that I know where my sister Cicely is, and if driven to extremity, she will, to save my life, consent to marry him, in which case he would come forward and represent to the Secretary of State that he had been mistaken as to the identity of the robber on Ealing Common, and be it whom it might, it was not me. In this he will be disappointed, for if injustice and wrong take their course, I shall surely die."

Markham ceased speaking.

"Have you said all that you wish to say?" said the recorder.

"All that I care to say now," replied Markham.

"Then it——?"

"A witness! a witness!" cried a loud voice from among the dense crowd in the centre of the court.

## CHAPTER LXII.

### AN INTERRUPTION.—CLAUDE'S DANGER.

So completely was everybody taken by surprise at this sudden and most extraordinary interruption, that the speaker, whoever he was, had for some moments everything his own way. The judge first revived from the surprise of the sudden interruption, when it was thought all interruption was past.

"Seize that man!" he cried.

As he spoke he pointed to a tall personage in the crowd, and the officers made a rush forward, but the man by no means showed any disposition to avoid them. On the contrary, he pressed forward, and finally confronted the judge, saying as he did so—"A witness! a witness!"

It was Claude himself.

"No, no, no!" cried May Duval, for she knew her brother, despite the disguise he was in, and at that moment her fears got the better of all other feelings—she fancied that she almost saw his sacrifice.

"Silence," cried the usher.

"Oh, no, no!"

"Remove that person," said the judge.

"I am still," said May. "Oh, let me remain—I am still now. I shall not move or speak now. It is over."

Again she resumed the attitude which the voice of Claude had broken, and hiding her face in her hands, she wept silently. Could there be a more painful situation than poor May's? Loving as she did Markham Brereton, for alas! she did love him, she saw no other mode of saving him from death, than by the sacrifice of her brother, who, we all know, was, despite all his faults, so very dear to her heart. All eyes were now, naturally enough, fixed upon Claude Duval, although only three persons in all that crowded court knew him. One of that three was May. The other, Markham Brereton, and he rather guessed than at sight recognised Claude, and the third was Sixteen-string Jack. The officers all tried, a-

officers do upon occasions, to look cunning, but they were all at fault, and really knew nothing of the bold man who stood close to the witness-box.

"What do you want?" said the judge.

"I have testimony to give, in favour of the prisoner at the bar."

"Then you are too late."

"Too late?"

"Yes."

"Can it be too late to be just?"

"No; but there are certain forms and modes of transacting the business of courts of justice, which cannot be tampered with. If you have anything to state, it must be put into the form of an affidavit, and handed to me to-morrow."

"That will not do."

"It must. Stand aside—it is the only form in which evidence can now be received in favour of the prisoner; of course there is no need of any of a contrary tendency now. The probability of what you shall swear being true or not, will be a matter for consideration, always provided it be of sufficient importance to affect the sentence of the prisoner."

"It is of the first importance."

"Very well. Stand aside, or I shall commit you."

"This is making justice a form," said Claude, "and man's life a matter of rules of court. My Lord Judge, I defy you to pass sentence of death, or of any punishment whatever, upon Markham Brereton. I was present when this robbery was committed upon Ealing Common."

"I think, my lord," said the Attorney General, rising, "there is a precedent in a criminal case, for hearing a new witness after the verdict. It has been held by Lord Stowe, that when life or liberty is concerned, a jury is always sitting, and the ears of a judge always open, while a prisoner remains in his place, at the bar of the court."

"What case constitutes such a precedent?" said the recorder.

"Dean's trial for murder, my lord; reported in the sheriff's reports for the last year. An alibi was clearly proved after the verdict."

"I recollect the case, Mr. Attorney General," said the judge. "The court is not exactly sure that it would be safe to make Dean's case a precedent; but still the court must not say it is not."

"Then your lordship will hear the witness?"

"No, no," said Markham Brereton. "Let the witness depart in peace."

He saw May's agony.

"Hush!" said Claude Duval, "right is right. Hush, Markham Brereton, I pray you; let me take my own course."

"The court will detain this new witness," said the counsel for the prosecution,

"I apprehend, whether he be heard or not?"

"I think," said the judge, "that the court, in its discretion, will feel bound to do so."

"You hear," said Claude. "It is done now."

As he spoke, he ascended the two steps that led to the witness-box, and then, and not until then, the whole court could see him plainly; no one, however, but those whom we have already mentioned, recognised him or had the least suspicion that they were looking upon so celebrated a character as Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman.

"Swear him," said the recorder.

"There is no need," said Claude. "The character of the testimony I come to give, will carry with it amply sufficient its own verification; not all the oaths in the world could make its truth more apparent, or for one instant shall it. I tell the court that I was present at the robbery."

"You saw it committed?" said the Attorney General; "what objection can you have to be sworn?"



"It is scarcely an objection. After I am sworn in, you will not ask for my evidence. Let me say at once that I was present at the robbery as a principal."

"A principal?"

"Yes."

"Then you did it—and are—"

"Claude Duval!"

Certainly if a bombshell had suddenly come into the court it would not have created a greater sensation, although it might have made one of a different

description, than did the sudden and unexpected declaration of a name that certainly nobody expected. Even the judge gave a slight start. Tom Brereton made an effort to leave the court.

"Close the doors," cried the judge. "Let no one depart. Officers, is there no one among you who can depose to the identity of this person with Claude Duval the highwayman, or not?"

The officers crowded forward with looks of intense chagrin. Here was the very man they had been so anxious to lay hold of, and upon whose capture three hundred pounds had depended, fairly by his own act in the clutches of the authorities, and nobody the gainer.

"They don't know me," said Claude; "but there is one here who can swear to me. May?"

"Claude!—Claude!"

"Are you satisfied, my lord, that I am the veritable Claude Duval? If not, I have another proof."

"What is it?"

Claude glanced round him, and with a slight curl of his lip, he replied in a loud defiant tone—

"Who but Claude Duval would do this act? What other knight of the road, think ye, would place his own neck in a noose for the purpose of pushing out another man's? Is it like, or is it not like what you have heard of Claude Duval, who never robbed a poor man in his life, but who has relieved the necessities of many and many a one?"

"There is no objection to swear this man?" said the attorney-general.

"No," said the recorder. "Of course he is in custody; but a prisoner awaiting trial is a competent witness upon oath. Of course his testimony must be taken with all its qualifications."

"My lord, a man may be believed when he lays down his life as the pledge of his sincerity."

A general clapping of hands now ensued in court, and it was actually renewed three times, despite the frowns of the recorder, and the bewildered manner in which the officers tried to take everybody into custody; while the usher, who never had before been witness to such an exhibition, was unable to call for silence in a higher tone than a whisper.

"If such a truly disgraceful practice as this be repeated," said the judge, "I shall retire from the court, and measures shall be taken for imprisoning every one who has taken part in such unmanly disturbances."

"You have one man already in custody," said Claude, "for my act. It was I who made the exclamation; but the officer found that it was necessary to take some one."

"Is there anything else," said the counsel for the prosecution, "that this gentleman will take upon himself? Perhaps he will direct the authorities to make a general gaol delivery, fathering himself with the criminality of the country?"

"I would rather father any amount of bold criminality," said Claude, "than the petty malice of a hired partisan, who for his fee would send an innocent man to the gallows, or throw back upon society the most blood-stained wretch ever beheld."

"Pho!—pho!"

"You may affect to sneer at me, but you cannot comprehend the deep contempt I feel for you."

The advocate tried to smile, as though he had the greatest possible contempt for what Claude had said; but the smile was only a sickly one, as it was evident to all that the truth of the reproof had made its sting deep indeed.

"My learned friend," said the junior counsel, for the defence, "has caught a very magnificent Tartar, I think."

Even the recorder could hardly keep his countenance at this remark, and everybody else laughed outright, with the exception of the "learned friend," who could

not see the joke at all, in those whose feelings were too much interested in Claude's fate, to jest even with Momus himself. An oath was now duly administered to Claude Duval, and it certainly was what, in the chapter of strange accidents, no one would have expected to find such a personage, with such a price upon his head, in the court of the Old Bailey, giving his testimony, and that testimony, too, such as would have the effect of consigning himself on the instant to a dungeon.

"To what do you depose?" said the Attorney General.

"I robbed the prosecutor, Tom Brereton, of his pocket-book on Ealing Common on the night in question."

"Was the prisoner at the bar present?"

"No."

"Was he in any shape, way, or manner, cognisant of the robbery?"

"Certainly not; he and I were utter strangers."

"Well, my lord," said the Attorney General, "I may say that it is an established custom of all courts to protect witnesses in giving evidence. I claim, therefore, safe conduct for this witness."

"Why, Mr. Attorney, you don't mean," said the recorder, "to ask the court to let this most notorious and much sought for criminal go?"

"I think he is entitled to a safe conduct."

"Monstrous! I will, if there be any such sort of custom, break in upon it; officers, take that man into custody, and hold him safely. Now-a-days, courts of justice must not be sanctuaries for great offenders. Remove the prisoner at the bar."

"I claim my liberty," said Markham.

### CHAPTER LXIII.

#### CLAUDE'S COMMITTAL.—THE LONELY CELL.

WHILE the Attorney General had made this certainly rather impudent appeal for the liberation of Claude Duval, there was a peculiar expression upon his countenance, which induced those who knew him well to think that after all he only did it to bother the recorder. At all events, he could not have expected, whatever were his motives for making the application, that it could for a moment be successful. It had done some mischief, however. It lit up a momentary hope in the breast of May—which the words of the judge as suddenly crushed again—leaving her, if possible, more desolate than she had previously been, and Heaven knows that was needless. Alas! poor May! The appeal, however, which Markham Brereton had just made to the court was far more reasonable.

"With respect to the application of the prisoner at the bar for a release," said the judge, "an application which, I presume, he founds upon the testimony of this person calling himself Claude Duval, it is not in the power of the court to grant it."

"Upon what pretence am I now detained?"

"You have been found guilty."

"Oh, my lord," cried one of the jury, "we have altered our minds now."

"That cannot be helped now, gentlemen. You have given your verdict, and it is recorded. All these subsequent proceedings it will be my duty to place before the Secretary of State, and, at the discretion of that official personage, a pardon or not will issue for the prisoner."

"What am I to do, my lord, with Claude Duval?" said an officer.

"Have you no warrant?"

"No, my lord."

"Well, somebody, I believe, has; and if you can produce no warrant, you must take him before a magistrate."

"But, my lord, now that we have him as it were under the roof of Newgate, would it not be better to keep him?"

"Certainly. I dare say you will find no difficulty in getting a magistrate to come to Newgate and legally commit him. Indeed, I fancy I have that authority *ex-officio* myself, but the matter had better go through the regular course."

"It will be my duty," said the Attorney General, "to prefer an indictment against Thomas, commonly called Tom Brereton, for wilful and deliberate perjury."

"Oh, good God, no!" said Tom. "What do you mean? I'll swear anything you like if you will only let me go. It was all a mistake, it was. Governor—Governor, where are you? you know you persuaded me to stick to it."

"I?" said the Governor of Newgate.

"Yes, you rogue, you know you did."

"Why, you incomprehensible vagabond!"

"You wretch!"

"You thief!"

"This is really quite edifying," said the Attorney General. "Mr. Governor, your position in this affair will need some clearing up."

"Not at all," said the Governor.

"Oh, very well."

"I don't know anything about it. I'll indict anybody who says a word against me for conspiracy. I know I have enemies, and it seems they are hard at work, but let them beware. I say, let them beware!"

"Good bye—good bye," said Tom. "It's a fine evening. Good bye, gentlemen. I forgive you, sir, about the joke of—indicting me. Ha! ha! of course it was only a joke, and it's no matter now. All's right. Upon my life a good joke. Good-bye!"

"The Lord Mayor will perhaps take a deposition which shall justify him in committing Thomas Brereton," said the Attorney General.

"If you think I can, Mr. Attorney General," said the Lord Mayor, "I shall have great pleasure."

"Pleasure!" said Tom. "What do you mean by that? Come, come, Mr. Lord Mayor, don't be a fool. I went to your house on the ninth of November, and now you talk of having the pleasure of committing me; is that gratitude? The Mayor's gratitude! What do you mean? Good-night!"

The Lord Mayor pretended to blow his nose to smother a laugh. After a few minutes, Tom Brereton was fully committed for perjury. He roared for mercy, and was taken away blubbing like a schoolboy.

May started forward and clasped her hands round Claude as she said—

"You will not fall—you will not be sacrificed?"

"Farewell," said Claude. "Bless you, May!"

"I did not wish this," said Brereton.

"No, Markham," cried May, "I know you did not. I know well you did not."

"Save Claude Duval," cried a voice in the court. "There's enough of us to do that easily enough. Save him for his gallant conduct in coming forward to sacrifice himself, rather than that an innocent man should suffer."

The voice was Sixteen-string Jack's. A partial rush was made by some few persons acting upon the sudden and thrilling impulse given to them by these words, but half a dozen officers immediately precipitated themselves upon Claude Duval, who himself cried in a loud voice—

"Forbear! The attempt is madness! Forbear, my friends—forbear! it is a vain effort, my friends! quite vain!"

Claude knew well that the mere crowd in the court was not to be depended upon, and he likewise knew that his life must be lost in the affair, for it would be

the duty of the officers to resist to death. Whether they would have done so or not remained to be seen. At all events, Claude gave them credit for so much, and spared them the probable disastrous consequences of a collision; and after all Sixteen-string Jack, although on the impulse of the moment he had made such an attempt to rescue Claude, could not help feeling how very helpless it was. The judge had now left the court, which was ordered to be closed, and as the best way of doing that, the officials began to extinguish the lights rapidly. This soon had the desired effect, and in the course of the next quarter of an hour the court of the Old Bailey was left to silence and to darkness. Claude Duval was heavily ironed and led through a number of intricate and winding passages to a cell, which was presumed to be of such strength as to defy all the attempts that even he, with all his courage and with all his ingenuity, could make to escape from its confines. Claude said not one word in answer to the many remarks that were made to him, and very many they were, for there was not a petty turnkey in Newgate who did not haste to have a look at the famous highwayman, and have his say upon the occasion of so important a capture, as it would be called. Claude had, as it were, walked into prison, so they had nothing to congratulate themselves upon in this acquisition, for it is probable he would for a considerable time longer have escaped the clutches of Newgate had he not, from the chivalrous feelings that actuated him, chosen to give himself up. It was both a foolish and ungenerous thing, therefore, for the authorities to rub their hands as though they had really achieved something. The cell which was assigned him was indeed a gloomy one, and seldom used, except to place the very worst of malefactors in when they were too refractory for any ordinary control. But from that very circumstance Claude Duval gathered hope.

"This cell," he said to himself, is out of the usual track of the turnkeys. It is not now so well watched as any other, so that I am left, at all events, to myself to carry on what operations I may please."

"Now," said the governor, as the door was closed and barred, and doubly locked and bolted upon Claude Duval, "I think we have this bird in about as secure a cage as old Newgate can very well accommodate any one with."

Truly there is nothing so dangerous as excessive vanity. The governor did not yet know the man he had to deal with.

"Wait a bit," said Claude, as he flung himself upon the miserable stump bedstead that was in the cell, "wait a bit—I may still give you something more to talk about yet, Mr. Governor."

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## CHAPTER LXIV.

### THE ARREST OF TOM BRERETON.—THE TABLES TURNED.

How deserted poor May Duval felt! Perhaps of all persons intimately connected with the various personages and events of our story, she felt most acutely the painful sense of loneliness, which is worse than any other species of grief. If Markham had been quite at liberty at once, instead of having to wait for a tedious form of law to pardon him for the offence he had never committed, no doubt he would have taken upon himself the task of consoling her in her sufferings. But alas! both the persons in whose happiness and existence all the best feelings of affection were built up, were now within those dreary walls of the much-dreaded Newgate. Cicely, from the place of security in which Claude had placed her, knew literally nothing of what was going on, she only thought that Claude was necessarily absent on business connected with her brother's position; but although he had told her over and over again that he would save Markham Brereton, he had not told her it was to be at the price of his own life. She had not questioned him closely as to the means he had of carrying out such a promise; but with that

blind confidence which all persons ought to have in the resources of those whom they love, she had stifled her fears into a belief that what Claude really chose to do he would find some safe and easy enough mode of speedily accomplishing. His last words had been to her,—

“Wait, Cicely, and inquire nothing, believe nothing until you hear from me.”

“And will that be soon, Claude?” she asked him.

“As soon,” he replied, “as it is possible, consistent with the safety of both Markham and myself to do so.”

This had satisfied Cicely, and she waited anxiously, it is true, but without the horror of knowing or even suspecting Claude's real situation. That it was his hope to alter that situation before the truth of its reality came upon the mind of Cicely, we can well enough imagine. It will not be from the lack of energy, or courage, or that species of perseverance which overcomes apparently insurmountable difficulties, if he succeed not.

It must not be supposed that Claude had resigned himself to a dungeon, without making some previous arrangements, the carrying out of which might be beneficial to him in his imprisonment. For example, he had arranged with Sixteen-string Jack a mode of conversation from without, which it was next to impossible the authorities of Newgate could discern, or even dream of. It was this. Certain articles were always permitted, after the most careful examination, to pass to prisoners, but no letters were permitted to be sent, which did not first undergo a careful inspection from the authorities, and Sixteen-string Jack had no wish to send, and Claude Duval had no wish to receive such love-courting epistles as are thought admissible to Newgate; they adopted the plan we speak of. It was agreed that when any inconsiderable or allowable article was sent into the prison for Claude's use, it should be carelessly wrapped in an old torn piece of newspaper. Upon such piece of newspaper there would sure to be letters enough under which Jack could put a small dot to compose the number of words which he wished to make up to Claude's understanding. By this means they hoped to keep up something like a correspondence, for Claude could return the paper withsoiled linen or anything that he was allowed to send out of the prison in the same way. He was allowed pens and ink, with the hope that some fit of remorse would seize him in consequence of his lonely and mind-depressing situation, during which he would write some confession, implicating himself and others. They did not know much of Claude Duval, though, when they ventured to calculate upon such a state of things, and upon such ordinary and commonplace results in his case. Still it was necessary he should appear to make some use of the writing materials, and he did, by writingsome of the most extraordinary twaddle that could be imagined, and which quite confused the governor, the chaplain, and the sheriffs, to each of whom it was duly submitted. As for Markham Brereton, although assured now of his own safety and enfranchisement from prison, yet he was, if possible, in a more distressed state of mind than before, and yet he could not tell himself why he should be so. Claude Duval had done the robbery, and Claude Duval certainly ought, if anybody suffered from it, to be the person. Moreover, to have allowed him, Markham Brereton, to be executed innocently, would surely have been the height of baseness. But yet, although Claude would have been beneath contempt to have not come forward, his doing so was a chivalric act, and it was a romantic appreciation of its chivalry which made Markham unhappy. He became extremely anxious for Claude's safety.

“How shall I save him?” he kept repeating to himself. “What means can I possibly adopt to save him?”

The oftener he asked himself the question the more impossible did it seem for him to find a satisfactory reply, and he could not help coming to the painful conclusion, that from the moment Claude Duval had answered his name in the court of the Old Bailey, his fate was fixed. Of course he, Markham Brereton, was in complete ignorance of Claude's external resources, nor could he be supposed to have a very clear notion of the personal powers of the highwayman. It seemed so



hopeless a thing to escape from Newgate, that he, Markham, had not made the smallest attempt so to do; but he little knew that it was one of Claude Duval's most familiar thoughts, that he should some day be caught, and them imprisoned, and that he would then endeavour to add his name to the short muster-roll of those who, with the most extraordinary perseverance and courage, had managed to make their way from those gloomy and spirit-depressing walls. There was now a third person well known to the reader in Newgate, with whom we certainly cannot have any amount of sympathy. That person is the despicable Tom Brereton—the trickster, the shuffler, the perjurer, the false witness, the everything that can be contemptible and beyond all measure mean. If we did not feel so much contempt for Tom Brereton, we must feel some amount of pity. Let us look at him. Tom Brereton was put into a room where there were a number of untried prisoners; but it was not the policy of the governor to keep him where he could find any company. Accordingly, calling one of the turnkeys, the governor said to him quite confidentially—"Davis, I want Thomas Brereton in solitary confinement. You understand me. He must be alone."

"All right, sir. He'll be refractory soon," said the turnkey, with a grin, for if the authorities chose that any prisoner should be refractory, why refractory to all intents and purposes he was very soon declared.

"That will do," said the governor.

In a little time after this, the turnkey entered the ward where Tom was, and going up to him, he said—"What you will, will you?"

"Will what?" said Tom. "Oh, dear me, I am doing nothing."

"Gammon."

"What, sir?"

"Oh, don't try to gammon me. I saw you making ready to give me a hit in the eye, so away you comes to a refractory cell."

With this Tom was violently seized, and dragged off, in spite of his loud remonstrances of how peaceably inclined he really was. That some dreadful fate awaited him, Tom Brereton fully believed, and he made the prison echo again with his shouts, but in such a p'ace remonstrance, whether loud or low, produced but little effect, and Tom soon found himself the inmate of one of a range of cells, tolerably well out of ear-shot of the rest of the prisoners of Newgate.

"There," said the jailer, "you may roar as loud as you like. There's nobody but the rats and the beetles to hear you."

"Murder!—murder!"

"Oh, it's all very fine. Who the deuce do you suppose would take the trouble to murder you?"

"Help!—help!"

"Oh, very good, You won't be quiet? Bang goes the door, then."

The door of the cell was closed and bolted upon him, and Tom was left to two things he never liked, namely, darkness and solitude. What his reflections were likely to be, we may in some measure judge from what we know of his general character. He now cried in a perfect paroxysm of fear for almost an hour, and then he fancied he heard a footstep approaching down the narrow passage from which his cell, in connection with many others, opened. He listened attentively, and when he at length heard the footstep pause at the door of the miserable place in which he was, and the bolts being removed, a hope that, after all, he should be delivered from confinement sprang up in his breast, and he cried out—"I'm here —I'm here!"

The door swung open, and the governor made his appearance.

"Oh, it's you," said Tom.

"Yes," said the governor, as he carefully closed the door behind him, and set down the light he carried upon the floor—"yes, it is I."

There was something about the governor's manner that gave Tom some qualms of fear, and then there was something likewise about the look of his face that was far from pleasant or encouraging to him, Tom Brereton.

The position of the light, too, so low down as it was, cast some very strange

## GENTLEMAN JACK.

shadows upon the governor's countenance, and made him look rather diabolical, as with folded arms he stood now glaring at Tom Brereton as though he expected him first to begin a dialogue, which could not be expected to be very delightful to either of them. This Tom was in no hurry to do, but yet he was one of those weak-resolved personages who cannot endure silence for long, and now that he saw, or thought he saw, that the governor was determined not to say anything first, he spoke—

"So, you have come to see me, have you?" he said.

"Yes, idiot," said the governor.

"Well, that's polite, at any rate, old fellow."

A scowl stopped the familiar jocosity with which Tom would have been glad to carry on the conversation.

"I don't come here for folly and ribaldry," said the governor.

"Oh!"

"No; it is business with me. I am in danger."

"Well, so am I," said Tom.

"What is your danger to me, you worse than idiot; you rogue in heart, and absolute fool in capacity."

"Upon my life," said Tom, "you must have been reading some dictionary, and found out all the abuse in it. What compliments you are full of, to be sure, to night!"

"Have peace, I say."

"Very well."

"You have kindly implicated me in your transactions, and, of course, to save yourself even from the smallest inconvenience, you will turn evidence against me and blow the whole affair. You need not deny it, as, of course, you are about to do, for I know you too well."

"Oh, dear," said Tom. "You very much deceive yourself. But what's to hinder you letting me go, and then, you know, there's no danger."

Tom thought now that he had got hold of quite a bright idea, and that if he threatened the governor with disclosures that would thoroughly implicate him if he did not connive at his escape, he (the governor) would feel himself compelled, from considerations of personal safety, to let him free.

"You know," he said, "we both rowed in the same boat, and it is not at all natural that I should like to suffer alone when you were to have had part of the profit if we had succeeded, you know; but if you let me go, of course then I could only come to harm by saying anything about you."

"That is your calculation, is it?"

"Eh?"

"I say, that is your calculation. Well, perhaps, under some circumstances, it might have succeeded; but it is too late."

"Too late? How?"

"As no one will believe for one moment that you are the sort of man to break out of Newgate, and I dare not place any facilities in your way, simply because you have already committed me and yourself too, by mentioning me. If I were to let you free now, it would be to bring a certainty upon my head instead of a mere suspicion."

Tom gave a groan.

"And, as I say," continued the governor, "it is too late."

"Oh dear—oh dear!"

"Ay, you have made a fool of yourself indeed, and you may well say—'Oh dear.' You have damned me with regard to this whole transaction. You never for one moment let me know the sort of people with whom we had to deal. You never let me know that they were of that obstinate character that all ordinary motives and impulses would fall dead upon them."

"Dear me!"

"And you never let me know that, in the event of any little miscarriage of



the affair you were going to plunge about, accusing anybody for the mere purpose of securing yourself."

"Really, you are very severe," said Tom.

"Not more so than the occasion warrants, I am quite sure, Thomas Breerton."

"You think not?"

"Bah! this is the very worst of trifling. What do you mean to do? that is the question. If you intend to turn evidence against me, and implicate me, I must look to my own safety by some means, and whether or not those means will

be pleasant to you, depends upon the turn my thoughts may chance to take in the matter."

Tom had sense enough to feel that whatever he meant to do, it would be at the present juncture highly dangerous to induce any belief in the mind of the governor that he meditated any danger towards him, so he said—

"Well, as you put it in that fair light, I will tell you really what I mean to do, now. I shall hold out like a brick."

"You will?"

"Certainly, I will. I am very sorry for the few words I said in the court, but the fact is, I was so taken by surprise, I didn't know very well what I was about; but they won't get any more out of me, for I dare say if I were to tell everything, and admit everything, they would just serve me out all the same."

"They would, indeed."

"Very well, then, you and the lawyer may make your minds easy, for I ain't going to say a word about either of you."

"Only keep to that resolution, and you will find me your friend, Tom Brereton; break it, and your danger will be great."

"Stop, stop, I say. Are you going?"

"I must."

"But—but, am I to stay here in this dark place?"

"Only for a little time. You may depend, that as you keep faith with me, I will keep faith with you, Tom Brereton; the result will soon be sufficiently apparent to you."

The governor then rather abruptly left the cell, leaving Tom in a state of anxious doubt as to whether he had been clever or not.

## CHAPTER LXV.

### SIXTEEN-STRING JACK MAKES PREPARATIONS FOR CLAUDE'S BENEFIT.

JACK was not unmindful of what had been agreed upon between him and Claude Duval previous to the latter being placed in the gloomy walls of Newgate. And in addition to the efforts without, which Sixteen-string Jack was to make to supply Claude with the means of making some effort for freedom, he, Jack, had some desperate schemes of his own which he kept secret from Claude. But Sixteen-string Jack reasoned in a different way altogether. "I hold my life cheap," he said, "if I employ it in Claude's service, and nothing shall be too desperate for me to attempt for his release." Acting upon this feeling, he commenced some proceedings, in the course of which we will follow him. It has been truly said, that one half of London have no idea of how the other half lives, and one would need to make it a life-long study to arrive at the information in all its minute particulars. Nevertheless, if there be any class which more readily than any other arrive at such a knowledge of the hidden modes of existence in London, it evidently is that class which has thrown off the restraints of law, and of which Sixteen-string Jack was one. The principal difficulty he had in his movements, however, consisted in the fact of his presumed death. So impressed was what is called the London family, that is, the London thieves, with the idea that he was no more, that even his personal appearance among them, undisguised, would only have been looked upon by many as a very remarkable likeness. Indeed, we can very easily imagine that we or our readers would be somewhat chary of our belief in the appearance of a man whom we had seen recently executed at Tyburn Gate. This, then, was Jack's difficulty. If he went about among those from whom, as a "family man," he wanted assistance, and convinced them that he was the veritable Sixteen-string Jack, he ran the risk of being informed against by some

scoundrel, and of falling into the clutches of the law again, before he could complete what he was about for the service of Claude Duval. Then, again, if he intruded himself as a stranger, he could hardly expect to be treated with confidence by those who would naturally be suspicious of one concerning whom they had no knowledge. These were difficulties; but Claude's position was such that he, Jack, was not to be deterred by difficulties from serving him, or at least making the attempt to do so. One thing he wanted, which he knew was to be had in London for money, and that was an accurate plan of Newgate. Careful as the authorities had always been that the interior of that celebrated prison should remain a mystery except in its most general details, there can be no doubt but that the London thieves had as accurate a plan of every cell and every passage as the city architect himself could have taken with all his means and appliances for the task. The dimensions of the plan might be a little defective proportionally, but everything was there, and that was the main point. That this plan was to be had somewhere, Sixteen-string Jack knew well, but where he did not exactly know; and he had another difficulty, which lay in the fact of being rather short of funds, for although he had enough money for any of the ordinary contingencies of living, he certainly had not enough for such purposes as he now required it. Under these circumstances, Jack asked himself where was the most likely place to find any cash that would be sufficient for his purpose. Now, from many long conversations which Jack had had with Claude Duval, he had imbibed many of the latter's notions, one of which was, that the crime of robbing a robber was certainly by no means so great in a social point of view, as robbing an honest and industrious man. Among robbers, and the worst of robbers, too, Claude very properly classed most public functionaries, secretaries of charitable societies, persons connected with the administration of public monies, and canting, hypocritical scrapers together of subscriptions of all sorts, kinds, and degrees. Ministers of state, parsons and lawyers, he likewise comprehended in his list of persons who, from their frequent dishonesty and cupidity, were all fair game for the highwayman or the housebreaker. "It is among such, Jack," he used to say, "that you may commit what amount of deprecation you can, and although the law will be exercised more strongly against you than if you robbed a poor man of his last shilling, yet you will find, in an absolute case of conscience, much compensation for the additional risk that you run." These lessons had not been thrown away upon Sixteen-string Jack. He was sitting in the little dark parlour of rather an obscure public-house, thinking over his position, when his eye happened to rest upon a paragraph in a newspaper that was lying upon the table before him. It ran thus—

"Yesterday, His Grace the Lord Bishop of London, presented to the Rev. and Hon. George Augustus Fitzfunkie, the living of Upton Lees, estimated as worth 1,400*l.* per annum. The Rev. George Augustus Fitzfunkie is already Rector of Andoy, Incumbent of St. Margaret's, Rector of Heglton, Vicar of Bolton-cum-Lees, &c. &c. We understand that the rev. gentleman has just returned from Naples, where he spends the greater part of his time, no doubt in prayer for the poor curates who perform his duties at home for an average of 60*l.* per annum each, whilst his revenue amounts in the whole to the sum of 8,448*l.* per annum."

"What a rogue!" said Sixteen-string Jack.

Yes, Sixteen-string Jack, the highwayman, the housebreaker, the liver upon other men's substance, the thief who called "Stand!" upon the king's highway, blessed his stars that he was not such a rogue as the bloated church pluralist; and he was right! He was not such a rogue.

"I will rob that man," said Jack, "if it can be done, as sure as I am alive; he is one of the greatest scoundrels, even among parsons, that I have heard of for many a long day."

There were some serious difficulties in the way. First of all, Jack had to find out where the reverend gentleman was, and he had to concoct a plot by which, at the least amount of personal risk, he should be made to surrender some of his ill-gotten money, but difficulty only sharpens invention, and Jack first of all set out to find where the reverend sinner resided in London. This was not a difficult task

by any means, and indeed Jack saw the reverend gentleman actually come out of his hotel, and on foot, too, condescending to walk the streets like any common man, which certainly ought to have been thought something, and considering that he was an humble and meek follower of the disciples, who were such luxurious personages. Jack took such accurate notice of him that he felt certain now that, let him see him when and where he might, he could not be mistaken in him. Jack followed him with some curiosity, and he was not long in discovering why the reverend gentleman chose to walk instead of to make use of one of his luxurious carriages. He followed every young lady he chanced to see who had a pretty face and a neat ankle; of course, his object was to beg of them to say their prayers regularly, and attend scrupulously to their religious duties. Such a very reverend personage, who was thought worthy of so many livings, could have no other object in view. This was enough for Sixteen-string Jack, and he left the reverend gentleman to his onerous duties, while he made his arrangements accordingly. It was in the dusk of the evening that Sixteen-string Jack knocked at the door of a private house in the vicinity of Bloomsbury Square. It was a very peculiar sort of knock, and in a few minutes it was opened by a black man, who said, "One—two—three."

"No," said Sixteen-string Jack, "twenty-four."

"From the country?" said the black.

"Yes, Mungo."

"Me no Mungo. Me Lillywhite."

"That will do. Is your master within?"

"Yes, him be."

Jack followed the black in'o the house, which was rather elegantly furnished, and was shown into an apartment on the ground floor, which had the appearance of an office for the regular transaction of business. After waiting for some time, a pale, small, thin man made his appearance, and with an easy address, said,

"Have you a name to state?"

"Yes, Claude Duval told me to say I knew him as forty, and that if you thought him at all worth anything, I ought to be worth something."

"Very good."

"You are satisfied?"

"Quite. Sit down. I suppose you come with a proposition?"

"I do."

"Very well. Be so good as to state it as precisely as you can."

Sixteen-string Jack made a speech of some ten minutes' duration to the little pale, thin man, but as the object of it will be best seen during the course of what occurred in the next few hours, we need not detail it. Suffice it to say that at its conclusion the man of the house rose, and took several turns to and fro in the room as if considering, and then he said—

"It might be tried. It is novel."

"I thought so."

"Oh, yes. A similar kind of thing has been done, but not in that way. Yes, half of 500%, you say, will be enough for your purpose?"

"It will, and I make no secret to you of what that purpose is."

"What?"

"It is to attempt the rescue of Claude Duval."

"Indeed?"

"We are old companions and dear friends."

"Well, you can easily suppose that I wish you all the success in the world. Who you are I don't know. I see you are disguised, or, perhaps, I might know you, but I am quite satisfied that I am in safe hands."

"You are, indeed, and perhaps soon, when we are a little better acquainted, I shall let you into the secret of who I am. There is one question I want answered and which, probably, you are the very man to answer."

"What is it?"

"Where can I get a plan of Newgate?"

"Here?"

"Indeed! And the terms?"

"If this affair that I have consented to enter upon should succeed, you shall not want either a plan of Newgate, or as much efficient assistance for Claude Duval as will go far towards ensuring success in attempting his rescue."

"I am glad of that."

Shortly after this, Sixteen-string Jack, who, it will be noted, had evidently recovered much of the daring, courageous character which, for a time, had been under a cloud of depression, left the mysterious house. He managed upon that evening to send in the following words to Claude Duval, marked upon a piece of newspaper—"Be tranquil. All is going on well. Do nothing rashly, Claude; and, in fact, do nothing at all until you hear again from me."

Claude returned the paper with some soiled linen, and had marked as follows in answer to Jack—"Do you do nothing rashly, Jack; I mean to give myself twenty-four hours' thought before attempting anything. I think May ought to be taken to Cicely, who you know is my wife. They will no doubt be good friends, and console each other. Cicely has money."

Claude had put Jack fully in possession of where Cicely was, and of all the circumstances connected with his marriage to her, and as this companionship of May Duval and Cicely was a thing that he, Jack, had before advised, he set about with considerable alacrity the measures necessary to bring it about as soon as possible.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

### CICELY AND MAY COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

It would have been quite impossible for Claude Duval to have thought of anything which could have given more exquisite and general satisfaction to both his sister and Cicely, than this proposition of companionship between them. Their old intimacy, and a certain congeniality of tastes, feelings, and dispositions, had always made them the best of friends. No wonder, therefore, that the circumstances which had for a time parted them had been renewed with the greatest gratification by both. The only thing that rather puzzled Jack in the affair was, that Claude Duval, in his few words from the prison, had not been explicit as to whether Cicely was to be made acquainted with his situation or not. Upon this head, however, he thought he would take the advice of May, or leave it as a matter altogether in her discretion. For his own part, he was decidedly of opinion that Cicely had better know all that had happened, inasmuch as thus knowing it from those who could and who would tell her the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, she would be spared the shock of hearing, by some accident, a distorted and partial statement of those circumstances in which she was so very deeply interested. Sixteen-string Jack knew where to find May. He thought the best way was to explain to her his mode of communicating with Claude Duval, and actually to show her the few words which he had written.

"They will," he said to himself, "silence all scruples about her accompanying me, in case she should happen to have any, which may or may not be the case."

He found May in a state of great grief, and it was a great satisfaction to him to be able to say to her what he did.

"You have a remembrance of Cicely Brereton?" he said.

"Oh! yes, yes."

"Then Claude wishes you to be with her, to console her for his absence.

May was silent for a moment or two, and then she said—"You are Claude's friend, and I know that from you he hides nothing. Tell me, now, in all truth and honesty, is Cicely Claude's wife?"

"In all truth and honesty, she is."

"I am satisfied and delighted, and yet——"

"Yet what, Miss May? You hesitate."

"I do, and I hardly know why I do so. Give me but a few brief moments to collect my thoughts, and I shall be able to accompany you freely."

Alas! poor May, her mind was going back to old scenes—to the brief period of happiness that the family of the Breretons had enjoyed, while they were unmolested at the farm-house, with all its pleasant appertenances of gardens and orchards, at Guildford. It was there that Markham Brereton had first told her that he loved her.

Ah! no wonder that that became a green spot in her remembrance, never to be by time or the confluence of other events obliterated.

Sixteen-string Jack saw that she was deeply moved, and he thought to be sure it was Claude's fate she was speaking of. He hastened to put her in better spirits by saying—

"All are not lost, Miss May, who are in danger."

"Ah!" said May, "how that phrase rings upon my ears. Do you not remember using those same words to Claude, on that night when he and I first encountered you in the waggon, upon Hampstead Heath, that sad and fearful—fatal night?"

Jack was silent for some moments, and then he said, with some evident emotion—

"Miss May, I cannot conceal from myself that you look upon me as the tempter of Claude, and upon his accidental association with me that night, as the commencement of the career that has brought him to his present condition."

"No," said May, quickly. "I can reason now more justly, and I do not, as I have, I confess, frequently done, condemn you. You certainly came in Claude's way upon that occasion; but when I come to reflect upon what had already happened previously to meeting with you, and upon Claude's disposition at that time, I think he might, and would probably, if he had not met with you, encountered a much worse companion."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Jack.

"I mean it," rejoined May.

"Well, then, I shall feel the more comfortable from the thought that you don't look upon me as Claude's enemy; and now, come along at once, and I will take you to Cicely, from whom I think nothing now ought to be kept regarding Claude's situation and prospects. As we go along I will manage to tell you all that I think and know about it. People have broke out of Newgate before to-day, and why may not Claude do so."

"Alas! is an escape from Newgate the only hope?" said May.

"Not the only hope; but if it were, should you think it impossible?"

"I should, indeed. You must recollect, Jack, that Newgate is different now to what it was then, when the daring characters of the last century laughed at its bolts and bars."

Jack winced a little at this remark. Its truth struck him rather more forcibly than pleasantly, and he was rather induced to be silent and reflective for the rest of the time, as they proceeded to where Cicely was staying. We need not detail the interview between Cicely and May. Suffice it to say that it was on both sides all that could be wished. Cicely had always had a great partiality for May Duval, and from the first few words that she now spoke to her, May found that that partiality had suffered no diminution. The worst part of the meeting, however, had to come, and well might May shrink from reciting to Cicely all that she had to tell her. But yet it had to be done, so May set about it as courageously as could be, and fairly and distinctly told Cicely all that happened from first to last of the trial of Markham Brereton and its results. Cicely listened with the most breathless attention; and when they had concluded, it was evident that Cicely was making a very great effort to overcome her emotion, and to exhibit a calmness and fortitude she was far from feeling in reality. The effort was, however, too much for her, and clasping her hands over her face, she burst into tears.



"Ah," said May, while Cicely was sobbing hysterically, "I almost regret that I have told you at all."

"No, no; do not regret it. Do not regret it," sobbed Cicely, "and do not fancy that these tears are those of regret that Claude has placed himself in his present position. No—no. He was right to do as he has done, and if he had done otherwise he would not have been the Claude I took him to be."

"Can you speak thus?"

"I do—I do. Dear to me as he is, and dearer still since I know so much of his chivalric goodness, I myself would have counselled him to do as he has done."

"And Mark Brereton is saved?" said May.

"Nay, do not mistake me."

"Mistake you, Cicely? How do you mean that I should mistake you?"

"Do not fancy, May, that it is only because Markham would have been the victim that I would have applauded and encouraged Claude in what he has done. It would have been base to have allowed any one to suffer innocently for an act of his. Oh, May, May, how much dearer has this truly heroic conduct made him to me! I thought that I loved him fully, but now I feel that there was an admiration yet to mingle with my affections, which was to lend it a new charm."

These words were deeply affecting to May, and she could not control her tears. Nevertheless, she flung herself into the arms of Cicely, exclaiming—

"Ah, how happy we all ought to be, Cicely, with such thoughts and feelings! And yet shall we ever know even serenity again!"

"Heaven only knows, May. But what can be done? Are we condemned to be merely spectators of what is going on? Can we do nothing for Claude?"

"Alas! nothing—nothing. The attempt upon our part fails, and any interference would most probably be full of mischief. We must perforce remain as we are, and wait the issue of events which to us are of terrific importance. There is a perfect understanding between Claude and his friend, Sixteen-string Jack, and that they mean to try something I have no doubt. Let us hope for the best."

"Hope! alas, faint hope!"

Sixteen-string Jack had promised to return in an hour when he left May with Cicely, and as that period of time had expired, he made his appearance, according to his promise. The moment he showed himself, Cicely ran eagerly towards him, and taking him by the hand, she said—

"Tell me—tell me, I implore you, by all your dearest hopes—tell me, what can be done for Claude?"

"I cannot," said Jack.

"You cannot?"

"No. I really cannot tell you what will be done, but I can tell you that every thing will be attempted. Be of good cheer. Claude is hopeful, and so am I. There is no violent hurry about it just now. Nothing is to be gained by precipitation; and, besides, the first flush of caution as regards Claude in Newgate, upon the part of the authorities of the prison, will blow over when they see that he is quiet, and apparently resigned to the circumstances that surround him."

"Then something will be done?"

"If I live to do it, yes."

"And—and you have hope?"

"Indeed, I have abundance of hope. Do not ask me to detail the plan to you, for it will very likely assume many different shapes yet, before it can be matured and carried out, but all the information that from time to time I can bring here I will bring, of that be assured."

This was rather meagre as regarded actual information, but both Cicely and May felt that it would be unjust, as well as ungenerous, to force further explanations at that juncture from Jack, so they let him go, declaring themselves satisfied with his promise to come from time to time, and let them know what was doing. Having thus far carried out Claude's wishes, Jack set about procuring the money, without which he felt how useless it would be to attempt anything for Claude

The plan of operations that he had concocted with the man who had promised him a plan of Newgate, was fully successful, and if we do not at this juncture go into the details of that remarkable robbery, which at the time made a great noise in the metropolis, it is that we have more important matters, immediately connected with the personages of our story, to dilate upon. The result was to place in the hands of Sixteen-string Jack a considerable sum of money, and an accurate plan of Newgate and the surrounding houses. He had already ascertained from Claude by the mode of communication that they had agreed upon between them, what part of the prison he was confined in, so that now, with the plan before him, Jack had no difficulty in marking the very spot where Claude was languishing in the fortress-like building. This was something, but it was not everything. It was only an approach towards a first step. The first step itself had yet to be taken, and in the midst of all that he was doing, or attempting to do for Claude Duval, Jack had continually to labour under a difficulty which would not have beset any one but himself. That was the dread of being himself recognised by any of the officials of the prison, for he was perfectly well known to them all, having been for a long time in the gaol before his trial and execution. To be sure, feeling confident, as all the officers and turnkeys in Newgate of course did, that he, Sixteen-string Jack, had been duly executed at Tyburn, they, even if they had seen him, could scarcely have been able to believe their own eyes; but what he dreaded was the consequent inquiry that would in all likelihood thus ensue. Thus, then, all that he did had to be done under this serious disadvantage, that he was compelled to keep himself continually disguised. He wrote to Claude, by means of an old piece of newspaper, as follows—

“I have a plan of Newgate, and know your cell. If gold can purchase a turnkey it shall be done, as that would be an assistance, but, whether or not, hope for the best, and do nothing yourself until I send you word that I can do nothing for you. May is with Cicely.”

The note reached Claude, but he was quite lost in wonder to think what scheme Jack had in his head which with any chance of success could be put in practice from the outside of the prison. He trembled for Jack's safety, while he did not himself gather any hope from the communication. We shall now leave Claude, while we turn our attention to Sixteen-string Jack's proceedings, which were most singular and complicated. He felt that by no ordinary, or every-day means, could there be any reasonable hope of snatching Claude from his prison, and certainly, if by bold daring, and the most exquisitely put together plan of proceeding, success could be achieved, Sixteen-string Jack fully deserved it, for such a plan was never before attempted of invading, in the manner Jack intended to do, the inmost recesses of Newgate.

## CHAPTER LXVII.

### THE APPARITION IN NEWGATE.

It was on a drizzly, damp, and most uncomfortable evening that Sixteen-string Jack, in the dress of a drover from Smithfield Market, entered a public-house nearly opposite to the debtors' door of the Old Bailey, where he knew the turnkeys and under-officers of the prison were in the habit of coming to solace themselves with various creature comforts after their spells of duty. He called for some ale, which he stood sipping at the bar, while he regarded with interest the countenances of the persons who came in from Newgate. It was then the fashion for all officials connected with the gaol to wear red waistcoats, so that there was no difficulty in recognising them, for if they buttoned up ever so closely, they always managed to allow some portion of the red waistcoat to show itself. One of those men Jack



knew at once. He was the one who had always brought him his rations while he, Jack, was waiting for execution in one of the condemned cells. Before this turn-key could order anything, Jack said to him in rather a mysterious tone, at the same time pushing his ale towards him—

“Have you been in Newgate long enough to recollect Sixteen-string Jack?”

“Ah, to be sure I have. What then?”

“Well, then, I don’t mind telling you what I have not mentioned to anybody else, and that is, that last night, while I was dozing against one of the pens in the

market, for I had made up my mind to keep watch, as me and my partner had lost a four-year-old, and you know that thieves always come twice, and so you see I thought it would be only prudent, you understand, to——”

“God bless me, what a rigmarole!” said the officer.

“Well, I’m coming to the point—you don’t drink. Well, as I was saying, I was half asleep, leaning against the pens, when the hospital clock struck twelve, and then St. Sepulchre’s struck twelve, and I said to myself, one or the other of them must be slow, and——”

“Confound you,” said the officer, as he finished Jack’s ale, “if you are not the most roundabout story-teller I ever came near in all my life. Come, be quick.”

“I will. Well, from Barbican way there came a man on horseback, but what made no noise on the rough stones. On he came right up to me, and stopping close to the pen, he said, ‘My friend, I had not an opportunity of thanking you for handing me up my handkerchief before, but I do now.’ ‘Your handkerchief!’ said I. ‘Yes,’ he added, ‘on Holborn Hill, September 16. Look at me well.’ I did so, and then, as the moon struggled out, I saw that it was Sixteen-string Jack, to whom, as he went to be hung, I had handed his handkerchief, which he let drop out of the cart on Holborn Hill.”

“Oh, bother!” cried the officer, “you were dreaming.”

“No—no.”

“Drunk, then?”

“No, I tell you, no; I saw him as plainly as I saw you ever, or see you now, and you may well suppose how I shook. He had on the identical dress he went to be hung in, and his top-boots had the ribbons flying to them that he then wore.”

“Oh, stuff—stuff!”

“Well, it may be, but I only tell you of it just as it happened to me. You may suppose I stared a little, and shook a little, but after a few moments he said, ‘You need not be afraid, Joseph Brown—you need not be afraid, Joseph Brown. Perhaps I can tell you something that may be for your good. Listen, Joseph Brown, I have not got much time to spare.’

“I had recovered myself a little by this time, and the idea took possession of me that I was being hoaxed, and made game of for somebody’s sport, so I up with my thick stick, and gave him a pelt over the head with it, saying as I did so—‘take that as a stopper to your joking to-night.’

“The stick went clean through him and the horse, without meeting with any opposition, and then I dropped it, and I felt my hair begin to stand on end.

“‘Joseph,’ said the spectre, in rather a mournful tone of voice, ‘I’m sorry you did that. It’s the worst blow possible to strike at nothing. But my mission is not over. Find out Mr. Swade, at Newgate, and give this to him. It was his handkerchief, not mine, and it was accidentally buried with me. Tell him, Joseph Brown, that I will call upon him some night at Newgate.’”

“What!” cried the turnkey, “what!—did he say Mr. Swade?”

“Yes, he did.”

“Why—why, that’s my name.”

“Yours?”

“Yes, to be sure, and you know it. Come, come, this is some joke, but it won’t do. Everybody, of course, saw me lend my handkerchief to Sixteen-string Jack, in the lobby of Newgate. No, no, this won’t do, and I happen to know it was buried with him. At least, when his friends took away the body, it went with it.”

“That’s just what he said. After saying it, away he went; and when I recovered myself a little, I found on one of the posts the handkerchief.”

As he spoke, Jack produced from his pocket a handkerchief, which he handed to Mr. Swade. Now, the turnkey was rather a jovial, hearty-looking sort of man, under ordinary circumstances, but when he saw the handkerchief, he turned as pale as death, and staggered back till he came to a seat, upon which he sat down with a plump that was enough to knock all the breath out of his lungs at once. Sixteen-

string Jack took the opportunity of slipping out of the house. A crowd gathered round Mr. Swade, whom everybody thought was taken suddenly ill, and there he sat, with the handkerchief in his hand, which he knew perfectly well, and gasping in a curious manner, in a vain attempt to say something about it to those around him.

"Undo his neckcloth," said one.

"Send for a doctor," said another.

"What does he stare at that handkerchief for?" remarked a third.

"I—I—am better," gasped Swade; "some—brandy."

"Oh," said the landlord of the public-house, "he is coming round now. When a man is well enough to ask for a glass of brandy, you may depend he'll do, gentlemen."

While this bustle was going on at the public-house, Sixteen-string Jack hurried off to a lodging he had taken, and got rid of the drover's clothes. He attired himself quite different, and sallied out into the street, saying as he did so—"There can be no doubt now, that all the turnkeys in Newgate will fully expect a visit from my apparition, so that if I do show myself I shall produce a tolerable sensation." The accurate plan of Newgate that he had, sufficed to show him that there was a house in Newgate-street, the back attic of which was not more than twenty-five feet from the wall of the prison, which wall was covered with spikes abutting in all directions. As fortune would have it, this attic was to let as a sleeping room. The house was kept by an old woman who sold aberdashery in a small way, and as Jack was decently dressed, and threw into his manner much courtesy to the old woman, his application regarding taking the attic was favourably received, and in consideration of his alleging he was a stranger in London, a reference was dispensed with upon his paying a month's rent in advance. Sixteen-string Jack fairly took possession of the attic, and that evening he managed, by sending a shirt to Claude, to communicate with him to the following effect—

"I shall make an effort to reach you, as soon as a man named Swade is on the lock of the outer gate. Let me know, if you can, the name of the turnkey who visits you late at night, for I know it is the custom for one to visit prisoners who are in separate confinement. Hope for the best, Claude."

To this Claude Duval managed on the following morning to send the following reply to Jack—

"The turnkey's name is Wright. Be cautious, Jack, and do not peril yourself for me. Do nothing rashly, for it would surely fail."

"Wright," muttered Jack, "I must see this Mr. Wright, and ascertain what sort of metal he is composed of. He may be flexible enough, or he might not. At all events, it can but be tried; but the trial must be made with caution."

Of course, the great difficulty in making an attempt upon the integrity of this man, Wright, consisted in doing it so that its failure, if it should fail, entailed no bad effects upon him, Sixteen-string Jack. After much thought, Jack hit upon a mode of accomplishing this. He found that Wright came over to the public-house regularly to have his drop, and that there generally dropped in about the same time a man dressed in a long drab coat, half-dressing gown, and half-dressing coat, and who had a glass of beer, which he consumed with a small biscuit he took from his pocket always. Upon inquiry, Jack found that this man was a clerk to a well-known usurer's attorney in the neighbourhood, and, indeed, it was considered that he was a sort of partner in the grasping business. At all events, Jack heard enough of his character to feel no compunctions whatever at getting him into a little difficulty. After taking the most accurate notes of this man's dress, Jack went to one of those places in London, where accurate costumes of any required description can be had in a few hours, and supplied himself with a drab coat, and so exactly like that of the usurer's clerk, that he might very well be taken for him by any one not intimate with his physiognomy. The next thing to do was to find Mr. Wright somewhere a way from the public-house, and this, after some waiting, Jack accomplished at night, for he saw him come out of Newgate, and walk towards Smithfield. Jack pursued and called to him.

"Hilloa!" said the officer, pausing; "what do you want? Oh, your name is Falk, is it not? I think I have seen you often at the Rose Inn."

"Yes," said Jack, "yes. Mr. Wright, have you any objection to earn a 100*l.* note?"

"Humph! How do you mean?"

"In plain language, are you really fond of your situation in Newgate, for its own sake, or for what it brings you in? If the latter, you may as well earn 100*l.* in addition to what you usually make."

"But how?"

"First of all, Mr. Wright, let me tell you that I am a man of determination."

"I don't understand you."

"I can easily explain myself. Here is a loaded pistol. If you attempt to arrest me, I will blow your brains out. Now, listen."

"Oh, I don't want to arrest you."

"Will you, then, connive at the escape of a prisoner from Newgate for 100*l.* provided it can be so managed that you are in no way implicated?"

"An awkward and dangerous proposal from you to me, Mr. Falk. I must really have a little time to consider."

"Very well. Will you let me know when you see me taking my glass at the Rose to-morrow morning?"

"Certainly, I will."

"And in good faith, I hope, Mr. Wright. If you accept terms, well and good; and if you don't, I hope there's no harm done."

"Oh, none at all. Good evening."

On the following morning, Jack took care to be at the bar of the Rose Inn, but in quite a different costume; and presently came in the real Mr. Falk, with his drab coat, and asked for his half pint of beer, as usual. Jack stood quite close to him, and scarcely had he been there two minutes, when in came Wright, the officer. He sidled up to Falk, and whispered, "All's right."

"Eh?" said Falk.

"I consent."

"Oh, you do?" said Falk, who thought it was a joke at his expense. "I am very happy to hear it, I'm sure."

In an instant, Wright sprung upon him; and then two officers, who were there in disguise, likewise pounced upon him, and poor old Falk found himself handcuffed in the twinkling of an eye.

"Murder! murder!" he cried. "What's this for?"

"Oh, you know," said Wright.

"How can I know? Good God! what have I done? It's some mistake. What have I done?"

"One scarcely expects you to admit it," said Wright, "but you will find that trying to bribe a sworn officer is an offence. Bring him along."

"Ah," said Sixteen-string Jack to himself, "it was as well for me to be cautious. Wright will not be bribed; but I have lost nothing by trying, so now I know what I have to depend upon, and fear no ill-consequences from the experiment."

Two persons were talking at the corner of Newgate-street as he passed. One was a perfect stranger to him, but the other was Swade, the officer, and Jack heard him say, in answer to something from his acquaintance—

"I would, with pleasure, but I am on the outer wall to-night."

"To-night, then," said Jack, as he crept up the attic stairs to the room he had hired, "to-night, then, the attempt must be made to free you, Claude. It is desperate; but yet a desperate adventure will sometimes succeed where a carefully got up one would fail. I will try, and I will succeed or fall by it. You would do as much for me, Claude Duval."

Sixteen-string Jack had made all his arrangements, so that there was no necessity for him to leave the attic again that day, except to send something into the prison to Claude, by means of which he might let him know that he would that

night make an attempt to rescue him. He marked letters sufficient on a piece of newspaper to convey to Claude the following brief communication—"Expect to see me to-night, Claude. Keep yourself awake and well alive. All may, and shall be well, if I can make it so." So much depended upon circumstances as they might occur, that Jack could not say anything more explicit to Claude, and so, after sending that much to him, he waited until the shades of evening began to gather around the city, and the lights were gleaming in the streets. Sixteen-string Jack needed no light. What he had to do was a great deal better done in the dark; for although, as far as he knew, no window commanded a view of his attic, he could not swear to such a state of things, and he was not at all inclined to run unnecessary risks. From the lights in the shops, as well as from those in the street, there came a strong reflection, so that Jack was able, from his eyes having become gradually accustomed to the creeping on of that ruddy sort of twilight, to see tolerably plain everything in the attic. The clock of St. Sepulchre's church struck ten as he began his preparations for entering Newgate—that dreadful abode which he last left in a cart to go to execution. He carefully unlocked a large chest that he had in the room, and the key of which he had carefully hidden. In this chest were some very long, stout ropes, with strong iron hooks, or grapnels, and at the end of each of them, and here and there in the rope, was tied a great knot, by means of smaller pieces, so that there was a good hold at places for either feet or hands. Slowly, and with the utmost caution, Sixteen-string Jack opened his attic window, and looked out into the night air. The legion of spikes and *chevaux de frise* that ran on the top of the prison wall could be clearly seen against the bright sky, and there it was that Jack now directed all his attention.

"Kind," he said, "very kind of the architects of Newgate to place so many good holdfasts upon the top of the wall for my hooks. Here goes! it will be hard, indeed, if I do not get a grasp upon some of them."

He cast one of his ropes so that the hook fell among the *chevaux de frise* on the top of the wall, and then, pulling it tight, he ascertained that he had a good firm hold. He then secured unto the window-sill a very strong brass hook, which seemed such as chandeliers are suspended from ceilings by, and fastened the other end of his rope to it firmly and tightly.

"So, so," he said; "a very tidy bridge indeed, from my attic to old Newgate. I hope sincerely, my poor friend, Claude Duval, that you will be able to say, this was well done."

There was much more to do, though, besides fixing the rope, before Sixteen-string Jack could venture into Newgate; but he set about his well-arranged preparations with great speed and exactitude. First of all he dressed himself from top to toe, exactly as he had dressed when he left Newgate to go to execution. It was not without some strange thoughts that Sixteen-string Jack put on that clothing, which brought back to his mind, more vividly than usual, such a host of painful thoughts and feelings. He quite shuddered as he surveyed himself in the glass, and saw that he was restored to that precise condition that he had been in, when it was whispered to him that it was time for him to come to death. But this was only a temporary feeling, and not one that he would for a moment allow to interfere with the proceedings to which he had so heart and soul pledged himself. He gave the finishing touch to his costume by putting on a large cravat, and then he said—

"Now, Claude, I will rescue you, or we shall, I think, both have our homes in old Newgate to-night."

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### SIXTEEN-STRING JACK IN NEWGATE.

NOTWITHSTANDING Jack had succeeded tolerably well so far, and that he had found a good hold upon the iron-work on the top of the prison wall for the rope, which made a frail bridge from thence to his attic, it was no easy task, at that

giddy height from the ground, and with the faint, uncertain light about him, to achieve the first step in the adventure. Clambering along horizontal ropes, although to a sailor as easy, probably, as walking up stairs, was rather foreign to Sixteen-string Jack's habits; and when he knew that a single false grasp, or the least accession of giddiness, might be his death, he might well be excused for feeling some slight degree of nervousness upon first starting. He tried the rope repeatedly, to thoroughly satisfy himself that it was quite secure; and then, as he stood upon the window-sill of the attic, he listened for a few moments to that dull, confused roar, which always comes from London—a combination of thousands of voices, of thousands of footsteps, of the rolling of coaches, and the clanking and clanging of thousands of handicrafts, all combined into a sullen, half-muffled kind of roar, not unlike that of the sea when the sun has gone down upon the face of the deep, and the sighing night-wind is whispering to the spirit of the waters.

"Who else," said Jack, "in all this vast city, is engaged upon a similar enterprise to mine? Who else is about to risk so much for one whom he loves as I?"

Alas! Jack little knew the secrets of that vast congregation of humanity when he thus spoke. It was probably true enough that no one was precisely in his circumstances, but there is more heroism in every-day life, during one passage of the sun over London, than is to be found in the wildest romance ever dictated by the most discursive imagination. Jack looked down from the height at which he was, but nothing was to be seen below, save a congregation of little black-looking spots, which made up the yards of a number of houses jammed in between Newgate Market and Newgate-street. Here and there he could see a glimmering light, and then it would disappear, leaving the darkness more profound than before. St. Sepulchre's church clock struck eleven.

"It is time," said Jack, "it is time."

He carefully, before starting, fastened his apparel about him in such a way that there was no loose portion of it dangling about, and this he did with the greatest ease, as he took with him a quantity of rope, which he coiled round and round him, as being the most ready and easy way of conveying it. A pair of good double-barrelled pistols, carefully loaded, he placed in a breast pocket, and a knife, and a file, and a pair of strong nippers he likewise had with him. Thus he considered himself provided against all ordinary contingencies; and with a firm determination not to be deterred from the prosecution of his object let what would occur, he swung himself off the attic window-ledge on to the rope. It was a good stout piece of cord that, and drawn tightly, too, yet it swayed down a little, and gave to Sixteen-string Jack's weight, as hand over hand he slowly dragged himself along it, keeping a firm grasp with his ankles at the same time. The distance from his window had really looked nothing, but now that he came in such a way to traverse it, how wonderfully it was increased in imagination! Once, too, he thought he heard a creaking noise, as though the rope was either breaking at some portion of its continuity, or as though the iron at the end of it which was grappling the *chevaux de frise* at the top of the prison wall was coming gradually off.

This was a horrible idea, but there was now no help for it. He was more than half across, and he would not go back. He paused, however, and grasped the rope tightly; for if the end attached to the prison wall were to give way, he was confident that fastened to the window-sill would not. In the course of about half a minute, as nothing occurred, he began to think he must be mistaken, and that it was merely the straining of the rope, and the working of the hook at the end of it against the iron-work it grasped, which made the sound of such alarming import, and he went on again with renewed courage. To Jack, this part of his adventure seemed as though it would be the worst of all; which probably arose from the fact, that he saw all of this, while what was to come was shrouded in mystery still, and was invested with the radiant colours of hope. At length, the vibration and the depression of the rope ceased, and, by stretching out his hand, Jack could grasp the iron work on the top of the wall. Another moment, and he was standing, evidently rather precariously, among it; but still he had crossed the



chasm. He thought it imprudent to stand up, for fear even his shadow might be seen against the night sky by some one from the prison, and he stooped as low as he could, while, by the insufficient light in the place, he carefully examined the hold that the hook had taken. He found it perfectly fast ; and as he had no sort of intention of disturbing that rope, he began, with great caution, to uncoil the one he had round his waist. Any idea of being able to consult his plan of Newgate during his expedition had never crossed his mind, so that he had carefully previously studied it, and it was as strongly present in all its details to his mind's eye as though it were actually before him. He gazed down into Newgate from the top of the wall, for he knew that a small court-yard, of a triangular shape, was immediately before him, and that the only mode of getting from it into the interior of the prison was by a vaulted passage, with a door at each end of it, tolerably well secured by bolts and bars. There would be no danger in this first little court-yard of meeting with any one, for no cells looked into it, although the narrow gratings of some obscure places of confinement caught a faint light from it in the day-time. The height was terrific. Now Jack was in a much better position to make sure that his rope was well fastened to the iron work, and he accordingly took good care that it should be so before he let the other end of it slowly down the inner side of the wall, like some long, slender snake, making its way into the abodes of wretchedness. He grasped the rope, and slid down rapidly. He was quite sure that it was more than long enough to reach the ground, and he was not deceived, for when his feet touched the cold pavement there were some yards of the rope remaining coiled upon it. "Better than an inch to short," said Jack, as he stood in the little court-yard, feeling a little giddy with his rapid descent. A very few moments' stillness, however, sufficed to free him from that feeling, and then assuring himself that he was quite recovered, he placed the superfluous end of the rope close up against the wall ; for although it was against all probability that such should be the case, he yet felt that some one might come into the court-yard. The next object was to get out of this place which he had taken so much trouble to get into, and he carefully stepped along to the passage which led from it. This was to test the correctness of his plan of the prison : if the passage was just in the place the plan indicated, then he felt that he could have abundance of confidence in all other respects—if not, he should be sadly puzzled. One, two, three, four, five six, steps counted Jack, and then he paused and felt the wall immediately before him. Yes, there was the door, true enough, studded with thick, large, iron nails, just as it was represented in the plan which he had so carefully consulted. "All right so far," said Jack ; "I am not deceived." The precision with which persons, who have made such matters their study, will ascertain the manner in which a door is fastened, is something surprising, but it was certainly true in the case of those ancient disturbers of the tranquillity of the wealthy, who are now no more. Sixteen-string Jack shook the door quietly, and then muttered to himself, "Humph ! one bolt above only, and a bar." At that time Newgate depended more upon its bolts and bars than upon its locks. The art of lock-making had not reached the perfection that it has now attained, so that the skill of the cracksmen of Claude Duval's time was generally more than sufficient to bid defiance to locks. Bars and bolts, however, were always more troublesome obstacles in the way of a prison escape or an entrance into a house ; but even they were not unfrequently removed with great skill.

Sixteen-string Jack at once set about this work, with scarcely a doubt of its success, considering that he had with him tools and implements sufficient to fully accomplish it. With a centre bit of the most delicate and exquisite construction, he bored holes above and below the bolt, so that he could introduce the blade of a fine saw. This blade was not above two-eighths of an inch in thickness, and yet it was so excellently-tempered a piece of steel that the rough soft iron of which the bolt was composed stood no chance against it for a moment. The saw cut into it as though it had been wood. The lower bolt was not fast, but the bar still remained, and Sixteen-string Jack could easily enough have cut through that, but he knew that the passage beyond the door was paved, and he feared that

the two ends of the bar might fall and make a clattering noise that might reach the ears of some official of the prison amid the silence of the night. Some other means, then, must be resorted to to get rid of the bar. He judged that it was merely placed across the door, being lodged in a socket prepared for its reception at one end, while, no doubt, it was jointed on to the strong frame-work composing the door-post at the other end. At least, he was well aware that, unless this bar was an exception to the general rule, such was the construction of it, and he set about his operations accordingly, without a moment's loss of time or consideration. By tapping the door gently with one of the implements he had brought with him, he ascertained the exact place of the bar; and then, about six inches below it, he bored a hole right through the door. The centre-bit encountered an iron plate in its progress, but that was only a temporary obstruction after all, and it was soon right through. Jack was provided against this very contingency that he had to contend with, so, taking from his pocket a long soft nail of about six or eight inches, he bent it in the form of a hook, and passed it through the hole in the door, so that the hook part stuck upwards. He placed it firmly there in its place by the insertion of another straight nail, which he firmly wedged in, for he did not care to remove either of them when they had answered fully his purpose at the present time. Thus far, then, all was right. The next thing he had to do, was to lift the bar out of its rest, and that was a matter of more difficulty, for the only way in which it could be accomplished was to get something under it, which should act as a kind of lever against it; but where there is a will there is a way, and throughout the whole of his proceedings Sixteen-string Jack exemplified the truth of that well-known and somewhat venerable proverb. Another hole was bored in the door, precisely below the lower edge of the bar, and through this was introduced another bent nail, the head of which was held firmly in a pair of pincers, so as to have a good purchase of it. By moving this slowly round, then, Jack caught the bar upon its under edge and lifted it. The only chance of failure was that the bent nail might not lift it high enough to release it from the kind of holdfast in the door-post behind which it was slipped. Jack had his doubts, but they were soon removed, for, upon suddenly releasing the bar, it fell clear of the holdfast and fairly upon the hook that he had previously prepared for its reception.

"All's right," said Jack.

The door yielded to a touch, and, with a slight creak, swung back upon its massive hinges.

"So much for bolts and bars," said Sixteen-string Jack, as he at once entered the narrow passage.

To his surprise, the door at the other extremity was not fastened at all. Probably it was thought so utterly chimerical for any one to entertain the idea of getting into Newgate, that outer doors were only attended to strictly. At all events, it saved Jack some time and trouble. The plan of the prison was so firmly fixed in his mind that he knew at once where the last door led to. It was to a passage to the right and to the left, along which were cell-doors, but they were not the cells he sought, and taking the right hand branch of the passage, he passed noiselessly on. Jack had taken the precaution to draw on over his boots a pair of thick worsted stockings, which had the effect of completely deadening the sound of his footsteps, while it gave him the confident step which a man has in his boots, and which he can never have in his stocking soles merely. The passage was substantially built and vaulted. It was of about twelve feet in width, and about fifty feet in length, when it terminated at a door where there was a wicket of wire, through which the turnkey could take a good survey of the passage. Whether or not a watch was kept during the night at this wicket, Jack had no means of knowing, except by ocular demonstration. He thought it probable enough that such was the case, so he carefully hid his light, as he slowly and stealthily approached.

A faint gleam, as if a lantern were upon the other side of the door, almost convinced him that he should there find some one; nor was he mistaken, although he would very gladly have found himself so. A turnkey was fast asleep in a recess in the wall upon the other side of the door; while a lamp, placed in a niche



THE TURNKEY ALARMED AT THE SUPPOSED APPARITION OF SIXTEEN-STRING JACK

above his head, had shed the faint light into the passage which had been by Jack observed before reaching the spot. This was really a most serious obstacle. For a few moments it seemed as if Sixteen-string Jack's ingenuity were at fault to know how to overcome this scarcely to be called unexpected, but still most provoking stop to his progress. He advanced close to the little wire wicket, and placing his ear to it, he listened attentively. The regular breathing of the man convinced him, Jack, that he was in a sound sleep. A slight glance through the wicket showed him, too, that a key was in the lock of the door, and that it had no other

fastening. What was he to do? Certainly, sleeping as the turnkey was, and situated as Jack was, nothing could be easier than to kill him; but there was something about the cold-blooded murder of a sleeping man so repugnant to Jack's feelings, that he himself shuddered as the suggestion presented itself to him.

"No—no," he said; "that would indeed be horrible. I cannot kill him as he sleeps. If he were to attack me, and I took his life in self-defence, it would be quite another thing; but I cannot commit a cold-blooded, deliberate murder even in such an exigency as this. It would be enough to blast with ill-success my whole exertions. I should not deserve to succeed."

He clasped his forehead with his hand, and remained for some few moments in the most profound and painful thought upon the subject.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

### CLAUDE IN HIS CELL.

IT was certainly possible, and only possible, that the turnkey might be so soundly sleeping as to allow Jack to open the door, by putting his arm through the little wicket, and turning the lock, and pass him without awakening. Just possible it was, but very far indeed from being at all probable; and yet, what else could he try?

"It must be so," said Sixteen-string Jack to himself—"it must be so; I cannot, after all my pains to come thus far, go back because I find a sleeping turnkey, when I had fully prepared myself to find waking ones. No—no. It must be chanced. If he sleeps soundly, his life is saved. If he awakens, he is an enemy, and I must take his life, or he will take mine. I cannot, I dare not delay. The attempt must be made at once."

Jack felt what a ticklish thing it was to do to turn the key in the lock so softly as not to awaken the man; but he advanced to do it, and, by coming so close, he saw that the turnkey was aged. His hair, like Hamlet's father's, was a "sable silvered," and Jack looked at him with a dim perception of having seen him before.

"Alas!" thought Jack, as he looked upon the face of the slumbering turnkey, and now fully recognised him—"alas! I cannot kill him. Now I remember him well. He brought me a glass of water upon the morning of my execution, and spoke some kind words to me. No—no. I cannot kill him. Oh, God! let him sleep on, let him sleep on!"

So fervent was this ejaculation of Jack's that he almost uttered the last words aloud. More than ever, then, now intent upon not awakening the turnkey, perhaps in consequence of a certain amount of agitation that came over him, he was less able to refrain from making a slight noise with the key. The turnkey moaned slightly in his sleep, and shifted his position. Jack awared with the stillness of death for full three minutes, and then, when he thought deep sleep had once again crept over the senses of the man who was so much in his way, he ventured to resume his operations. He thought the best plan was carefully to take out the key from the other side of the door, and put it into the lock on the side where he was. He would then have more command over it, and be much better able to turn it quite noiselessly, than as if it remained in its present position. He released the key from the lock with a dexterity and precision that made it quite impossible that, by so doing, the smallest alarm could be given to the sleeping turnkey, and then, transferring it to the key-hole upon the side where he himself was, he slowly turned the ponderous wards. It was quite impossible to prevent an inconceivably slight grating noise from ensuing, but that was all. It was next thing to an impossibility that so slight a noise should awaken the sleeper; and yet Six-string Jack waited its result with the most painful interest. All was still.

"'Tis well," thought Jack; "I shall be able to pass him now, if the door is easy upon its hinges, but if not, God only knows what will happen. I cannot sacrifice Claude, and I cannot kill this man. Heaven help me now, for my wish to avoid sin, not to commit it; and so I can call upon Heaven to aid me. This is no selfish expedition. I have all to lose, including life itself, and nothing to gain by it; so again I say, help me, Heaven, and deliver me from the temptations to take this man's life, by keeping him still slumbering."

Sixteen-string Jack did not expect any miracle to ensue, for the purpose of helping him to get Claude Duval out of Newgate; but after this odd kind of prayer he certainly felt, or fancied he felt, which was just the same thing, and answered the purpose fully as well, much calmer and collected.

A malediction light upon all musical doors! Who has not had his nerves set all in a twitter by a shriek from some door that will not open quickly without one, or slowly without a lengthened, long-drawn groan, as if it were in the greatest agony in the world?

But what were the creaking of doors of ordinary domestic life in comparison to this abominable creaking door in Newgate? for it did creak, as Jack ascertained, by the slightest possible movement of it. What was he to do? There was nothing for it but boldness.

"Courage!" said Jack to himself, "courage; creaking doors will sometimes yield, like creaking human beings, to resolution; and I have known them to be swung moderately open without making the least sound. I must try, however, come what may."

If this plan were to be adopted, Jack knew well there must be no compromise with it. It was hit or miss—a kind of leap from a precipice in the dark. He might alight with safety, or he might not. All was chance. He tried to ask himself how many chances there were of the door giving a hideous scream, to one that it would open quietly; but the stupendous piece of arithmetic was beyond his power—he only felt that he was running a frightful risk, that was all. Open rushed the door. It did not scream, it did not groan, but it did worse than all that—it struck the foot of the slumbering turnkey, and aroused him in a moment. He started to his feet.

"Hilloa! hilloa!" he cried, "What's that?"

The real truth was, that Sixteen-string Jack was so bewildered at this most unexpected *contretemps* that for a few brief moments he did not know what he did; and yet impulsively, if not reflectively, he dashed through the open door, and gained a few yards beyond it, before he told himself how utterly useless it was now to think of doing any good by flight—flight, which would only take him deeper into the interior of Newgate, with a hue-and-cry at his heels. Sixteen-string Jack turned, and stood with his right hand plunged in the breast of his apparel, grasping the stock of one of his pistols—a weapon which he dreaded to use, and yet felt now that he must use. The turnkey had snatched the lamp from the recess where it was placed, and in a moment he made a rush towards Jack. Another step, and it would have been his last in this world; but he did not take that step. On the contrary, he paused for a moment, and then staggered back, gasping—

"Good God!"

Jack saw his advantage in a moment, and divined at once from whence it arose. The turnkey knew him well, and took him for his own apparition. There was no longer occasion for killing. All Jack had to do was, as the canting religionists say, to improve the occasion. He saw that the man was almost convulsed with terror, and he was determined not to spare him. A good fright breaks no bones, thought Jack. Step by step, with a slow gliding movement, Jack approached the turnkey, who, for a few moments, was rooted to the ground with fear. A cold clammy perspiration stood upon his brow, and his limbs shook under him. At length, as Jack was coming into what he considered awful proximity to him, he managed to shuffle back a little, crying as he did so—

"I know you—I know you. Gracious goodness! I know you."

Jack paused, and in a deep sepulchral voice he said—

"Stop! I may speak now, since mortal lips have addressed me."

"Ye—ye—yes," stammered the turnkey, whose hair was standing on end with fright—"yes—I—I am aware that ghostesses can't speak till things are spoken to them—I—I know, oh, oh."

"Do you know me?"

"Oh dear; yes, I—I know you. You are the ghost of Sixteen-string Jack, who—~~who~~—was executed—on the 15th of May, in the year——"

"Peace! No more! Sit!"

"Yes—yes, I—I will do anything you like, anything you please, only don't touch me, for that would, I feel sure, drive me quite mad. I—I am sure it would. Oh, for the Lord's sake, don't touch me. What harm have I ever done to you?"

"None! But in the hour of my mortal tribulation, when poor human nature shrunk aghast at what it had to go through, you gave me a cup of water."

"Yes, I—I did."

"Wait here, I say to you; you shall have your reward. Wait until I come to you again. Do you promise me, upon your soul's salvation, that you will not stir from that seat until I come back to you?"

"Oh, yes—yes, I promise."

"Tis well. Have no doubts. Look at me."

Jack was exceedingly anxious that, after he had left, the turnkey should not be able to get up the slightest doubt as to his identity; so he advanced just far enough to allow the beams from the lamp to fall clearly upon his face; and then, for almost half a minute, he remained gazing with a mournful expression at the turnkey, who was nearly driven mad by the horror of his situation; for how could he doubt the evidence of his own senses? He had seen Sixteen-string Jack hanged, and he had now again seen him, and spoken to him. Oh, it was terrible!

"Remember me," said Jack, imitating the ghost of Hamlet's fraternal relative as well as he could—"remember me!"

"Yes," gasped the turnkey.

Slowly Jack moved along the passage backwards, until he got to a turning, and then he scampered in a most unghost-like fashion; for much time had been consumed in this rather awkward adventure with the turnkey, who, after all, when alone, might have strength of mind enough to get over his fears, and so commit some other act that might be highly detrimental to Jack's plans. Jack, all along, from his exact recollection of the accurate plan of Newgate he had so well studied, knew precisely where he was, so that he had the great advantage of never going an inch out of his way. At the end of the passage where he was, he knew there was another door which led into a court-yard, and he knew that the little gratings near the roof which let a dim light to the row of cells, in one of which Claude was confined, looked into that yard. But he would have to unfasten a door leading from that yard, and to traverse a passage until he came to a turning at right angles with it exactly, and from that passage opened the doors of the cells, the backs of which looked into the yard. All this was clear enough, if Jack could but get so far without interruption of any serious character. That, however, was the question; and now another consideration came over his mind for decision, which was simply this: provided he found his way safely to Claude's cell, and got him out of it, by what route should he attempt to take him from the prison? It will be seen that from the first Jack had provided against the contingency of having his retreat by the way he had come cut off, by the desperate determination, if such were the case, to proceed to the regular gate at which the man who knew him by sight would be, and pass himself there off, as he had already so successfully done, as his own ghost, so frightening the man into letting him pass out.

This, however, was a most desperate expedient, and, of course, it was a thousand times better to go by the same way he came, if he could do so with any chance of safety. Jack was divided in thought, between these two modes of procedure, as he made his way hastily to the court-yard at the end of the passage in which he had been so unexpectedly delayed by the really perilous adventure that had happened to him, and which might have turned out so much worse than it really

did, although he (Jack) still trembled at what might be its possible results. If anything, however, could save him from any *mal apropos* proceedings of the terrified turnkey, it would certainly be rapidity of action; so Jack, in his proceedings, now, was resolved to let no grass grow under his feet.

The door leading from the passage into the court-yard was not fastened, except by a latch, so Jack found himself in the court into which the backs of the range of cells looked, in an incredibly short space of time after leaving the bewildered turnkey in his seat. The experience he had now already had of the correctness of his plan of the prison, wonderfully encouraged him, and he proceeded to the door which led to the passage standing rectangularly to the one from which opened the suite of cells, in one of which Claude was imprisoned, without a moment's hesitation. The door was fast. St. Sepulchre's clock, dimly heard amid the stillness of the night, in the prison, struck one. Without a moment's pause than was just necessary to listen to the clock, Jack now set about opening the door. It was only locked, so the difficulty was not great, and in about five minutes it yielded to him, and he at once dashed into the stone passage.

"Now for Claude," he said.

A sudden flash of light from the farther end of the court-yard almost stunned him by the suddenness with which it came across his eyes. He stood as fixed and still as a statue for a few seconds—and then, by a kind of instinct rather than reflection, he closed the open door of the passage in which he was, feeling that, if it were found in that state, it would at once give rise to a host of suspicions, which would eventuate in a search of the prison. Anything in the shape of a thorough alarm or search would, of course, prove fatal to him. He placed his ear flat against the door, and with all the power of hearing he could bring to bear against the slightest sounds, he listened to what was passing in the court-yard. Through a slight crevice, too, he could see the light which the men carried. A faint genial-like ray of it, too, came through the key-hole of the door, and fell at his feet, but he could not for the life of him think what the party of men could be about, with lights at such an hour, amid the cold and dreary intricacies of that mournful building, in which hope itself bids the world adieu!

## CHAPTER LXX.

### THE ESCAPE CONTINUED.

THE only thing which gave to Sixteen-string Jack a ray of hope that the appearance of the party in the court-yard of the prison in no way concerned him, was the careless manner of the men composing it. If they had been roused up by any alarm, or by any suspicions, there would have been silence, secrecy, and caution in their every movement; but such was very far from being the case, for they talked and laughed together with perfect freedom, and after a few moments, when the hot blood did not bubble so furiously from his heart to his brain, Jack was better able to understand what they said; he found that though there was something to fear, there was not so much to fear as he had at first supposed.

"I really," said one, with a dissatisfied growl, "don't see the utility of this night patrolling. . . One regular watchman, always on the look-out, is worth half-a-dozen such inspections as this."

"Perhaps so," said another, "but it's the governor's orders, and so it must be done."

"Oh, of course."

Jack breathed a little freely, for now he knew that at all events, however dangerous the circumstance might be, there was at present nothing special about it as concerned him and Claude Duval, for whom he was attempting to do so much.

He heard them go to various doors, and try them roughly one after the other, and the thought struck him that they knew the door against which he leant was not of great importance; but they would pass through the passage, to try the other one that led to the cells, or perhaps visit the cells themselves.

What was he to do?

In the passage there was not the shadow of a hiding place. The door at the other end might be fast, and what time had he to open it then? It was a desperate resource, but he felt that all he could do was to hold the door against which he leant and listened fast, so as to induce a belief that it was locked, and the key gone. He placed himself against it, and held it with all his force. He dreaded to look for any mode of fastening it, lest, while he was so occupied, it should be suddenly pushed open by some of the party without.

"Have you tried all those doors?" said a voice, apparently in authority.

"Yes, sir," replied a turnkey.

"Well, let us go to the cells, now. Have you got the key of this?"

"No, sir. Mr. Stevens always leaves the key in the lock when anybody is in one of the cells. You know, sir, Claude Duval is in No. 4, if you please, sir, so Mr. Stevens is more than usually careful, knowing what a customer Duval is, and that he has friends outside."

"Ah, to be sure, Mr. Stevens cannot be so careful of Claude Duval. But I suppose nobody will finger the reward now, as he, in a manner of speaking, gave himself up to the officers."

"I think," said one, "he ought to have the reward himself. Did he not, according to the words in which it was offered, deliver up Claude Duval to the officers and see him safely lodged in custody?"

"Yes, he did. But it would be rather too good a joke to give him the reward for all that. Come, open the door."

"Hilloa! Mr. Stevens has taken the key away."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, the door is as fast as—a—rock. Ah! I can't move it."

"How could you if it's locked? Oh, it's all right, no doubt. Mr. Stevens knows what he is about, and, at all events, if he has taken away the key, and thinks that's the safest plan, knowing the customer he has got in No. 4, that's his look-out not ours. Come on."

To the immense relief of the listening Jack, the whole party left the court-yard, which in a few moments became again the dark and solitary place it had been before their visit.

"That danger is over," said Jack, as he released the door to which one of the officers had given a most vigorous push—"that danger is over, and a fearful one it was. It is not probable now that there will be another inspection for some hours, if, indeed, at all again, until daylight, so I may proceed in peace."

Sixteen-string Jack now felt much more confidence in the success of his efforts than he had done before, and he had quite a brightened look of hope as he proceeded along the passage towards the only one door which, save that of the cell, shut him now out from the presence of his old friend and dear associate, Claude Duval.

"No. 4," he said; "I must recollect that the cell is No. 4."

This door which shut him out from Claude Duval was fast.

It seemed to Sixteen-string Jack as though this last door being fast was a more troublesome and provoking thing than all the other troubles and difficulties he had met with in his progress put together, and his impatience as he proceeded to use the necessary means of opening it, was so extreme, as for a time, notwithstanding all his skill, completely to defeat him. Of course, though, he could open the door, and in the course of about three minutes it yielded to his efforts.

Now that he was really within a very few paces of Claude Duval, Jack felt as if he could have fainted. For a moment all the strength and all the energy that had so far supported him and urged him on, fled before him, and he leant heavily



against the wall, while a multitude of objects seemed to swim before his bewildered eyes.

This feeling was one which might have been expected under the circumstances; for if ever an enterprise had been undertaken from motives of pure affection, that of Sixteen-string Jack's, to rescue Claude from Newgate, was that one. In the whole affair, there was not the slightest alloy of selfishness; and no wonder, then, that he, Jack, felt, now that he had got so far upon his self-imposed task, a wonderful and overpowering gush of feeling.

"I shall save him," he gasped, "I shall save him!"

Gradually this feeling of utter helplessness wore off, however, and one by one the faculties of Sixteen-string Jack came back to him, so that he was soon enabled to shake himself free of such fancies, and to pursue the enterprise upon which he had staked so much, and in the whole course of which he had never faltered once, for this gush of excitement which he had but just passed through was anything but indicative of a faltering resolution.

"Yes," he said, "oh, yes, I feel that I shall save him."

Animated, then, by such a feeling, he at once walked on, counting the doors, until he came to No. 4. He might have spared himself the trouble of counting them, for the number was legibly enough painted upon it. The key, for greater security against any attempts of Claude from the inside to pick the lock, was left in its place, and in addition, a very heavy, massive bar, was placed across the door. The authorities did not exactly contemplate the idea of any friend of Claude's finding his way, alone, and unknown to them, to that door, and smiled at the futile precautions they had taken to secure their prisoner. But there was Sixteen-string Jack, the truest friend that man could have, with one hand upon the massive key, and the other upon the still more massive door. The hour of deliverance had come. In his eagerness Jack called upon Claude, forgetting that it might be dangerous to awaken an echo in such a place as that, and with such a name, too, as Claude Duval's.

"Claude, Claude," he cried, "are you there, Claude?—are you there?"

The door was too thick to allow the voice of Sixteen-string Jack to penetrate through its massive structure, and Claude made no reply to the summons. This silence, natural as it was under the circumstances, was sufficiently alarming to Jack, in his present state of great mental excitement. His hand trembled as he lowered the bar, and it was another moment ere he found strength to turn the massive key in the lock of the cell door. Again he raised his voice—

"Claude, Claude!"

This time, Claude had become aware that some one was outside his cell door, and he had roused himself from the partial sleep that had crept over him. He hesitated whether to say anything or not, and yet he was surprised at a visit at such a time. The hour was most unusual. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, exclaiming—

"What voice is that? A dream?"

"Claude, Claude!"

"Gracious Heaven! how real—how very real. It cannot be."

The door of the cell was flung wide open, and Sixteen-string Jack stood upon the threshold, and held up the small lantern which he had from the first provided himself with. The dubious flame fell upon the pale features of Claude Duval, who stood transfixed, completely astonished, and doubting his own sanity, as he fully recognised the well-known features of Jack.

"I am mad," he said.

"No, Claude, no, it is, in truth, your old friend."

Claude rushed to him, and clasped his arms round him, exclaiming—

"It is, indeed, no delusion. Good Heaven! who would have dreamt of this? It is too bewildering. In the name of all that is wonderful and miraculous, how came you here, Jack?"

"There is no miracle in the matter, Claude. It is I; and the only means I really had of getting here consisted in a fixed determination that nothing should stop me from coming to you."

Claude still looked bewildered, as, indeed, well he might; but Jack now carefully closed the cell door, lest the sound of their voices should, amid those tube-like passages which abounded in the prison, be conveyed to the ear of some more than usually attentive and observant officer; and then he said, with much emotion in his tones—

“Let us not, Claude, speak of my coming here—it is of our leaving that we must speak. Your better judgment must come to my aid in this matter, when I have explained to you all the circumstances. Listen to me, Claude.”

“With all my heart,” said Claude. “But——”

“But what?”

“There is only one question I would first ask of you.”

“I can guess it, Claude—I can easily guess, and so will answer it by saying that Cicely is well, knows all, and is hopeful.”

“It is enough,” said Claude; “proceed.”

Jack then rapidly detailed to Claude Duval all that he had done, step by step, to get at him, and the precise aspect of affairs, with all the risks and all the chances of failure or success, in leaving the prison. He concluded by saying—

“Now, Claude, you know all; and the question you have to consider is, whether we are to try to leave by the way I came, or by the regular entrance, where the man—who, no doubt, will be frightened at my ghost, as he will fancy me to be—is upon duty?”

Claude buried his face in his hands for some few moments, and then, looking up, he said—

“The way you came, Jack.”

“You think so?”

“Yes, there is less risk, I think. But, if done at all, it ought to be done very quickly. For your sake, Jack, I would start at once; but you must lend me a helping hand, first. You perceive they had a good opinion of my powers, as well as my inclination to escape, for they have placed upon my wrists these iron bracelets, which, under any circumstances, I confess I should not be sorry to be at once rid of.”

“That is easily accomplished,” said Jack, as he produced one of his small, exquisitely tempered files, and soon released Claude from the handcuffs which in that cell he was burthened with, more from a piece of personal spite on the part of the governor, than from any notion that they were wanted for security’s sake.

“You are free from that encumbrance, Claude,” said Jack, as the handcuffs fell with a clash upon the stone floor.

“Yes, thanks to you,” said Claude: “and now let’s be off.”

“Agreed.”

They left the cell, but before doing so, Claude Duval charred the end of a small piece of wood, which he cut from the door with the aid of Jack’s knife, and wrote upon the whitened wall of the cell—

“*Claude Duval escaped from Newgate, September 13th, 1778.*”

“Good,” said Jack.

“They may think that a piece of assurance,” said Claude; “but it is astonishing how people will take bold assertions for the truth. I will be bound to say, now, that there is not a turnkey in Newgate who reads that, but who will have his energies of pursuit quite crippled at the idea that it is so perfectly true, that any search for me will be useless.”

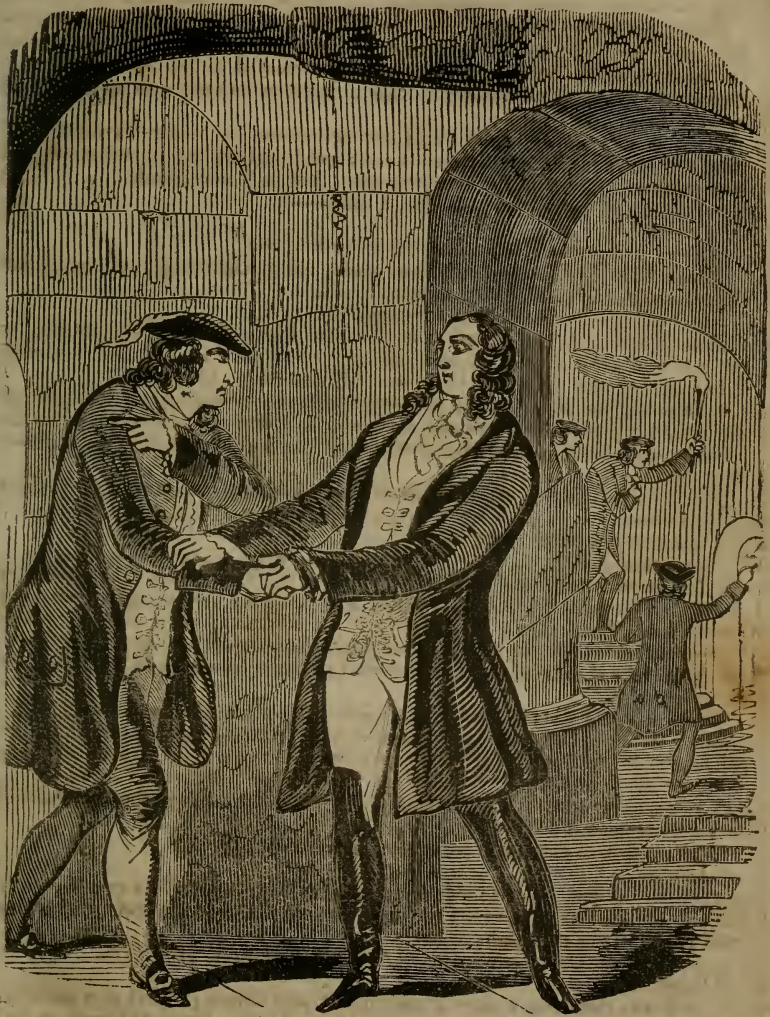
“It will have some effect,” said Jack. “But now, Claude, take this.”

He handed to Claude Duval one of the pistols with double barrels which he had brought with him, carefully loaded; and Claude at once placed it in his breast, saying as he did so—

“I hope I may not have to use it; but I am struggling for my life, and those who stop me to-night must be made to feel the importance of the stake for which I play. I am now ready, Jack.”

“Come on, then. Shall we make the cell door fast?”

“Yes—oh yes.”



CLAUDE ENCOURAGING JACK IN ONE OF THE PASSAGES OF NEWGATE.

The cell No. 4 was duly bolted, locked, and barred, so that if any visit of inspection were made to the long, narrow corridor from whence it opened, no one would suppose that it had been in any way disturbed. Jack being familiar with the route they were to take, led the way, and certainly two more determined or powerful men could hardly have been found than those who now stealthily made their way along the gloomy passages of Newgate.

"I think we shall see the daylight soon, Jack," said Claude.

"I'm sure of it," said Jack. "Push on."

## CHAPTER LXXI.

## THE OLD PRISON WELL.

THEY both paused as, with a faint sound, the clock of St. Sepulchre's came to their ears, proclaiming the hour of four.

"We have plenty of time," said Claude.

"Yes," replied Jack. "The night has seemed an amazingly long one to me. I thought it was at least an hour later, but we don't know yet what delays we may meet with on our route. This way, Claude, this way. In truth, I feel now as familiar with the various intricacies of Newgate, as though I had been its architect."

The small, short passage, with the two doors, leading, as it was now traversed, from the corridor of the cells to the little courtyard where the inspecting party had so lately appeared, was soon traversed, and the cool fresh air of the yard, fresh and delightful to Claude, in comparison to the close atmosphere of his cell, came in a most welcome gush upon his brow.

"I breathe again," he said.

"Ah, Claude, you shall breathe freer still than this, if we are but successful."

"Where else, then, upon our route does this yard lead to?"

"There are two other doors leading from it besides that which we shall leave it by and that by which we have entered. One of these doors leads to the interior of the gaol, and the other is a place which is marked in my plan as a deserted well-yard, where there are some cells which have gone to ruin and are not used."

"Is yonder door the one?"

"Yes; in the explanation appended to my plan there are the words 'never opened,' as regards that door."

"They will have to build a new Newgate, Jack, if they want to keep it secret from you, I see," said Claude.

"They will, indeed. I have not had much time to study it, but my knowledge of it shows only how quickly one may acquire anything when one really sets about it with a will."

"True, Jack, true; and now I presume this turnkey, whom you so much astonished, is our principal danger; in reality, if we pass him we shall be comparatively safe?"

"I think so, and I hope so."

"Well, then, let us push on, with the sincere hope that his superstitious fears have kept him chained to the spot upon which you left him."

"Which may or may not be," said Jack. "If he has recovered he has given an alarm, and then we are lost. Many men in my circumstances, and with such an object in view as I had, would not have scrupled to take his life; but I could not do it. No, I did think of it, but I could not bring my mind to do it."

"At which, let the consequences be what they may, I rejoice, Jack. Let me tell you, that if you had been the sort of man who, under the circumstances, would have deliberately murdered that turnkey, you would not have been the sort of man to have at all thought of undertaking your present noble expedition to save a friend. No, Jack, this is, if I may be allowed the term, a kind of congregation of thoughts and opinions, by which, if you know one important feeling or action of a man, you may almost with a certainty pronounce upon his line of conduct under other conditions."

"I have often thought the same myself," said Jack. "But we are close by the passage in which I left the man, and the most absolute caution must be the word with us."

It was true, indeed. They had both arrived at the end of that most critical passage in which Jack had encountered the turnkey, whose superstition had got so completely the better of his reason at seeing what he certainly very naturally, if

he admitted that there were such things as ghosts at all, took for the apparition of Sixteen-string Jack. Jack went first as they traversed this passage, for if the turnkey was still in his place, and at all dubious upon the matter, it might fairly enough be supposed that the second apparition of Sixteen-string Jack would have a great effect upon him, and probably induce a relapse of his fears. By far the greater probability, however, was, that he had been visited by the little party who were doing the duty of inspecting the prison, and in that case it was not at all to be supposed for a moment that he should have kept what had appeared to him a secret. If he had disclosed it then to the authorities of the gaol, one of two things must have been the consequence, either that the whole matter was believed to be a mere dream of the turnkey's, and no notice to be taken of it beyond laughing at him, or that it was thought there was matter in it worth attention, in which case Jack and Claude were likely enough to meet with rather a warm reception in the passage. As they crept on slowly, they soon began to feel assured that things were not, at all events, exactly as they would have ordered them if they had had the power of so doing. Jack turned, and laid his hand upon the arm of Claude Duval, as he said to him in the lowest possible whisper—

"Hush! there are voices."

"Where?" asked Claude, in the same tone.

"In advance."

"Well, Jack, I think I am calmer than you are, for great anxiety for my escape has rather shattered your nerves, so allow me, for both our sakes, to go on a little and listen."

"Do so."

Claude crept on so silently that it was quite impossible that any one could have heard him, and in this way he succeeded in approaching quite near enough to hear the dialogue that was proceeding, and which was evidently taking place around the turnkey who had been so much terrified by Jack.

"But I tell you I did see him," persisted the turnkey; "I saw him as plainly as I now see any of you."

"And you spoke to it?"

"I did; and another thing that makes me quite clear about it, too, is its mentioning, as I told you, about the glass of water that I handed to Sixteen-string Jack before he stepped into the cab to go to Tyburn. You may laugh at it, or make what joke of it you please, but I shall believe it to my dying day, for I cannot find the slightest room for any doubt about it."

"And you say this ghost promised to come again? That's the point, you know, for us to know."

"Yes, it did."

"Very well, then I promise myself the pleasure, if it does come, of making its ghostly head acquainted with a pair of slugs from my pistols. I have been in Newgate some time, and never heard of any ghosts till to-night, I'm sure."

"Perhaps, Master Watts," said the old turnkey, "you will come to hear more of this than you exactly like."

"Very well, it's time to cry out then. In the meantime here I wait."

"And so do I," said another, "there are three of us altogether, and I think we may consider ourselves a match for a ghost, at any rate."

Claude Duval had heard quite as much as it was necessary for him to hear; he felt that the danger of proceeding any further in that direction was immense, and he slowly and cautiously, as he advanced, made his way back to Sixteen-string Jack, and related to him word for word the conversation that had taken place.

"What's to be done?" said Jack.

"I really don't know," responded Claude. "What do you think of trying the regular gate in the Old Bailey; the risk of doing so is, I dare say, quite terrific, but it seems we have no choice."

"It does, indeed; it would be only over the dead bodies of three men that we could proceed by the wall I came, and that we are not the sort of persons to think

of. Well, Claude, come to the gate; if we meet no one as we go, there is a chance for us then."

"A forlorn one, Jack, but a forlorn and faint hope is infinitely better than none at all, so go we will."

Jack knew the way perfectly well, and he turned off to the right, and was proceeding without much thought of danger, when a broad flash of light came across their eyes, and caused them both to pause. At the same moment, in a strange, monotonous kind of way, a bell began to toll.

"What is the meaning of that?" said Claude.

"Lost! lost!" cried Jack.

"How do you mean? Come, come, Jack, do not give way in this manner."

"You are lost, Claude; that bell announces to the whole of the officials of the prison that a prisoner has escaped, or is attempting to do so, and has left his cell. There is no longer a hope; in the course of a few moments the whole place will be, as it were, under arms. Alas, my poor friend!"

Claude passed his hand across his brow, and, for a moment or two, felt confused and irresolute, but that feeling, along with the first start that Jack's doleful words had given him, soon passed away, and, starting like a man who had newly awakened from a fearful dream, he said—

"No—no—no!"

"What do you mean?" said Jack.

"That I won't give up so easily. Do you not hear, Jack, that footsteps are advancing?"

"I do, I do."

"A party of men is evidently then coming down the passage; if we do not choose to fall into their hands let us hasten ourselves. This way, Jack, this way."

"The way we came?"

"Yes. What other is open to us?"

"Oh, Claude, Claude, you will not again visit that cell?"

"Not in this life, Jack, you may depend. When I bade it adieu, I did so with that motive; I know that I shall be kept a close prisoner in chains until my execution, if I be captured now, after the attempt at escape; and that is a fate that, I think, death in any shape is infinitely preferable to. Jack, I do not intend to be taken alive."

"Nor I, Claude."

"Then we will die together, and I think it is highly probable we shall make the officials of Newgate remember this night's work as one of the most important in the chronicles of the Charter House. But we will not throw away a chance. Come on, Jack, come on. Good God! you seem paralysed. Oh, Jack, rouse yourself from that mental stupor, which I thought had left you for ever. Rouse yourself, Jack, I pray you."

"Oh, Claude—Claude!"

"Jack, my old friend, I implore you to rouse yourself. If you do not, you will sacrifice me, for I will perish by you. Let me implore you to shake off this blight which at times obscures your mind. Come, Jack, tell me that you are all right again."

"I—I am!"

"That will do; now what we have to do must be done boldly, or it must fail. Do you hear, Jack? We cannot, must not attempt to leave Newgate just now. It would be to court destruction if we were to attempt to do so."

"What shall we do, Claude? my mind leans upon yours. Only tell me what I am to do?"

The light that had so disagreeably surprised them now flashed more brightly, and the sound of advancing footsteps was much more plain than it had been before. Sixteen-string Jack still stood irresolute, and no doubt would have fallen a victim to the officers of the prison, had not Claude been with him at that most critical and important moment. Without saying another word, Claude held Jack tightly by the arm, and led him along swiftly and unresistingly by that way which they had

come. To have proceeded in any other direction would have been madness. Claude Duval, as he had followed Jack through the various passages leading from his cell to that spot upon which they had paused with a consciousness of so much danger, had been far from unmindful of the route which he had taken, and now he pursued it with unerring exactitude. There was no close pursuit, for the officers knew not where any intruder or partially escaped prisoner was to be found. They only knew that there was an alarm of something of the kind, or else the bell would not have been sounded, and that it was now their duty to leave no spot of the jail unvisited, so that Claude (when with Jack he reached the court-yard, from whence, in their progress, Jack had told him of several outlets) had fully time to think and to speak to his now somewhat reserved companion.

"Jack," he said, "I am certain that any attempt to leave Newgate now would be madness, but from the inscription upon the wall of my cell they will think me gone; and as for your coming, they know nothing of it at all, if we except the turnkey's story of a ghost. Our plan, then, is to find some hiding place, if we can until the present agitation and pursuit is over. Can you hit upon such a place? If we can hide until nightfall again, we shall have every chance of escaping by some means. Do you understand me, Jack?"

## CHAPTER LXXII.

### THE ESCAPE.

SIXTEEN-STRING JACK was slowly recovering from the shock that his mind had received, consequent upon the apparent failure of the means he had adopted to insure the escape of Claude from that gloomy home which held him in its stern embrace, and he could now, with something of a feeling of energy, listen and reply to Claude in that hour of their mutual danger.

"You are right, Claude," he said, "we have no resource but to hide, and there is no likelier place than that court-yard with the well in it, that in my plan is named as being never visited."

"Come on, then—come on; now, Jack, you are yourself again," said Claude, as he nimbly clasped Jack's arm. They now rapidly proceeded to that part of the prison which presented such a chance of concealment for them;

The great utility of the plan of Newgate, which Sixteen-string Jack had with so much difficulty obtained, was never more apparent than now, when probably, upon the promptness with which they could reach the place they had been speaking of, depended their safety from immediate arrest. Anything in the shape of incertitude, which would have led to wandering about the gloomy passages of the prison, would have been attended by more than danger, for capture would have amounted to a certainty. A very few minutes, however, with Jack's excellent local knowledge of the place, brought them to where they wished to be, and the door which led to the deserted place, and which, by its appearance, had evidently not been opened for a long time, was before them. The sounds of alarm from the other parts of the prison still came plainly upon their ears, although they felt that they had very considerably distanced the party of officers who, but a few moments before, had been so immediately in their vicinity.

"The great object in opening the door," said Jack, as he produced his skeleton keys, "will be to leave no marks of its having been meddled with."

"Certainly," said Claude; "but that, I fear, Jack, you will not be able to do; at all events, delay to us is death, so open it, I pray you, come what may, and that quickly, too. Are you calm and cool enough to do so, Jack?"

"Quite."

Jack soon proved nothing but the truth, for with great care he forced back the lock of the door, and then it yielded upon its rusty hinges with a dull creaking

sound, displacing no end of spiders' webs, for the long legged spinners had taken possession of that door, as though it had become their undoubted property, and no doubt were proportionally indignant at the manner in which they were now so rudely ejected. They both now paused for a few moments before passing that doorway, in order that they might come to some correct conclusion as to the whereabouts of their enemies. The sound of pursuit seemed to be dying away, rather than approaching, and it would appear as though, without the least suspicion of where the party was of whom they were in quest, the officers were ranging about the prison, seeking for some evidences of the mode of flight that had been adopted by Claude Duval. Indeed, it was then the fixed opinion of the officials that, by some means, he was out of Newgate. It was the hand-writing upon the wall which had produced almost as much sensation upon them as upon the monarch of old in his banquet halls.

"Close the door, Jack," said Claude. "Close the door. What a strange earthy smell there is in this place. Do you not remark it?"

"Yes. When the old Newgate that was burned down was built, this spot was a burying-ground within the walls. The architect of the new structure rejected it, and left it as it was. No doubt that strange smell partly proceeds from the former use to which the place was put, as well as from its confined and long disused situation."

Jack found rather more difficulty in locking the door again than he had found in opening it; but he did, however, succeed in doing so, after a few moments' striving, and then they both tried to pierce the darkness that was around them, in order to discover the precise localities of that spot, which might or might not be a place of safety for them.

"How very dark," said Claude.

"It is, indeed."

"I suppose, Jack, it would be imprudent to show a light here?"

"It would, Claude, for although there is no one here to see it, yet some reflected ray from our lantern, were we to light it, might find its way into some portion of the prison, and betray us. No, Claude, we must trust to our other senses here, if we cannot, amid the darkness, make that of seeing sufficiently available."

"Agreed, Jack; I think I can discern objects a little now."

"And I."

"A cloud or two, no doubt, has passed over the night sky, leaving it clearer than before, or else we are like the cats, getting so accustomed to the darkness that we can see in it almost as well as with a light."

"What do you see?"

"Some dark object about a dozen paces to the left, Jack."

"Oh, it is the old deserted well. It is described in my plan as an old fashioned codd and bucket well with a windlass, such as are fast disappearing even in the country places of England. It must be that which you see, Claude."

"I have no doubt about it. What is that?"

Suddenly one of the walls of the place in which they were had upon it a long streak of glittering light, which, after flickering for some few moments to and fro, disappeared, making, by the contrast that it had established, the darkness look much more profound than it had before been, as well as filling the minds of Jack and Claude with amazement to know whence it could have come. For the space of about a minute they both remained silent, and then Claude drawing close to Jack, said, in a cautious whisper—

"Danger!"

"Do you think so? Where did the light come from, Claude? Can you form any guess concerning it?"

"No, Jack, but I have a certainty. It came in from a wide crack at the top of your door, through which we have just passed, and I have no sort of doubt but that our enemies are upon the other side of it."

"Ho! ho!"



"Hush! Creep forward with me, for we ought both to be convinced. Creep forward with me, and let us listen."

Jack did this, and in another moment he and Claude had laid their ears close to the door, when they plainly heard upon the other side the murmur of whispered conversation. What was said, however, was uttered with so much caution, that not one word of it could be distinctly heard; so that our adventurers could gather nothing that would suffice to let them know what amount of information their enemies had, or if it were, after all, only suspicion upon which they were proceeding. But in either case the danger was of the most imminent description, and required from them the most prompt action to meet it, and counteract it, if indeed that, under the circumstances, were at all possible. At all events, they were not induced to succumb to adversity.

"Jack!"

"Yes, Claude."

"What are they doing there? No good. Let us go down the well."

"Down the what?"

"Down the well, Jack. Now, listen to me: those fellows upon the other side are fumbling with the lock of the door in a manner that quite convinces me they have not got the right key. That circumstance will delay them for some time, but not for very long. During that time, you and I must do something, Jack, and I think you do not intend to be taken?"

"No, Claude, not while there is one breath, or above one, left in my body."

"Very well; then the well is our only resource, Jack. It may be that there is water enough to drown us or not. At all events, we can but try; possibly it may never strike the officers that we should seek such a place of shelter, and then we may save ourselves; but if they do think of it, I am of opinion it will require more cool courage than any of them possess to come down to look for us. What say you, Jack—do you agree with me or not?"

"I do agree with you, Claude. I will descend with you at once. Come on; we are in desperate circumstances, and desperate chances in the shape of remedies must be the order of the day. Come on. But yet one moment. I think I can, without the observation of those on the other side of the door, increase the difficulty of undoing it. You have a ring upon your finger, Claude?"

"Oh, yes! I did not think of that. Fall to, Jack."

Sixteen-string Jack took the ring which Claude handed to him, and violently inserted it into the keyhole of the door, where it would be an insurmountable obstacle to any key or picklock acting upon the wards of the lock. Nothing now but downright force could suffice to open that door. It was almost questionable whether the object of merely looking into that court-yard, with the very forlorn hope of discovering there Claude Duval, would be sufficient to induce the officers to take so much trouble.

Suddenly, however, the state of doubt was put an end to; for a voice cried out without any caution at all, "Break the lock off. We cannot stay here all night."

It was the voice of the governor himself, who, while he felt that he should be obliged to tell the sheriffs that he had searched everywhere in the prison, yet did not by any means relish the job of doing so, at such an hour especially.

Now that the governor had set the example of abandoning all caution, the officers followed it, and one said, "There is something in the lock, sir; nobody can open it."

"But it must be opened. Fetch a mallet and chisel, one of you. We must look everywhere, or I shall not be able to make my report, although I think he is fairly gone."

"Courage!" whispered Claude to Jack; "our danger is not, after all, so great as I apprehended. Truly that announcement on the wall of my cell has been more implicitly believed than I should have supposed possible in such an atmosphere as this."

The court-yard in which they were was three-cornered. There was not throughout it the veriest shadow of a place of concealment besides the well, so

that if the door should really be forced open, of which there now seemed to be no doubt at all, the discovery of the fugitives became a positive certainty unless they were in the well, or the officers shut their eyes. Now the first of these conditions was probable enough, but the second by no means bore such an air, and, accordingly, Jack and Claude with stealthy steps made their way towards the well. They found, both by the feel and by observation in the faint night light, that the bucket was down in the well, and the cord all unwound from the windlass, conditions which they considered to be favourable, inasmuch as they could easily slide down by the cord to the depths below. It was certainly rather a nervous, uncomfortable thing to do, in the dark, too, and with such utter ignorance regarding the depth and construction of the place to which, upon a dependent cord, they were to make their way; but, as Claude said, truly the preponderance of evils was the other way, so he clutched the rope firmly, saying to Jack—

“I will descend first, and if there should be no possibility of reaching the bottom in consequence of the depth of water or otherwise, we must both keep to the rope until the officers have made the inspection of the court-yard.”

“Very well, Claude; but let me go first.”

“No, Jack, no. 'Tis for my sake you have come into such danger, when you might have remained in safety, and I shall take the first of such chances as these, at all events, upon myself. Say no more, Jack; I am resolved upon it, and here goes. Perhaps, after all, it is right enough, for the old well may be dry.”

“Be careful, Claude, be careful—I implore you be careful.”

“All's right,” said Claude, as he flung himself from the edge of the wall by the cord, “all's right, Jack—good bye!”

The cord snapped in a moment, and down went Claude from before the eyes of the agonised Jack to the bottom of the well. It would be quite impossible for any language to do justice to the state of Jack's feelings at this moment. He saw Claude cast his feet off the edge of the wall with something of a shudder, as though a presentiment of what was about to occur had come at that moment over him. He had heard the old rotten rope make a crack, and then part its threads with a sudden snap; and he had seen Claude, the dear companion of his life, disappear to what surely could be nothing but certain death. Oh, who could paint the desolation of Jack's soul at that dreadful moment? Great griefs come with a stunning effect upon the mind, and so, for a few moments, Jack stood upon the spot he occupied as still as though he had been turned to stone. Then, with a deep groan, and giving up all hope or desire for safety for himself, he fell in a strange huddled-up position, with his head resting upon his hands, at the side of the well.

“Lost, lost, lost!” was all he could say.

Alas, poor Jack! and is this, indeed, the reward of all your romantic devotion to your friend—is this to be the melancholy end of all your cogitations—all your plans and projects, and vast exertions! Is Claude, whom you love, to vanish from you to death in such a way; and are you never again to look upon that face, or hear that voice call you friend? Alas, again we say, poor Jack! If all this be so, then, indeed, will the bitterness of death be past. Better for you had you remained unrestored to that troublous existence, which had passed away from you, before that man of much skill, and no honesty, had resuscitated you to make you the victim you were for a time made.

“I will perish, too,” cried Jack, rising, “I will spring down the well.”

“Stop, Jack,” said the well-known voice of Claude, in an anxious whisper; “mind what you are about; it is only about five feet deep, and quite dry, and a lot of straw at the bottom of it.”

Jack's brain absolutely reeled at this most unexpected turn of fortune, and he had to hold by the framework of the old windlass to save himself from falling, while for the space of about half a minute he made sure that he should faint. All the blood seemed to have crowded round his heart.



THE PURSUIT AFTER CLAUDE AND JACK.

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

## THE SHERIFF.

CLAUDE, when he felt the rope of the old windlass cracking under his weight, certainly had made one desperate effort to reach again with his feet the brink of the well, but he failed in so doing, and at the moment that the last thread of the rope parted, he gave himself up for lost, and experienced all the mental agony inseparable from such a condition. The reason that, upon finding how much he was deceived as to the depth of the well, he had not upon the instant told Jack of

his safety, was simply that he was unable to do so. His nervous system had received a shock of no common severity, and the imagination for a few minutes so far got the better of reason and facts, that he lay upon the straw and hay, and rubbish, which was at the bottom of the shallow well, quite as incapable of movement as though he had fallen fifty feet instead of only five. It takes some time before a man can positively assure himself of safety after he has previously assured himself of something very much indeed the reverse. During the period, then, that it took Claude Duval to recover, poor Jack suffered all the mental agony to which we have alluded, without having the power to depict it in absolute words, and now that he, Claude, had spoken to him, Jack, it was his turn to be astonished at getting no answer, for Claude did not, at the moment, exactly think or contemplate that joy ties the tongue sometimes as effectually as any other sudden shock. At length he got alarmed.

"Jack," he said, "what is the matter with you? Why don't you speak?"

"Yes, Claude, yes," was all Jack could say.

"Oh, I understand," said Claude. "You had given me up, Jack?"

"I had, indeed."

"Oh, you should not have done that, Jack, I begin myself to think I have as many lives as a cat. I could not have fallen upon any feather-bed that would have been more soft, and really more comfortable to the bones, than the mass of straw and hay and other matters in this place. It is a puzzle to me, completely."

"So it is to me," said Jack. "But I care for nothing, now that I know you are alive, Claude. Oh, I shall never be able to tell you what I felt when I saw you go."

"And I, Jack, shall never be able to tell you what I felt when I felt myself going."

"No doubt, Claude, it must have been most horrible."

"Such a sensation once in a life is quite enough, or rather this, it is once too many."

"It is, Claude. But hark!"

As he spoke, they both heard distinctly the sound of hammering at the door leading to where they were, which was sufficiently suggestive of the fact of the arrival of the mallet and chisel, which the governor had sent for a short time before. It was pretty evident that the door would soon yield to the persuasive influence of the blows that were given to it by a vigorous hand.

"Now we are lost," said Jack.

"Not at all," said Claude,— "not at all."

"But what shall we do?"

"I will tell you. Come down here, by me, Jack. There is soft rubbish enough at the bottom of this place to cover us up most completely; and that is the only chance we have. The officers may be content with a very cursory observation of this place, in which event we are perfectly safe by covering ourselves up in the straw. Always recollect, Jack, that there is one thing in our favour, and that is, that they don't expect to find anything here at all, you know."

"I admit that, Claude," whispered Jack; "and I likewise see that what you advise is the only thing that can be done, so the sooner we do it the better. Mind yourself, Claude—here I am."

"All's right,—jump."

Down jumped Jack, and found indeed, as Claude had said, that the bottom of the well was same feet thick of hay and straw, although how it got there was quite a mystery to him, as well as to Claude. However, they were not disposed to waste precious time in conjectures respecting a matter which, let it have occurred how it might, was quite a subject for congratulation to them both.

"We must not be very particular," said Claude, "whether we are smothered or not, so long as we elude the officers; so come, Jack, let us burrow down in this straw and hay, as far as it will by any means allow us so to do. Hark! hark!"

"I hear," said Jack; "they have broken down the door at last, and will be in

the court-yard now before we can count four. Now, Claude, I think we shall do. How do you feel?—comfortable, I hope?”

“All the better for finding you in good spirits, Jack. I think we are as completely hidden as the babes in the wood, when the birds—so says the myth—covered them with alder leaves to get rid of them.”

“Hush!—hush! They come, now—they come now! Do not speak or move again, for our lives’ sakes.”

They were now perfectly still. The hay and straw was about two feet above them, and, save that the surface had rather a tossed and tumbled appearance, no one would for a moment have suspected that any one was there. It was quite a pity that they had no means of righting the disordered surface of the rubbish that was above them. But it was not to be thought of, and in a few moments they were completely engaged by listening to the conversation of the officers and the governor, who all entered the yard in rather a tumultuous manner, several of them speaking together.

“Silence!—silence!” said the governor, “we shall do no good with all this noise. Hold up the lanterns.”

Several lanterns were held up at arm’s length, and they sufficed to shed sufficient light over the place to make every portion of it clearly visible, but yet sufficiently visible to prove that no one was there crouching in any corner for concealment. A pause ensued while the lanterns were thus held up.

“Oh, of course, there’s no one here,” said the governor; “how should there be?”

“Yes,” said an officer, “it was all very well to come here, because we were going over the prison; but if I might presume to have an opinion, I should say that it’s likely enough Claude Duval is on the western road by this time, and has cried ‘Stand and deliver!’ to some one with a sufficiently heavy purse to make it worth his while.”

“I don’t know that,” said a third, “how did he leave the prison, if he have left it? Show me his mode of leaving, and I’ll be among the first to say good-bye to him, but I am not going exactly to take Duval’s own word that he has left old Newgate so cleverly. Out of his cell he may and has got, but there’s a fire as well as a frying-pan.”

“Oh, very well, Mr. Long,” said the governor; “we all know your tact in these things, that is your opinion is it? Very well, Mr. Long, as you think that Claude Duval is not out of Newgate——”

“Which is just what I do think,” said Long, rather unceremoniously interrupting the Governor.

“Well, then, we will look in impossible places for him.”

“The well, for instance, there,” said Long.

Both Jack and Claude at these words gave themselves mentally up for lost. It seemed to them quite impossible now that anything could prevent a thorough investigation of the well. They dared not speak to each other, even in the faintest whisper, for fear of being overheard, but, with each a double barrelled pistol in their hands, they prepared themselves for the worst, with a fixed and thorough determination that they would neither of them be taken alive by the officers, who would so glory in their defeat. The light flashed from wall to wall of the old deserted court-yard, and when the officers surrounded the old well, they looked like a parcel of wild religionists coming to celebrate some abstruse ceremony at that still hour, when no eye save their own and those of the Eternal could look upon their actions.

“I never was here before,” said the governor, “although I have resided in Newgate now for five years. Is it really a well?”

“Yes,” said Long, the officer. “I have heard speak of it. There was some underground communication between it and some vaults, it is said, that ultimately led out into a cellar in Newgate-market, and that was the reason bricks and dry rubbish were shot into it, until it was nearly filled up, they say. You see there’s a lot of straw there now.”

"And how came straw and hay there, I wonder?" said the governor. "It don't seem a likely place for such matters."

"Why, I have heard," said Long—who, to Claude Duval's apprehension, seemed to know a great deal too much—"I have been told, that many years ago, when the sheriffs visited Newgate, their horses were always turned into this yard, and that in one corner of it there was constantly kept a quantity of fodder, which may account for the hay and straw that from time to time have collected in the old well."

"Oh, very likely. Very likely," said the governor.

There was a pause of some few minutes' duration now, after which one of the officers said—

"Well, I don't see anything."

"Are you speaking to the well?" said Long.

A general laugh resulted, which somehow did not please the governor, who said rather tartly—

"Mr. Long, you seem to know or to suspect more than any one else does in this affair. Pray take your own course, and you will oblige me. If you make any discovery, of course it will render it very much to your advantage with the sheriffs, but you know all that, I dare say. You may get into the well if you like."

"No, thank you, sir."

"Then what do you want to do?"

"Ahem! only to try an experiment. I have got here my pistols, loaded with a pair of bullets each, and I only intend to fire them into the old well, that is all. It is a fancy of mine, in which I hope I may be indulged."

"Oh, certainly."

It was evident that Mr. Long had his suspicions, but nothing more, that Claude Duval might be hidden in the well, and he thought that if he had been there, and any one had proposed firing a pair of pistols into it, loaded with a couple of balls each, he would certainly have jumped out and given himself up. He was rather disappointed there, as all remained perfectly quiet as before he had made his speech.

"Very well," he said, in a loud voice. "I shall now proceed to fire into the well, just for the fun of the thing."

All remained perfectly still, and the governor gave a stout laugh, as much as to say—"Well, this, in my opinion, is rather absurd. I don't know what you expect."

Long was getting very much nettled at the grin that his brother officers had upon their faces at the great defeat of his cleverness. It was rather in anger than with any other feeling that he drew one his pistols from his pocket, and presented it down the old well.

"You are more fond of throwing away powder and ball than I should be," said the governor.

"I don't believe now," said Long, "that it was of any use, but it was worth the trial. However, as I said I would have a shot into the old well, I will do so, and here goes, come of it what may."

Bang! went the pistol. The officers hardly felt interested in the result of the shot, so convinced were they that Long's cunning for once had completely failed him; and when the smoke cleared away, and everything was as quiet as before, they were not at all surprised, nor in truth was he, for he considered that the threat ought to have been amply sufficient to disclose to light any one who had sought refuge down the old well. Mr. Long reasoned like many of his betters namely, upon what he himself would do under certain circumstances, and then concluded that that was just what everybody else would do. A very popular mistake that of yours, Mr. Long.

"Perhaps you are satisfied now, Mr. Long," said the governor, "that there is no one in the old well. Are you?"

"Yes, I am, sir," said Long; "but still I thought it was quite necessary to try

the experiment. I once got a prisoner out of a coffin by the same means : at the last moment, just as I was about to fire, up he jumped and gave up."

"But if the prisoner had not been in the coffin he could not have jumped up," said one of the officers, gravely; "and in the present case nothing will convince me that Claude Duval is not at liberty. I feel as sure of that, as that we shall have him again some day. Everybody has his time, though, and his, I think, has not yet come, that's all."

"Well, come along, then," said the governor; "I am tired of the night air if you are not."

It was evident to all that the governor was not only not sorry at the supposed escape of Claude Duval, but that he viewed with anything but eyes of favour any exertions that were made to capture him again. Why he did so was, after the scene that had taken place in court, at Markham Brereton's trial, sufficiently apparent. A few moments more and the court-yard, with its old well, was in total darkness and silence. It seemed, for a few minutes, as though it would be years again before a human voice would awaken the echoes of that old, deserted, and most melancholy place. But for all that, there were living, beating hearts close at hand, who would soon banish desolation and silence from that spot;—it was not quite sacred to the worms and beetles of Newgate.

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

BARNES COMMON.

ALL was still as death itself for the space of about a quarter of an hour, and then a faint voice spoke. It was the voice of Sixteen-string Jack, but weak and trembling. Under any other circumstances Claude could scarcely have said that it was his old friend's tones that smote his ears.

"Claude, Claude, speak to me, if it be but one word, to tell me you are not hurt."

"No, Jack, no. Are you?"

"Thank—God—I——"

"Speak again—speak again. What would you say, Jack? You do not know how much you alarm me by breaking off in such a way. For Heaven's sake, Jack, let me hear your voice again!"

All was still. No voice responded to this earnest appeal of Claude's, and, quite unable longer to control his impatience to know what was the matter with Jack, he threw off the heap of rubbish that had so well concealed him in the well, and again cried, as he struggled to his feet—

"If you can speak to me, Jack, and it is only one word, it will be the most acceptable favour you could ever do me in all your life."

There was no answer. In perfect desperation Claude felt about him until his hand rested upon a face. It must be Jack's; but it was cold, and the damp of death appeared, to Claude's imagination, to be upon it.

"My poor friend," he cried, "my best, bravest, and most devoted Jack, they have killed thee, have they? Oh, how much rather would I that the bullet had found its way to my heart than to yours! I am more desolate without thee, Jack, than as if all the world had slipped from me. I scarcely know if my own Cicely would have been a greater loss to me than you are, my old and true-hearted comrade."

Claude had become regardless of his own safety now, and he sat upon the edge of the old well, and covering up his face with both his hands, he wept like a child. There came no sound upon his ears but the mournful echo of his own deep sobs. He felt how truly alone he was. But this gush of warm natural feeling was not

likely to last long with such a man as Claude Duval. After the first effort of grief for his old friend, indignation against those who had taken his life became the uppermost feeling in his mind.

"Wait awhile, Mr. Long," he said; "wait awhile. You and I will meet again in this world yet, when I shall be able to pay you for your wonderful cleverness in firing into the well, and the payment shall be of a character that I doubt not you will consider to be much more than ample."

These thoughts of avenging Jack's death recovered Claude from the deep dejection into which he had fallen, and he soon set about taking active steps for placing himself in a very different position to what he then was. First of all, though, he determined upon taking a last look at the face of Jack, and for this purpose he took from his pocket some phosphorus matches and prepared a light, by the aid of which he stooped down into the well and removed the straw and other rubbish from off Jack. His first sight of his old friend horrified him, for blood was upon his face.

"Oh! Jack, Jack!" he said, "hear me, thou good spirit, and I will swear——"

"Claude," said Jack, "is it really you?"

Had a thunderbolt suddenly fallen at Claude's feet, he could not have been more thoroughly astounded than at this most unexpected incident. So firm had been his persuasion, he knew not why, that Jack was dead, that he had never thought of the possibility of his only being in a state of syncope or swoon; but now that truth, for a truth it was, flashed across his mind in a moment.

"He lives! he lives!" said Claude. "Oh, yes! he lives! Speak again, Jack!"

"Where are we?"

"In the deserted well in the old court-yard of Newgate. But tell me, where are you hurt, Jack, and how do you feel?"

"Faint! faint!"

"And I cannot aid you—not even a drop of water."

"There's a small flask of brandy in my left-hand pocket, Claude. The rascal hit me somewhere in the shoulder, and pain, or loss of blood, made me faint away, I think. Oh, I remember it all now."

"Do you?"

"Yes, yes! Oh! Claude, we have much to do—I shall now only encumber you, and so, Claude—so you must now make up your mind to leave me."

"If I do, may I be d—d."

"Hush! hush!—not so loud. The brandy has revived me, Claude. If you could manage to tie a handkerchief or two round my wound, I really think I might move. But be careful of the matches, Claude. Here is the lantern; it will be better, I think."

Claude lit another phosphorus match, and by its light he saw the small lantern, which he soon ignited; so that he was able to throw a good ray of illumination upon Jack, as he now sat half up in the well, with his hand upon his wounded shoulder.

"Courage, courage!" said Claude. "You will do well yet, Jack. Don't you think, now, that the worst danger is really over?"

"I hope so, Claude."

"Then—then, I think, by making this one handkerchief up into a kind of ball and binding it tightly down over your wound with the other, that I shall stop the bleeding for you. How do you feel, Jack?"

"Much better—much better. But, Claude, you must make me one promise."

"A hundred, if you like. What is it?"

"If I faint again at any moment which is critical as regards your escape, you must promise that you will not let me be an impediment, Claude."

"Oh, Jack—Jack!"

"What is the matter, Claude?"

"Nothing, only I find that we are not quite so well acquainted with each other as we ought to be—that's all, Jack; but say no more. There, you can stand very well, and you have, I see, the use of both your arms, notwithstanding the wound"



in your shoulder ; all's right. Do you think you can really climb a rope yet ? Oh, yes—you smile. Come, that's a good sign, at all events, Jack. Now lean upon me, old friend, and out we go from Newgate. Why, this affair will be spoken of yet, and the way Claude Duval and his friend Jack escaped from Newgate will form many a comment. Come, come, all's right. Why, you are as well as ever, now !”

“Nearly, Claude ; but we have much to do yet, you know.”

“Of course, we are not dead, and in this world, Jack, there is always something to do.”

After Jack had walked a little, and taken another dip at the brandy, he felt so much better, that he got quite in good spirits, and said—

“Now, Claude, we must pass the turnkey, who was frightened at my appearance before. Most likely he is alone again now, as the alarm has subsided, and I am quite convinced that that will be a safer course than making any attempt by the front entrance, although a man is on the look-out whose senses are a little shattered.”

“I think so too, Jack. Let us proceed at once ; this state of suspense is worse than anything. I will follow you, but not so closely as to be seen.”

They easily made their way now through the various doors which before they had passed, and when they were tolerably near the narrow stone vaulted passage, in which the turnkey sat, Jack thought of a plan of increasing the supernatural character of his appearance, which Claude, when he saw the effect, admitted did so considerably, and yet it was very simple. It merely consisted in placing the small lantern they had at the back of Jack's neck, so that while it, as the source of the light, was completely hidden, the effect produced was as though he were walking in a mysterious kind of halo of light emanating from himself in faint rays all round him. Jack adopted, too, a solemn gliding movement, and thus slowly advanced. Now, the terrified turnkey had not left his post, but he had got another man to stay with him, and they were both sitting close together, whispering and talking quite mysteriously about all the well-authenticated ghost-stories they had ever heard in all their lives from time to time—a theme certainly not over well adapted to calm their fears. They had just got into the thick of such an ill-timed conversation, when the turnkey glanced in the direction of the passage over his comrade's head, and his eyes dilated to an enormous extent.

“What's the matter ?” said the man.

“Oh ! oh ! oh !”

The man jumped up and looked behind him, for his back had been turned towards the passage, and there, sure enough, to his horror, he saw a figure gliding towards him, lighted by no seemingly earthly light. Indeed, to his terrified apprehension, the figure seemed to move in a strange and awful kind of luminous cloud. Terror for a few brief moments seemed to choke his utterance, as well as to freeze up all capacity to fly. He stood like one transfixed by some magic spell, and slowly on came Jack. It was by a frightful effort that the man at length uttered a shriek, and broke the fascination of the spell that bound him. He then made a rush, in which he upset his comrade, nor stopped until he had darted down a cross passage, and disappeared. As for the turnkey himself, he lay upon the floor without sense or motion. All was accomplished that fear could accomplish, and Jack turned, and beckoned to Claude, who was considerably in the rear, to come on. This Claude was not slow in doing, and in one minute more, the barrier which they had considered to be the most formidable obstacle to them was safely passed.

“We are saved !” said Jack.

“Nay, nay,” said Claude, “be not over sanguine. The walls of Newgate yet encompass us. Do not say we are saved yet.”

“On, on !”

Jack hurried forward, and to his great joy, he found as he reached them, that his ropes had not been discovered by the authorities of Newgate. If they could get into the attic from where he had come, all would now be well.

"Claude," he said, "you will be upon the road again in a few hours."

"Think you so? Where is my gallant horse? Alas, I shall miss it, indeed!"

"You know the cottage on Barnes Common, where we have had shelter more than once?"

"Well, well?"

"There, then, is your horse, and it is there that I wish you to get at once, as soon as we are free of Newgate. Come on—climb, Claude, climb the rope, and I will follow you quickly."

"No, Jack, you are weak from your wounds, and I have made up my mind that you shall go first when safety is before and danger behind. It is of no use your expostulating with me, Jack. Follow you now I will, or go not at all."

Jack knew too well the determined character of Claude, when he spoke as he now did, to attempt to argue the point with him, so, as time was precious, he ascended the rope first. Claude followed him closely. They met with no obstruction, and reached the walls of the prison, exactly opposite to Jack's window, in safety.

"Save yourself," said Jack, "I faint again. The handkerchief has fallen from the wound, and I—I bleed—I fear to death."

"No—no."

He fell at Claude's feet insensible.

It took Claude but one moment's thought, and then a moment's action, to remedy this disaster. Lifting Jack in his arms, he placed him upon his back, and tied his hands together round his (Claude's) neck, and then he launched himself upon the rope. It vibrated and creaked beneath the double weight fearfully. But the passage was short, and in the space of half a minute, Claude, with his burthen, rolled through the attic window on to the floor.

"There are the cats again," said a voice; "I thought they'd come. Hist! hist! Oh, drat you, I say! Hist! hist!"

## CHAPTER LXXIV.

### RUE AND CRY.

CLAUDE heard these odd sounds with some degree of alarm, for Jack had told him that the attic window was closed, and quite untenanted, except by himself. The most profound darkness was in the attic, so that he could see nothing, and the only course he could bring to bear upon the whole affair now was that of remaining silent.

"Drat the cats!" said the voice again, which was that of a female; "drat the cats, I say! Who is to get a wink of sleep, I wonder? I wish some people, when they go out, would be so good as to shut their windows."

Claude now began to have an apprehension of what was the matter, and he went to the attic door in order to try if it were really quite fast. It was so.

"So far, so good," he said. "And now, Jack, we must not remain long in this place; but all will depend upon the capacity you have to move about."

He soon lit a match, and, by its flickering glare, he saw a candle ready for lighting upon a table, and in a moment the attic was sufficiently illumined for Claude to see well about him. He carefully closed the curtain over the window, and again satisfied himself that the door was fast. Then he raised Jack from the floor, and placed him upon the bed that was in one corner. A very superficial examination of Jack's condition sufficed to let Claude see that the bandages had come off his wound, and that it had again bled freely, which, no doubt, had been the immediate cause of his fainting; but now Claude was in a better condition to apply such surgical knowledge as he possessed to Jack's case. In the course of



THE CAPTURE OF SIXTEEN STRING JACK.

ten minutes, he had successfully again stopped the bleeding, and bound up the wound in such a way that nothing but the very roughest usage indeed could dislodge it. He then dashed cold water in Jack's face, and soon had the pleasure of seeing him open his eyes, and look about him.

"Newgate?" said Jack.

"No, the attic," said Claude. "All's right."

"Oh God! can it be?"

"It is, Jack. Make yourself comfortable now, old friend. We have done

what so many have tried to do and failed—escaped from Newgate, and in a manner, too, that will be remembered.”

“Yes, Claude, those words that you wrote upon the wall of your cell were prophetic.”

“They were. But now comes the most important question of all, Jack. Do you feel yet strong enough to move?”

“Oh, yes, yes. I am convinced the ball from Long’s pistol went quite through my shoulder, breaking no bones, for a wonder; so I shall soon be better. But, Claude, the safest and the best course in the world would be to leave me here.”

“No, it would not, Jack, for then I should have to stay with you. By some means or other, I will get you to the cottage at Barnes. There I shall have no objection to leave you, because there I know you will be kindly treated, for your own sake as well as for mine. Now don’t say a word about it, Jack. It shall be so. Can you walk?”

“Oh, yes, yes.”

He rose from the little bed, but, to his great concern, Claude saw that he reeled a little in his gait; and there was no mistaking the fact, from the expression of his face, that he was in very great pain, although he would not vex Claude by owning that such were the case. But still, what could be done? There was really no help for it. Leave that place they must, and that too immediately, for by the morning, no doubt, all the particulars and mode of the escape from Newgate would be known, and then they would be caught in the attic, like rats in a hole. Claude sat upon the side of the bed in deep thought. A hackney coach could easily be got to take them to Barnes, but then, by its means, nothing would be easier, when the hue-and-cry was raised upon the morrow, to learn the route they had taken; so that would not do. To be sure, Claude might take a coach, and then, when they got out of town a little way, dispose of the coachman, and drive the vehicle himself the rest of the distance. But that was what he did not like to do. It was making war against the poor, and that he had not stooped to yet. But still, something must be done, and that quickly too, for the morning was coming on apace. He started from his thoughtful position by the side of the bed, and said—

“Jack, we must trust to good fortune in this matter entirely. We must go into the streets at once, and see what fortune will do for us in the way of providing some vehicle for conveying us to Barnes. Come, lean upon me. This atmosphere is full of danger.”

Jack suppressed carefully whatever feelings of pain and weakness he might have; and, assisted by Claude, he managed to descend the stairs pretty well. They met with no sort of obstruction, for, with the exception of the old woman who had given utterance to such anathemas against the cats, there was no one but themselves stirring in the house at that hour. Claude carefully removed the fastenings from the street-door, and in another moment they both stood in the street, and felt the cool morning air blowing upon their faces. It was a grateful feeling to both of them, for, to their perceptions, although not many feet distant, the air within the prison had a very different flavour to the air without; and this was not altogether fancy.

“What’s that?” said Jack, as a carriage of the most gaudy description suddenly flashed by them, and was soon lost in the dim distance at the farther end of the street.

Before Claude could make any reply, another vehicle passed, and then another.

“I can understand what this means,” said Claude: “a civic entertainment has taken place, and the mirth and the feeding have been practised until this hour. The guests are returning, you see, Jack.”

“That’s it, no doubt,” said Jack. “Ah, Claude, one of those equipages would soon take us to Barnes.”

“Indeed, yes, Jack; but they would rather condescend to carry us to Newgate. But come this way, Jack. I think we are safer in a crowd and bustle, than in the lonely solitude of this place; and if we can get to the river-side by Southwark, who

knows but I may get hold of a boat? I shall not be very scrupulous, Jack, in borrowing one for this occasion."

"It is a good thought, Claude."

Jack leant upon Claude's arm, and they proceeded together along Newgate-street to Cheapside. As they went they met more and more evidence of the fact that the night had been devoted to a civic feast, for carriages were dashing about, and now and then some gorgeously appareled footman with links in his hand crossed the roadway, jesting and laughing. By the time our hero got to King-street, he found that at Guildhall the entertainment had taken place. We say had, for there were unmistakable evidences that it was breaking up.

"Sir Thomas Grampus's carriage!" roared one. "Way for the sheriff. Links, here—links. Constables! Clear the way for my Lord Mayor!"

The trampling of horses feet and the flaring of links, made up a scene of great confusion, and in the midst of it a footman laid hold of Claude by the arm, and said—

"*Fallow—a—a—hold them osses eds, a—a—while oi look for me leday—oi—a—a—fallow.*"

"Certainly, sir," said Claude. "Anything else?"

A splendid carriage was close to the footway, and a pair of greys were stamping in their impatience to be gone. The coachman was refreshing the inward man at a public-house close at hand, not expecting to be wanted quite so soon, and the footman suddenly found it his duty to go and escort his lady, whoever she was, to the carriage, since, from the crowd and rush of the vehicles, the carriage could not be brought to her. Our private information informs us that this was the carriage of the Lord Mayor's chaplain, as greasy a hypocrite as chaplains usually are, and that his lady was one of those sweet specimens of female humanity, who modestly imagine that the world was specially made for them and their convenience. After this, the sympathies of our readers will not be violently excited if some little inconvenience falls to the lot of the chaplain and his amiable lady. Jack looked up at the box of the carriage, and so did Claude. It was empty. The footman had darted away with a link in his hand, never doubting for a moment but that the person he had ordered so to do would mind the carriage until the fat coachman could bustle out of the public-house.

"Jack," said Claude.

"Yes. Yes."

"Get in."

"What? in—the—the—carriage, do you mean, Claude? Good God! don't you think that such a step as that would be rather—too—too—bold?"

"Get in."

Claude clambered up to the box and seized the reins—Jack opened the door of the carriage, and at once dashed in among its soft luxurious cushions. One touch to the impatient greys, and away they dashed at a smart trot down Cheapside. Claude drove as coolly as possible, and Jack lay at the bottom of the carriage, scarcely sensible in his fright of where he really was. The rapidity and daring boldness with which this action was done constituted its safety. The least appearance of timidity or irresolution would have ruined all, but Claude was so self-possessed, that nobody thought of looking to see if he had livery on or not. If they had looked for that insignia of his genuineness, in a little while they would have been deceived, for there was a large great coat, with about a quire of capes, upon the box, which he stopped at the corner of Newgate-street to put on. Then off he dashed again at a rattling pace. Truly, Claude did not spare the parson's greys. He dashed down Snow Hill, and then he began to ask himself which would be the best way to go to Barnes, for thither he determined to give the horses a trot. Hammersmith Bridge had not then been thought of, but old Battersea Bridge was there, and Claude thought that his best plan would be to drive either on to that, or cross old Westminster, and so take his way to Barnes. He trotted down the Strand while he was considering, and as he passed Northumberland-house, he was for the moment much startled by feeling a touch

upon his arm. Upon starting half round, he found it was Jack, at the front window of the carriage.

“ Oh, Claude, is it possible ?” said Jack. “ Can it really be that you have got clear off with the carriage ?”

“ It looks like it,” said Claude.

“ And it was done for my sake ?”

“ Not much merit in that, Jack. How much have you done for my sake ? But tell me, shall we go by Westminster to Barnes, or by Battersea ?”

“ Westminster, Claude. You will excite less attention.

“ Be it so then. Now, Jack, you sit down gently and comfortably, and don't make yourself at all uneasy. All will be well. No one will think of interfering with us now, and if they did, I think they would repent of it in a short time.”

Having determined now his route, Claude put the horses to better speed, and they went on with the carriage as though it had been a child's cart behind them. The old bridge of Westminster—old then—was passed over, and the vehicle made its way into that den of houses that flank the river upon the Surrey side, where squalid poverty and brazen vice seem to be ever alike at home. Claude would have liked much to know how Jack was, but while they were in the vicinity of houses he did not like to pause and descend from the box, so he drove on until gradually the open country began to show itself. The fresh morning air brought out the fragrance of flowers, and although a chilly dew was upon all things, there was an invigorating feel in the atmosphere, which to Claude, after his incarceration in Newgate, was specially delightful. There was not the least appearance of pursuit, and indeed there can be no doubt but that, as good fortune would have it, Claude was out of sight with the chaplain's carriage before it was missed, and its disappearance was involved in perfect mystery. We need not trace the whole of Claude's route to Barnes : suffice it to say, that when he got within a mile of the place of his destination, he stopped the horses and alighted.

“ Jack,” he said, “ how are you now ?”

“ Much better,” was the cheering response. “ I have scarcely felt the fatigue of the journey at all, Claude, since we got off the stones.”

“ That is all right. Now, can you walk a mile, think you ?”

“ Two, Claude, if needs be.”

“ That's right. I do not wish to bring this vehicle so near to Barnes, that it shall become a sign-post to direct people where we are ; so I propose leaving it close at hand here, and giving the horses their liberty. Here are plenty of fine meadows for them to graze in, and they will enjoy themselves exceedingly. Hold fast a moment, Jack, where you are.”

Claude drove the carriage into a road-side field, and then some distance along behind a tall hedge and broad ditch. He then once more alighted, and having taken the horses out, he freed them of all harness, and sent them capering away by giving each a touch with the whip. He then, by the assistance of Jack, finally upset the carriage into the ditch, where it lay, with so little of it visible, that it could not be seen from the road, and so was likely, for some time at least, to escape any observation.

“ Now for our friend at Barnes !” cried Claude. “ Lean upon me, Jack, and put the best foot foremost, for the daylight, you see, has already made some progress, and the sooner we now get housed the better it will be for both of us.”

Scarcely had these words passed Claude's lips, when he heard the distant sound of horses' feet upon the road behind him. Some one was evidently coming on at a quick rate.

“ An enemy ?” said Jack, inquiringly.

“ We shall soon see. Walk slow, Jack, I have the pistol you gave me all ready, but I may as well look to the priming, at all events.”

Jack looked back as Claude examined the priming of his pistol ; but an exclamation from Jack interrupted him.

“ Good God, Claude, who do you think that is ?”

“ Eh ?—Who ?”

"Long, the officer; I know him well by sight—I should know him among a thousand. 'Tis he—'tis he, Claude; but what, in the name of all that's horrible, brought him down this road?"

"Information of some sort, you may depend, Jack. But we are one too many for him. Ah! there are three other horsemen behind him. To the hedge, Jack, to the hedge. Don't expose yourself to the officers. This way! this way!"

Claude seized Jack by the arm, and they both darted through the hedge. It would appear, however, that Long, the officer, who rode a little in advance of three men whom he had with him, had seen the fugitives, for he suddenly cried out—

"Come on, and seize that man who has just crept through the hedge. Take him dead or alive. He may be our man. Quick! quick!"

These words, of dire import as they were, came plainly enough to the ears of Claude and Jack, and they now saw nothing before them but to sell their lives as dearly as possible. But Mr. Long, after coming up to within about twenty paces of the hedge, somehow or other hung back. How strange and true it is that all great talkers are cowards!

"Come on! come on!" he said to the men he had with him, "come on, my brave fellows. You shall be well rewarded, I will take care of that. Come on now, at once; don't be afraid!"

"We ain't afraid," said one of the men in a loud voice, laying an emphasis on the "we." "We ain't afraid, Mr. Long, I assure you."

Stung by this reproach, Long did approach nearer to the hedge, and taking a pistol from the holster of his saddle, he said—

"By all that's sacred I will fire into the hedge if you don't come out directly, whoever you are!"

Claude Duval had in his hand the pistol that Jack had given him, and he took a careful aim at Long. He whispered to Jack—

"This fellow has had one shot at us, and it is fairly my turn now."

On the instant, then, he pulled the trigger, and when the smoke cleared away, the saddle of Long's horse was empty, and that voracious and notable officer lay upon the ground, with a small hole in his forehead that was quite sufficient to let out his modicum of life. The other men rode up instantly.

"Claude," said Jack, "if you don't be still and let me have my own way now, I swear to you, by the memory of all our friendship, if you are taken, I will blow my own brains out."

"Good God! what do you mean?"

"You shall see in a moment, Claude, what I mean," said Jack. "See, there are no less than seven men on horseback!"

## CHAPTER LXXV.

### THE RESCUE.

SIXTEEN-STRING JACK was quite right. There were now upon the spot, immediately in front of the hedge, no less than seven mounted men, for more followed hard upon the track of the three who had been with Long. Resistance was madness, but yet Claude was not prepared for what Jack was really about to do.

"Promise me, Claude," said Jack.

"But——"

"Then here goes—good bye!"

Jack placed the muzzle of the pistol in his mouth, and Claude had just time to clasp his hand and say—"I promise anything, Jack."

"Good. Remain quiet here, then, Claude, and remember that you have now

passed your word, which to me you never yet broke. We may meet again some day. God bless you."

Before, then, Claude could say another word, or move a finger to prevent him, Jack burst out of the hedge in front of the horsemen, and cried in a loud voice—

"Further resistance is useless against so many—I give myself up."

The men had pistols in their hands, and at sight of Jack, one in his hurry fired, but the bullet went wide of its mark, and then two of the others flung themselves off their steeds, and took hold of their prisoner roughly.

"I am wounded," said Jack.

"Who are you?" cried one, "who are you? Are you Claude Duval, you vagabond?"

"I am no vagabond; I wonder that you should not see at once that I don't belong to your family; you must be a fool."

"I'll fool you," said the fellow, and he raised his hand to strike Jack, but one of his comrades interposed, saying, in an indignant voice—

"For shame, Atkins—for shame! What do you mean by behaving to a man in that way? He is our prisoner. Surely seven of us are enough to take care of him without any ill-usage as well. Just do strike him, and I'll have you off your horse before you know where you are."

Atkins growled out something that was unintelligible, but he lowered his hand without striking Jack, and some of the others soon tied a cord round Jack's arms, and they looked at Long, who, if he had been looked at for an age, could not have returned the compliment.

"You have done for him," said one of the men to Jack.

"This wound in my shoulder came from his hand," replied Jack.

"Why, he did not fire."

"Not here, but he did in Newgate."

"Then you are Claude Duval! Comrades, we have recaptured Claude Duval, that the sheriff offered £200 reward for. Not a bad morning's work. Let's sling the dead body of Long across one horse, and put our prisoner on another. The sooner we now get to London the better."

"Yes," said another, "but I vote that we leave the body at the first public-house we come to. There will be an inquest on it, of course."

"Very well—come on."

Jack was placed upon a horse behind one of the officers, and to their great surprise he said, with an air of fervour that could not but be sincere, as they trotted off—

"Thank God!"

"What for?" said the officer.

"No matter," replied Jack. "I am very well pleased, that's all, and so I may thank God, I suppose, and give no offence to any one?"

"Oh, none in the least, only it's very odd. Make speed, friends—all's right; who so welcome as we to-day at the gate of old Newgate, I should like to know? Ha! ha!"

Off they went, and in two minutes the clatter of their horses' hoofs had died away into but an indistinct murmur in the distance. Claude Duval rose up, and bursting through the hedge, stood in the centre of the road, shading his eyes with his hands, and trying to catch a last glance of that dear friend who for him had made so noble a sacrifice, but a turn of the road completely hid him from sight.

"Gone!" said Claude.

Then a choking sensation in his throat seemed to prevent him from uttering another word for some minutes, during which he did not move from the spot. Suddenly, then, he dashed his hand across his eyes, and, without saying a word, started off in the direction of Barnes. He had not walked far, before he saw, some short distance to his left, a hillock, which was of sufficient height to command a view of the surrounding country for a considerable distance. Claude made a leap



over a hedge, and then ran towards it. He reached its summit, and fancied he saw the horsemen who were conveying Jack to prison some miles off.

"And do you know as yet so little of me, Jack," he said, "as to suppose that I would allow you to make this sacrifice for me, and then desert you? No—no—no! May heaven at my utmost need desert me if I do. I will save you, Jack, yet."

He slowly descended the hill, and at a rapid pace pursued his route. He had not proceeded far when he heard the neigh of a horse behind him; he thought it as well not to hurry himself, for that would excite suspicion, nor would he look round except very cautiously to see who the horseman was; but it was little he could see of him, except that he was enveloped in a large cloak, and rode a powerful looking bay horse. What was his surprise, however, to hear a voice say—

"Is it indeed you, Claude Duval?"

Claude turned on the instant to make what defence he could; for the idea that, like Ishmael, the hands of all men were against him, and his hand against all men, was strong within him; and yet had he been in a calmer frame of mind, he would then have detected more melancholy in the stranger's voice than enmity.

"Ah! it is indeed you," said the stranger, and dropping the cloak from before his face, he disclosed to Claude the well-known features of Markham Brereton.

"Is this possible," said Claude, "or do I dream?"

"This is do dream," said Brereton; "and I can easily account for my presence here. I was released from Newgate, as you are probably aware, by an order from the Secretary of State, and since then I have been unwearied in my exertions to try to procure a remission of your sentence. It was all in vain; and you may judge of my joy when the rumour of your escape reached my ears two hours ago."

"But how came you upon this road?"

"I have seen Cicely, and she confided to me the fact that you had an interest somewhere in this direction; my errand is to do you what service I can. If you want money, here is my purse; if you want a horse, take this one; if you want a friend, look upon me, and only say what I can, by any possible exertions, do for you?"

"This from you?" said Claude.

"Yes; and why not?"

"I thought I had removed your anxiety by yoking your sister's fortunes to mine. I thought that you would never be able to tolerate the highwayman."

"Do not speak of that. Did you not come forward and save me from the base machinations of Tom Brereton, my own near relation, and that, too, at the imminent hazard of your own life? Can I do otherwise now than hold out my hand to you in true friendship and call you brother?"

Claude clasped the extended hand of Markham.—"I—I—only wish," he said, much affected, "I only wish I were not what I am. But it is now a vain regret."

"Not wholly."

"What mean you? I have gone too far in my present career ever to embrace another."

"Nay, in some other land you may be blessed by peace. I have means—how I came by them will be the subject of another conversation with you. But why will you not leave England with Cicely and me, and in some other country go by a different name from that which you have here?"

"If I could."

"You surely can. The coast may be easily gained; I have a friend at Southampton who will give you a shelter, if you can get there, until Cicely and I join you, and from that port nothing will be more easy than to get to the continent. Only say that you will attempt it, and I shall be happier than I have been for many a long day."

"Listen to me," said Claude. "I have a story to tell you, and then you will be better able to judge of the value of the advice you give me. Just listen to the story of my escape, and then tell me what you would do."

Markham Brereton was profoundly silent while Claude, having one arm upon the saddle of his steed, related to him all the various particulars of his escape from Newgate, by the aid of Jack, and the subsequent conduct of Jack when he was upon the verge of a second captivity.

"Now," he said "ought I to desert Sixteen-string Jack?"

"No," said Markham Brereton, "it would be base."

"I knew you would say that. It would be base indeed. So, you see, I am yet doomed to remain and fulfil my destiny here in England. If Jack can be rescued from his present position and taken with us, I will gladly embrace your proposition, but I cannot go without him. The ties that bind me to him are by far too strong for any feelings of self-advantage to break asunder."

"Then what do you propose to do?"

"At the cottage at Barnes, to which I am now bound, I shall find ample means of disguising myself, and when I have done so, I shall proceed to London to see what can be done for Jack. I hope for the best, and fear the worst."

"Shall I accompany you?"

"No. Do not; that would be an ill-judged step. Your being with me might provoke suspicion, but by myself I shall get on very well. Go home again, and if you remain with Cicely, and she is where I left her, expect me in the course of a few hours."

"I will. I have that abundant faith in your tact and your resources, that what you dictate as best to be done, under such circumstances as the present, I am inclined to believe is the best. Come to us as soon as you can, and we will see what can be done."

"Depend upon me," said Claude. "I don't think I shall have any real difficulty now. The only party, as you find, who had taken this road after me, is disposed of. I may be in London sooner than you expect. Remember me to Cicely, and think of me as kindly as you can yourself."

Claude waved his hand, and giving one of his fascinating smiles to Markham, he walked rapidly on.

"Alas!" said Markham Brereton, as he turned his horse's head towards London, "what might not that man have been under different circumstances? How truly are we the slaves of past actions. Claude Duval will go down to posterity as a robber, while men who are far worse robbers than he would ever dream of being, are venerated as bishops, or respected as ministers of state."

Markham Brereton was quite right. Truly, some great day is wanted, upon which folks will find their level, and if such a day should ever really dawn, how many a piece of gilt iniquity will shrink into the nothingness of its natural individuality! We shall see—perhaps!

It was about two o'clock upon that day, that Markham Brereton and Cicely were sitting together in a small, but comfortable room, when the servant of the house came, and said—

"If you please, sir, a Mr. Lee wants to see you."

"Mr. Lee?"

"Yes, sir. Oh, he's coming up stairs. This is the gentleman."

A tallish, slim, gentlemanly-looking man, with light hair and a sandy moustache, scrupulously dressed, entered the room, and in a slightly foreign accent, but very indifferent English, said—

"May I have the honour of seeing Mr. Brereton?"

"Yes, sir, my name is Brereton."

Both Cicely and Markham were rather surprised at the stranger's manners. He walked to the door, which had been closed by the servant, and opening it a short distance, he listened attentively; then closing it again, he advanced and said—

"Is it possible that my disguise is so perfect, that even you do not know me, Cicely?"

"Claude, Claude!" she cried, "it is our own Claude!"

"Hush! hush! Walls have ears. Hush, dear one, be calm—the slightest

hint, of who I am might be fatal. Ah, Cicely, at times I doubted if I should ever have the joy again of seeing you, but now to hold you in my arms is a rich recompense for all I have suffered." Cicely hung on his bosom weeping; but she felt the necessity there was for composure, and managed to put on a calmness



"Spy!" said Claude. "Fool as well as knave! What made you set your life upon such a cast?"

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she was far from feeling. Markham congratulated Claude upon the admirable manner in which he had disguised himself, and then Claude asked for May.

"She is from home," replied Cicely, "but will soon be here. Oh, Claude, you will stay with us now. Say you will, and you will likewise do what Markham has advised you about leaving Eng'land. Say you will."

"When Jack is safe and free to go with us, Cicely, then speak to me of such a plan with a certainty of receiving my hearty concurrence with it."

"Is there any news of Jack, Mr. Brereton?"

"None whatever."

"What, have they not yet brought him to town?"

"Not that I know of. I have made the most careful inquiries, and heard nothing of him. It is to me quite inexplicable; I cannot make it out, and, indeed, I can come but to one conclusion, which is, that something serious has happened upon the road."

"Then I must go," said Claude, as he rose; "I must go and ascertain what it is. I do not think that Jack, in his disabled condition, could make, with any degree of success, an attempt to escape; and if he really has got away, it is by some accident, such as might not happen once in a hundred years; nevertheless I must inquire."

"Oh, Claude, do not go into danger," said Cicely.

"Danger! Is not the very atmosphere I breathe full of danger to me? Am I not surrounded by dangers in every shape and way? Who shall say that 'k going east, west, north, or south, I run into the most dangers? No, Cicely, do not fancy that I am running a greater risk by going to see after the fate of Jacob than by staying here. I will return as soon as possible, you may depend. My horse is at a friend's house."

"Be careful; return you must, Claude," said Markham.

"Oh, I can trust the 'family,' as we call them; all is right upon that score; and mind, if anything happen to me, always make inquiries of Joe at the 'Saddle Bags,' in Picket Street until the first of next month. Once a month I change my confidences."

"Your life is a strange one," said Markham.

"It is, indeed, one made up of all strange chances; but all must end somewhere. Farewell, Cicely; you need not weep, for you will see me again, I think, before the hour of midnight. Adieu!"

## CHAPTER LXXVI.

### THE ROSE INN.

WE return to Sixteen-string Jack. The wound in his shoulder was really much more serious than Jack would even admit to Claude. The pistol bullet had not, as Jack had supposed, made itself a passage and escaped. On the contrary, it still rankled in the wound. Moreover, if any set of circumstances more than another could have tended to the aggravations of a wound, they would be the mental and physical exertions which Jack had gone through since the time of receiving the hurt. A certain feeling that if he gave way he should become a serious encumbrance to Claude, had hitherto kept him up. It is truly astonishing how mind will triumph over matter; but now that he was in the hands of the officers—and, oh! joy of joys to him!—now that he had fairly succeeded in giving Claude another, and a fairer chance than ever of escape—Jack no longer felt the same necessity that he had before felt for battling against his own sensations. A faintness came over him, and a perceptible shudder passed across his limbs.

"What's the matter?" said the officer, on whose horse he was.

Jack could not answer. The world seemed to be slipping from him, and then all consciousness was gone.

"Holloa! stop, stop!" said the officer to his comrades.

"What is it now?"

"I do believe he is dead."

"Dead?" they all cried; "oh, no, not that. Who knows but there might be some cavil about the reward if he were dead?"

"I can't help it. All I can say is, that he don't seem to have any life in him."

Certainly Jack's appearance warranted the alarm of the officer; and when the others gathered round and looked at their prisoner, they fully shared in their comrade's alarm.

"Confound him," said one, "that's just like his obstinacy, now; I thought we should not get him to London quite so easy as we might have wished. What is to be done now?"

"There's the Rose Inn, about half a mile further on, close to the common," said one; "and what is to hinder us leaving Long's dead body there, and likewise waiting a little for the recovery of our prisoner? I must say it will be but half a triumph to carry a dead Claude Duval to Newgate instead of a living one."

This seemed to them all to be good and judicious advice, so they made up their minds to follow it forthwith, and putting their horses to a canter, they soon traversed the half mile, although it was somewhat of a long one, that lay between them and the old Rose Inn. The arrival of seven men on horseback, a dead body, and a fainting prisoner, with his dress and person sprinkled with blood, produced rather a sort of sensation at the inn. The landlord looked, indeed, as though, of the two, he would rather not have had the honour of the visit; but with a laudable fear of the licensing magistrate before his eyes, he did not exactly like to say anything that could be construed into an anti-welcome.

"Dear me—dear me!" he said. "What's amiss? Who have you got, gentlemen? for I see you are officers."

"Claude Duval," said one.

At the mere pronunciation of this well-known name, the greatest interest was at once excited in the inn. There was not a person there that did not press forward to obtain a sight of one who had made so much noise on the road; and among them all there was only one rough-looking farmer, who shook his head as he looked at Jack, and said—

"Be sure this be your mon?"

"Yes, wisacre," said one of the officers. "We are sure, though none of us have seen Claude Duval before, except Long, and he is shot."

"Well," said the farmer, "I have seen Claude Duval before; and much good may your prisoner do you, that's all. Ho! ho! ho!"

"Pho! we are satisfied. You mind your own business. Now, landlord, you must have this dead body laid somewhere, for there will be an inquest at this house. It's Mr. Long, the officer; Claude Duval has done for him, and we want a bed and doctor for Claude himself; for, to tell the truth, we want to get him to Newgate alive and kicking, and you see what a state he is in now."

"Why, he's a dead 'un, too," said the landlord.

"Not a bit of it. He's only done up, that's all, and has got a wound, you see, in his shoulder. That's it—all right—up stairs, is it? Very well—gently—gently. Is there a doctor near at hand? That will do—let your boy run for him at once."

Jack was laid upon a bed, and the nearest medical man was sent for, pending whose coming the officers enjoyed themselves with a draught of old ale, and told their story at the bar of how, with extraordinary valour, they had captured Claude Duval, and fully expected the sheriff's reward for so doing. They did not forget to make the most of their adventure; and when the nearest surgeon arrived, two of them accompanied him up stairs to the room in which Jack, insensible as he was, had been securely locked. They found him still in the same state, and the surgeon, who was a skilful man enough in his profession, extracted the pistol bullet from the wound in Jack's shoulder, and bandaged it properly up before he would take any means to recover him from the state of syncope into which, from pain and exhaustion, he had fallen.

"There is no occasion to arouse him," he said, "until I have done all that is necessary for him; but now that is over, we will hear what he has got to say."

By the application of some pungent essences, Jack was soon recovered, and

looked about him with rather a puzzled expression; but he recovered his consciousness of what had happened much sooner than any one would have imagined, and when one of the officers said—

“Well, Claude Duval, how are you now?”

He smiled faintly, and just murmured—

“All’s right—all’s right.”

Truly it was great joy to Jack to find that they still continued in this mistake, for he knew that each minute that was gained was of the most vital importance to Claude.

“He seems pleased enough,” said the doctor; “but if he be moved for some hours, there is every chance of his wound inflaming to a sufficient extent to endanger his life. I suppose, though, that really don’t much matter, for he will be hanged if he be taken to Newgate, I presume?”

“Yes,” said one of the officers, “but it does matter. We want to get him to Newgate alive; so we will wait—at least a couple of us will, until he is a little better, while our comrades can ride on, and take the news of the capture, putting in our joint claim for the reward.”

“As you please,” said the medical man. “If you don’t remove him, I shall see him again in a few hours, when I shall be better able to judge of his condition.”

Jack overheard this discourse, and he closed his eyes, trying to think what would be the best policy for him to adopt under all the circumstances of the case. He was resolved to keep up, as long as he could, the delusion that he was Claude Duval; and at the same time, he was better pleased to be at the Rose Inn than in Newgate. Had he a hope that Claude’s fertile brain would devise something in his favour? We rather think that at the bottom of his heart he really had. Who can wonder at the wondrous faith Jack had in the resources as well as in the courage of Claude? The officers carried out their expected determination, and only two of them remained at the inn, to keep charge of their prisoner. They considered that the condition he was in afforded a fair enough warranty that he would make no sort of attempt to escape. Quietness surely must be to him the greatest of earthly blessings now. Under these circumstances, it was no wonder that the officers made themselves quite comfortable, and by no means disturbed themselves about their prisoner, whom they thought so very safe in more ways than one.

“There will be a pretty good purse for us all.”

“To be sure,” replied the other; “and it’s a lucky job that Long got that pistol-shot.”

“So it is.”

“You may say that, for if he hadn’t, I know as well as possible he would have tried on taking the whole of the reward himself, and only handing us a few guineas for ourselves.”

“Not a doubt of it; but there he lies up stairs stiff enough. Come, it’s about dinner time now. Let’s have something nice, now.”

It was about half-past two o’clock now that a man in a respectable groom’s livery rode up to the Rose Inn, and said—

“Hilloa! Have you room for my master for a few hours, landlord?”

“Ay,” said the landlord, “and for a dozen masters, if you had them, old fellow. Who is he, I should like to know, that he’s so afraid of not getting room at the Rose Inn, he’s forced to send you on afore?”

“He’s a Frenchman, and his name is Monsieur Resolut; but, he is a good master for all that, and he pays his way like a trump. You know he can’t help being a Frenchman.”

“Oh, no—no, certainly not. We oughtn’t to think ill of a man ‘cos o’ things he can’t help, no how. Frenchman or not, if he’s a gentleman, and behaves himself as sich, he’s welcome as the flowers in May to the Old Rose Inn.”

It was Claude himself, in the same costume that had so successfully deceived even May and Markham, who now rode up to the inn door, where one of the

very officers who would almost have given his ears to capture him, was lounging with a pipe in his mouth. But Claude felt that he was perfectly safe.

"If they take Jack for me," he said to himself, "they don't know me, that's quite clear."

The officer looked at Claude as carelessly as a man who can have no possible interest in another might be supposed to look; and as Claude dismounted, the only remark that was made was by the landlord, who said—

"He ain't a bad-looking fellow, though he is a Frenchman."

"Quite the reverse," said the barmaid.

"Anything, but—" said the landlady.

"Quite a love," said the landlady's niece, a young lady of about fifteen, who was very romantic; but she did not give utterance to her opinion aloud.

Claude was shown up stairs; and as they were opening a room door for him, he laid his hand upon the lock of another.

"Not there, sir," said the landlord; "there's a prisoner there—the notorious Claude Duval."

"Indeed," said Claude, with a well-imitated foreign accent, "I shall not for to go there."

"No, you shall for to go here," said the landlord, who had the common notion that a Frenchman understands bad English better than good; "Claude Duval is a highwayman, and he has shot an officer, the dead body of whom is in yon further room."

"I not understand too much," said Claude.

"Oh, bother him," muttered the landlord, "I dare say, a stupid like, he don't know one half what one says to him. Who would be a Frenchman if he possibly could help it?"

## CHAPTER LXXVII.

### A SURPRISE AT THE ROSE INN.

THE door was closed upon Claude, and then he stood profoundly still, in an attitude of listening: all was still as the grave upon that floor; and after a few minutes of the most intense listening, Claude opened the door and stepped out into the corridor, from which several doors opened, both to the right and to the left. To have a thorough idea of the plan of the premises was now Claude's great object, and he stepped lightly across the corridor and tapped at a door opposite. There was no reply, so he concluded the room was empty. Upon opening the door he found he was right. It was a bedroom leading into the stable-yard, beyond which yard was the open country. He saw his horse in the yard undergoing a slight grooming from a lad, while the servant he (Claude) had brought with him, was leaning upon a gate opening into the meadows at the back of the stables. All these things Claude noted accurately, and likewise saw that the descent from the window of the room in which he was, to the yard, would be a matter of no difficulty whatever. Quick in motion and fertile in resources, Claude at once made up his mind as to what was to be attempted, and he retired to his room again, resolved upon at once commencing operations, for he was timidly afraid Jack might be hastily removed from the inn. Claude rang the bell, and was calmly reading a newspaper that had lain upon the table, when the landlady's niece, who was upon the romantic side of twenty, made her appearance in answer to the summons. Claude felt, from the first moment that he looked at this girl, a strange desire to trust her, but still it was rather too hazardous a thing to do so all at once, and he looked at her in silence for a few moments. What was his surprise when she cautiously closed the door, and with much agitation of manner said—

"Sir, I know you."

Claude started for the moment, and a flush of colour visited his cheeks at the thought of the possibility of all he was trying to do or Jack being defeated when it was most promising of success; he did not, however, lose his presence of mind.

"Do you, indeed, know me?" he said. "If so, you will have no objection to name me."

"You are Claude Duval. Pray do not be alarmed: I owe you a favour, and will repay it if I can. When the wounded man, who lies in the next chamber, was brought here, they told me it was Claude Duval. I knew they had made a mistake, and I said so, but he looked reproachfully at me and said, 'Indeed I am;' from which I guessed the truth, assured that he was making a sacrifice for you."

"Then you will not betray me?"

"Betray you?"

"Pardon me for using the word; I *am* Claude Duval, and my errand here is at the risk of my life, if needs be, to rescue my wounded friend. But how came you to know me?"

"By your voice. You once stopped the Exeter mail. I and my mother were passengers, and we had about us our little all (£20). I told you it would make us destitute to take it, and you said but two words—'God forbid!' Can I be otherwise than grateful to you? Oh, no, you have but to command me, and I will do you any service. My poor mother is dead, and that £20 smoothed her passage to the grave."

Claude was much affected at the simple and earnest gratitude of this girl—a gratitude, too, that he felt his claim to was very doubtful indeed. Nevertheless, at that time he was glad to take the advantage of any circumstance that promised him aid in the deliverance of Sixteen-string Jack from the officers.

"I see but one man in the yard," said Claude, "and all I want you to do is, if you can, to keep him out of it for ten minutes, and to let me know when those ten minutes begin, and when they will be likely to happen."

"Can I do nothing else?"

"Nothing but hold me as well in your esteem as your better feelings for such as I am will let you; believe me, I shall not forget to my dying day the kindness you show."

"You must wait until five o'clock," she said, "and then our man Sam will come into his tea, which I can make take him half an hour. During that time the yard will be quite free. Besides, if you wish it, I will manage to hold both of the officers at talk at tea for as long. I don't think they will refuse an invitation from me."

"A thousand thanks."

"Not at all; you don't know how happy it makes me to show that while I always try to forget an injury, I never forget a word of kindness, and how much more, than a word of yours was."

Claude, we must confess it, kissed the fair cheek of the blooming Kate—yes he did, and Kate, too, was her name, and we cannot at all blame Claude for doing so—do you, gentle reader, or otherwise, as the case may be? Ah, no! Kate blushed her exit.

"This is a godsend," said Claude, to himself. "I shall save you now, Jack; and I shall begin to think that even a negative good action in this world does not go without its due reward in the fullness of time. But now for a visit to you, Jack, if it be safely practicable, for I must risk as little as possible."

Claude listened for a few moments, and found that the coast was clear, after which, stepping lightly along, he reached Jack's chamber, and opening the door, he glided in instantly. Claude's first glance around the apartment showed him a cupboard, and before approaching the bed, he glanced into it, and saw that it was large enough to hold him. He then walked up to the bed, and saw that Jack's eyes were closed. His old friend was either really slumbering, or though proper



to sham that state for the purpose of avoiding any conversation with the officers or the surgeon. He little expected who was now bending over him.

"Jack," said Claude, "be quiet."

Jack started, and sprung up in the bed.

"Hush—hush—'tis I——"

"Claude—Claude—oh, why are you here? Will you render all that I have done in vain? Oh, Claude, for the first time I am sorry to look upon your face."

"Nonsense, Jack. Attend to me. Are you well enough to ride?"

"Quite—but——"

"Hush, listen to me. Be too bad to move from here—rave a little—anything to induce them to keep you here yet awhile, and expect aid from me. All will be right. God bless you, Jack. Did you think I would desert you? Ah, Jack—Jack."

Claude moved towards the door, and as he did so he heard a step in the corridor, and a loud voice from below cried—

"You will find the door unlocked, doctor. We ain't afeard of him now. If he moves off, it will be out of the world."

"D——n it," said Claude, and in an instant he was in the cupboard.

The surgeon stood by Jack's bedside. Jack shut his eyes fast and tried to compose himself. The sudden appearance of Claude had much agitated him, but he recollected the advice that had been given to him by his old friend, to seem much worse than he really was, and even to sham being delirious to some extent, the better to impose upon the surgeon and his captors.

"Well, my man, how are you?"

Medical men are exceedingly fond of using the words "my man," to what they consider to be their *un-equals*.

"There he goes," said Jack, feigning delirium; "spread his brains on a brickbat and give them to a mad cat in the family way!"

"What, what do you say, man?"

"Here we are in the gutter—now—now—wash out the stains—where's the pitchfork?—Shake hands with a toad, and measure the distance between Tyburn Gate and the devil with your entrails. There they go—whoop! whoop! off and away."

"Quite delirious," said the surgeon, lifting up his hands; "I must confess I did not expect this exactly; what odd things he says, too."

Jack gave such an awful groan, that the surgeon quite started back; and then affecting suddenly to fall into a deep sleep, Jack was profoundly quiet again. The surgeon was a little puzzled. He rubbed his chin with one hand, and conceiving himself to be quite alone, he said—

"I hardly know what to do with this case. I certainly expected some amount of fever, but not this delirium. And of what a novel character, too. What awful reminiscences must this wretched man have upon his mind! I wish I could recollect what he said exactly. Something about a mad cat in a delicate situation, I think. How sound he seems to sleep now. It's rather a curious case; and the best thing I can do is to keep it as long as possible. I'll tell the officers that he ought not to be removed, unless they wish him to breathe his last before they get him to the door of Newgate. That will stop them, I dare say."

The surgeon, to Jack's and Claude's great relief, stepped lightly from the room, and closing the door again, he made his way down stairs. When he was thoroughly out of hearing, Claude emerged from the cupboard, and spoke again to Jack, saying—

"Expect me at dusk, Jack, and until then keep up your spirits, my old friend. All will be well; for believe me, I have one of those presentiments that don't ever fail me that neither your time nor mine has come yet. All will be right; but don't over-act your part, if they should visit you again."

"No, Claude, no, I will not; but I implore you to consider your own safety as paramount. From what you say, I suppose I have over-acted my part a little?"

"Why, I confess, Jack, the mad cat took me a little by surprise; but it is of no consequence. I am glad to see that smile upon your face. Farewell, Jack, for a short time. I hope to see you in safety before another day dawns; and I will, or my name is not Claude Duval."

Claude did not wait for a reply; the danger to them both of staying where he was he felt to be imminent, and he at once sought his own room, there to wait until the young girl who had promised him assistance should come to him to say that the time for action had arrived. Not the shadow of a doubt of her good faith crossed his mind, and indeed if it had it would have been to her the most cruel injustice. As he paced the room, Claude's thoughts were busily occupied with the past and the present; and for the first time since he had embraced his present hazardous and adventurous course of life, he took a keen retrospective glance at his life. He saw himself a young lad upon Hampstead Heath, with his sister May by his side; and there came before him vividly in his mind's eye the gibbet upon which hung all that remained of what he had once called father. Then came the act of retribution at the hands of the boy against the proud, strong man; and he remembered the cry with which Sir Lionel Feversham had fallen down the precipice upon that awful night. Then came his meeting with Sixteen-string Jack, and the various scenes that followed; and as he recollected what Jack was when he first saw him, and contrasted his bold slashing bearing then with what he was now, he could not but sigh to think how such a spirit had been broken. And thus the time passed on, until the dim shades of early twilight began to creep over the scene, and then Claude stepped into the corridor, and listened. All was still. The inn clock struck five, and he began to get right, when he heard a light, hurried footstep upon the stairs, and at once he retired to his room again. He expected it was Kate; but then it might not be her, and caution was necessary. It was Kate. She entered the room with her face flushed, and her bosom heaving with agitation. It was some few moments before she could speak; and then her voice was broken and tearful.

"I have done what you wished," she said. "No one is now in the stable-yard. God speed you, Claude Duval; we may never meet again; but when you think of me, tell yourself that I tried to be grateful. The officers will be engaged for the next half hour. Farewell."

"I shall never forget you, Kate."

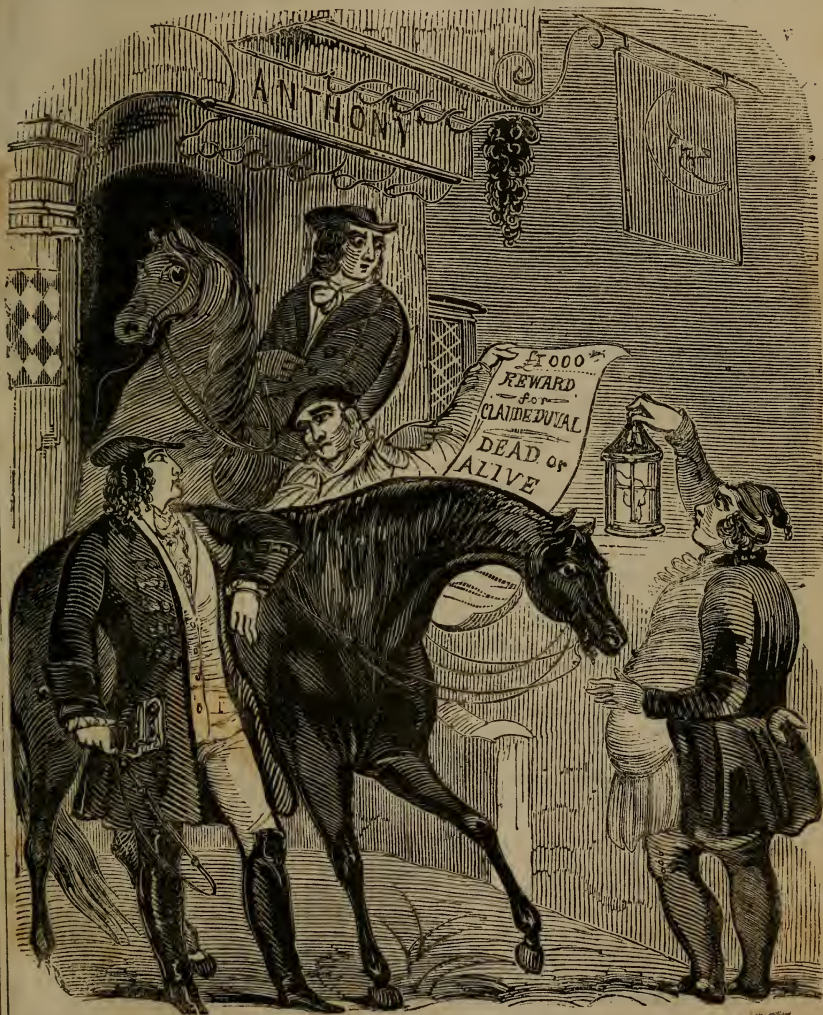
She held out her hand to him, and he shook it cordially. He was about to speak to her again, but she vanished from the room, and as she went she seemed to take with her the small portion of daylight that had yet lingered in the western sky. Claude started from a sort of reverie that had stole over him; and walked to the door of his room. From thence he proceeded to the head of the stairs, and listened. He heard loud laughter below, and doubted not but that the officers were making themselves as comfortable as possible, and flattering themselves they stood high in the graces of the pretty Kate. The time for action had arrived. Now, Claude was thoroughly determined to carry out this affair to the rescue of Sixteen-string Jack at any risk; and, with a full perception of all the possible dangers and difficulties that might beset him, he commenced operations. He looked carefully to the priming of his pistols, and feeling confident that the two pair he had with him were effective, he sallied out of the room, exclaiming—

"Now, Jack, for liberty or death!"

One of the great secrets of Claude Duval's success in many of his daring exploits consisted in the cool rapidity of his proceedings. When once he commenced an enterprise, he went on with it without flinching, and often had it completed within the time that many other persons would have been looking and peeping about to see if the coast were clear for action. Then, again, he made his arrangements so perfectly beforehand, that, unless some very cross accident happened, nothing went amiss, and nothing was left to be decided upon at a time when it ought to be done. Claude's first care was to let Jack know that the time for action had come; and with a light, noiseless step he again sought the room where his comrade lay.

"Up—up—Jack, and be ready," he said, "there is no time for delays ; I will be with you again in a few moments."

Jack would have said something in the shape of renewed caution or exhortation to Claude to be careful of himself, but the latter was gone as noiselessly as he



CLAUDE DUVAL AND JACK PAY A VISIT AT THE OLD MOON TAVERN, DRURY-LANE.

had come. Three strides brought Claude to the spare bedroom opposite to Jack's apartment.—He opened the window—hung an instant from the balcony—and then dropped safely into the yard, upon a quantity of hay that was there. There yet lingered sufficient of the day to guide him, without any difficulty, to the

stables where his mare was put up. He then blew a whistle, but so faintly that it more resembled the call of some bird to its mate than anything else. In a moment the man who played the part of his servant made his appearance, from where Claude himself could hardly, in the twilight, discern; but there he was.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### OFF TO LONDON.

BOTH master and man looked at each other intently, for fear of a mistake, and then Claude said—

“It’s you, Bill? all’s right.”

“What’s the fakement?” said Bill. “Is the iron all hot, Captain? Blaze away.”

“Hush! all’s right. Get the horse all ready for a start, and open yon gate leading to the meadows. Jack is in no state to ride a steeple chase, although he will be on the back of one who could do it.”

“Yes, Captain, she can go it: kick out the man in the moon’s eye, and then away like a handful of squibs. Blaze away!”

Claude immediately went back to the window from which he had dropped into the yard, but he found it was too much of a spring up to reach the little balcony, and looking to the stable where Bill was putting the saddle on his horse, he said—

“I must have her to reach the window with. Come along, lass.”

The creature knew Claude’s voice in a moment, and gave a short neigh of congratulation at finding herself with him again. He led her beneath the window, and then, with great agility, mounting and standing upon her back, he easily got into the spare bedroom again. Leaving Bill there to finish accoutring the horse, he made his way again noiselessly and swiftly to Jack’s chamber. He had no sooner reached it than he heard some one, mounted, gallop up to the door of the inn.

“I’m ready,” said Jack.

“Hush! let me hear who this is that has just arrived. We ought to know as much as we can in our present circumstances, Jack, of everybody who comes here just now. Hush—hush—just for a moment, Jack,—only a moment.”

Claude went close to the window and heard the following brief but significant colloquy—

“Hilloa!” cried a loud voice. “Is this the Rose Inn?”

“You are right for once,” said some one, in a bantering tone from the inn door. “It is the Rose.”

“Come, come,” said the stranger, “don’t trifle with me; I have ridden hard from Mr. Gregson’s, the sheriff, in Ludgate, and know all about Claude Duval. Is this the house where he is in eustody of the officers?”

“Yes,” replied he who had before conversed. “This is the house. But don’t you know that Claude Duval is sorely wounded, and can’t be moved?”

“Oh, yes, Mr. Gregson has heard all about that—tell somebody to take care of my horse, will you—as I was saying, Mr. Gregson has heard all about that, for they sent for him to Newgate as soon as the express of Claude’s capture came in, and he says that he’ll have him in Newgate to-night, wounded or not wounded, for he knows he has as many twists and doubles as an old fox, and he shan’t be content until he’s under lock and key.”

Claude did not wait to hear more. He knew now that nothing but promptitude could save Jack; but as he turned from the window, he could not help hearing the new arrival add—

"The sheriff sent me, you see, because I know Duval well by sight."

"The deuce you do," thought Claude, and then turning to Jack, he said—  
"Are you ready?"

"Quite, quite. But Claude——"

"Come, come, this is no time for exceptions. This way, Jack; I can tell you that we are to do as we go along. When you are once mounted, and in the open air, mind you are to keep the remains of what sun-set you will see for this half hour yet, on your right hand. You understand me, Jack?"

"Yes, Claude, I do. But——"

"There you are again, Jack, with your buts. Now attend to me. Come along, this way; you see I know the old Rose Inn pretty well. Push on to Battersea Fields as hard as you can, and get to Westminster. Then make your way direct to the Old Moon in Drury Lane. Anthony has ways and means of taking care of you, which he will do for your own as well as for mine; and upon no account stir out, for so sure as you do, you will get into mischief. Leave me entirely to my own resources. Promise me that Jack."

"Well, well, Claude, I suppose I must."

"That will do. You know Bill Deerhurst, old Anthony of the Moon's nephew?"

"Yes—yes. Well?"

"He is in the stable yard. He will assist you to mount, and show you the way into the fields; and good luck attend you. Don't stop another moment—I won't hear one word."

"But Claude——"

"There, that will do. Bill?"

"Here yer is!" said Bill, from below the balcony, on to which Claude had hurried Jack. "Here yer is, my masters. Blaze away! righ-too-looral-lee! Kim up."

Claude now gave an illustration of that amazing strength which upon emergencies he could put forth, for he lifted Sixteen-string Jack fairly off his feet, and over the balcony into the yard, where Bill received him, and got him safely to the ground.

"Mount, and away," said Claude, "mount, Jack, and away, if you love me!"

Claude closed the window. But he lingered in the room a moment, until he heard the clatter and dash of a horse's feet, and through the glass he saw the dusky figure of the gallant steed and its rider dash away into the night air, among the meadows at the back of the old Rose Inn.

"It's done!" said Claude. "It's done, thank God. If Jack manages affairs with common prudence only, now he is free. Oh, what a load this is off my mind, to be sure; I can now really breathe a little freely."

Claude knew now that his own situation was one of immediate peril. He was there among foes without a hope, and the man who had so recently come from London, had declared that he was sent purposely on account of being so well acquainted with Claude's person; so that from his scrutiny he had everything to dread, notwithstanding the perfections of his disguise. As he was traversing the corridor a thought struck him, the carrying out of which was more of a boyish whim than anything else. He proceeded to the room opening from the same corridor in which the dead body of Long the officer was; and striding up to the bed upon which it lay muffled in a sheet, he took it in his arms, and carrying it to the bed so recently vacated by Jack, he placed therein the dead officer, and covered him up with the clothes.

"Now, gentlemen, below," said Claude, "I think I have given you the means of enjoying a little surprise when you do come up stairs."

When he reached his own room he rung the bell. Kate answered the summons—she was pale and anxious.

"Is he gone?" she said.

"Yes" replied Claude, "all is right, thanks to you. Say that I orde red coffee

as soon as possible, and that I want to go to town in half an hour; and order my horse, mind, Kate. Sooner or later its absence must be discovered, and it may as well be so as soon as possible."

"Yes—yes. Oh, how I tremble."

"For what?" said Claude, with a smile.

"For your safety; a man has arrived with an order from one of the sheriffs of London to bring you up to town directly and lodge you in Newgate."

"Not me. You forget, Kate, that I am Monsieur Resolut, and that the order relates to the occupant of the adjoining room. I am quite safe so long as my disguise lasts me, and perhaps even after that. But do not create suspicion by remaining here, Kate."

Kate was rather surprisid and alarmed at the curious movement of Claude's. He was evidently slowly walking round her so as to get between her and the door of the room, but before she could say a word upon the subject he suddenly flung the door open, and a waiter of the inn fell into the room upon his face and hands.

"Lost—lost!" said Kate.

"Not at all," said Claude. "I heard this fellow out side. Then we are safe enough.

"Help—mur—oh;" said the waiter, who felt the cold muzzle of a pistol against his temple, and heard the click of the lock as it was put upon full cock. His hair visibly moved upon his head, and his features assumed a pallid hue.

"Spy!" said Claude, fool as well as knave. What made you set your life upon such a cast as this? Answer me. Who am I?"

The fellow's teeth chattered so much with fear that he could not speak a word.

"Hark you," said Claude, "for the next hour you must take up your abode in yon cupboard; and as I am living man, if you speak or move, or so much as breathe heavily, I will send a brace of bullets through the panneling; and when I am gone from here if you say one word to anybody of what you have heard, or even so much as hint anything to the disparagement of Kate, I will seek you out if you should be hidden in the pulpit of a church, and blow your brains out."

"Oh—oh—oh, gracious goodness."

"To the cupboard."

"Oh, don't; it won't hold me. The shelf will cut me in two, and I can't cram myself in underneath. Have mercy upon me, and let me go; I wont say anything, indeed I wont."

Claude seized him by the collar, and thrust him underneath the shelf of the cupboard; then resolutely closing the door, he forced the unfortunate wretch into such a narrow compass that he must have been awfully cramped—but it was better than killing him.

"The key," said Claude. "The key."

"Here," said Kate. The room door-key locks it.

"Thanks. I warrant myself, now, against this rascal's interference, and I think his abject cowardice will save you, my dear Kate, from any annoyance from him when you release him, which you can do when you like, after I am gone."

"Oh, would that you were gone!"

"Do not fear, Kate. We are not all lost who are in danger. Go and order the coffee and the horse for me. I must now be guided entirely by circumstances."

Kate was nearly in tears as she descended the staircase; but before she had got halfway down, a grand bustle of people ascending occupied all her attention. This awakened the liveliest fears of Kate for the safety of Claude, and she flew back to his room to warn him, but she met him upon the threshold.

"Hush!" he said, "go rapidly down stairs. Say nothing, and know nothing. Leave all to me."

Kate disappeared again down the stairs, and Claude, tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote upon it the words "Bill, saddle any two horses you can find, and beat the gate leading to the meadows." Claude hoped to find the opportunity of delivering this to the man whom he had brought with him, and whom he knew

was courageous enough for anything. He would have made his way into the spare bed-room again, from whence Jack had escaped, and trusted to finding Bill within the stable-yard; but he heard those who were upon the stairs too close at hand. By the sound of feet, he was sure there were four or five persons; and as they reached the head of the stairs, he heard one say—

“It’s the sheriff’s express orders, so, come what may of it, nobody’s to blame. He must be taken to town, and he must be bad, indeed, if a post-chaise will hurt him. You have seen the sheriff’s order, so come on.”

“Very well,” said one of the officers.

## CHAPTER LXXIX.

### CLAUDE’S DANGER AT THE INN.

CLAUDE WAS NOW perfectly aware that an eclaireissement would take place very shortly; and he was not a little curious to know how the surprise that was in store for the sheriff’s man and the two officers at the inn, would be taken by them. As the party passed his door, he heard some one say—

“Who is in that room?”

And then the voice of Bill replied—

“Why, my master, Monsieur Resolute, is there. He’s a Frenchman; but, of all things, I should like to see Claude Duval. He robbed my master once, near Winchester.”

Bill accompanied this speech by a sly kick against Claude’s door, and the whole party passed on to the room, where they fully—with the exception of Bill, who knew so much better—expected to find their prisoner. It was quite dark enough for lights, and the landlord, who was likewise upon the spot, carried a lighted candle in his hand. Claude would have given anything for an opportunity of slipping the little memorandum he had written, respecting the horses, into the hands of Bill; but just then it could not be done. He did not despair, however, of very shortly finding a means of doing that much, and he kept close to the door of his room, holding the handle of the lock, so as to be ready to turn it at a moment’s notice.

“This is the room,” said one of the officers, opening the door of the chamber that had been Sixteen-string Jack’s temporary prison. “Here he is.”

They all went in, and Claude at once opened his door and looked out. A glance showed him that Bill lingered behind the others. Rapidly traversing the few steps between the two doors, Claude placed in Bill’s hand the little mission he had written, and was back again like a flash of light. Bill’s head was in the room, so that no one there could say he was for a moment absent; but his hand was without, and it closed upon the little despatch in an instant. He expected fully something of the sort from Claude.

“Yes,” said one of the officers approaching the bed, “here he is safe! but not sound. Ha! ha! Oh! He’s dead!”

“Dead?” cried the sheriff’s messenger. “You don’t say so! Dead?”

“As mutton!”

They all crowded round the bed, and the officers pulled from over the face of the corpse, the sheet which Claude had laid over it, adding—“Well, you may take him to London now and welcome. There he is. He won’t run away any more, I’ll be bound.”

“You idiots!” said the sheriff’s messenger. “You incorrigible geese! Why, you have killed the wrong man—that’s no more Claude Duval than I am.”

“Not Claude Duval?”

“No—not at all like him.”

The officer looked earnestly at the corpse, and then he cried—"May I die this instant, if that is the man we brought here wounded."

"Look at him," cried the other. "Why, Jarvis, don't you know that face? It's poor Long, that Claude Duval shot. There's the scar on his nose. Don't you know him?"

They all looked thunderstricken, except the sheriff's man, and he calmly enough put his hands in his pockets, and whistled a tune.

"Ha! ha!" he then said. "It's all right—oh, of course; I knew it was no go. I took the liberty of saying as much to the sheriff. I could have sworn it would have turned out something extraordinary. Oh, dear me; you don't know Claude Duval so well as I do. He ain't to be nabbed, or kept when he is nabbed, quite so easy. Oh dear, no! So it's all ended in a bottle of smoke."

"But we had him!" cried one of the officers, with an oath.

"Don't make too sure of that, my good fellow. You fancied you had him, I have no doubt, and you fancied you had nothing to do but to walk up here and find him; and instead, here is Long, who is the only one who finds the whole affair something worse than a hoax!"

"Damn it! I could eat my own head."

"No doubt of it. But I am not at all disappointed. Oh dear, no. 'Caught Claude Duval!' says I, 'have they? Very good. When I see him, I'll believe it, that's all.' Why, what do you think he did now? I'll tell you, though it's been kept snug. He actually, when he got out of Newgate, walked to Guildhall, and took the Lord Mayor's chaplain's own carriage, and drove off with it. What do you think of that? Lord bless you, Claude Duval is not so easily nabbed as you all seem to think. Oh dear, no!"

The jeering upon the part of the sheriff's man was more aggravating to the officers even than the loss of the prisoner, and it went a long way to keep their faculties in a confused state.

"Confound you," said one of them, "for a gabbling fool." You go on, talk—talk—talk, and don't give one leave to think about the affair. How came Long's body here, I wonder?"

"I suppose," said the other, "Claude Duval, when he walked off, put it here for the fun of the thing."

"It must be so, and he pretending to be so bad too."

"Master—master—master!" cried a voice from below. "Master!"

"What now?" cried the landlord. "What is it, Sam? Who's chimney's on fire?"

"Nobody's sir, but I have just been to the stable, and I can't find the Frenchman's horse, sir."

"The devil you can't."

"No, sir. It's gone, and the saddle and everything else with it, sir, as clean as a whistle, sir. I had put it in a loose box, sir, as he seemed an out-and-outer, and now it's gone, as safe as last Christmas was a twelvemonth, sir."

"Oh dear, yes!" said the sheriff's man. "Oh, yes, of course, we shall find it all out by degrees. Ha! ha! Claude Duval, or the devil, or whoever you had or fancied you had here, wounded or not wounded, has helped himself to this Frenchman's horse, you hear."

"It must be so," said one of the officers, in a tone of the bitterest vexation. "And it has all happened while we were swilling tea and quizzing at the baby-face of a barmaid."

"And while I was a taking my pipe quite promiscuous," said Bill, "on the bench at the front door, as innocent as a baby or a *vaxy dollikins*. Oh! oh! shan't I catch it? Why, that *ere*'oss costed I don't know how much."

"More fool you, then, you great blubbing goose," said the sheriff's man, "for not taking better care of it. You had better let your master know at once. Well, gentlemen all, I think this is about as outrageous a *do* as anything I ever heard of."

"Can't we go after him?"



"East, west, north, or south, stupid? After Claude Duval! Why, he has as many hiding places as a fox. No—if you really had him, he's off. I say, you great gaby, what's your master's name, eh? I'll go and speak to him myself about his horse."

"Risolut is his name," said Bill; "but I'll tell him himself. He's rather a passionate man, and as he's sure to blame me, I'll have it out with him at once."

"Then I'll go with you. What sort of horse was it?"

"Why, sir, you see," said Sam, the ostler, who had come to the top of the stairs to tell his tale, "it wasn't exactly a horse, seeing as it was a mare—a kind of mouse colour, with the finest legs you ever saw in your life, and the cunningest looking face and ears as ever a hanimal had in this here world. She was always a looking at you as much as to say, "Well, Sam, old fellow, and what do you think o' things in general?"

"Humph!"

Bill did not at all like this graphic description of Claude's celebrated mare, and he thought that he saw a thoughtful expression upon the face of the sheriff's messenger. He felt that Claude's situation was getting awfully critical; as yet too, he had had no time to read the little scrap of writing that Claude had put into his hand, so that, take things altogether, poor Bill for a few minutes felt as miserable as any human being could feel.

"Well, well," said the sheriff's man in the tone of one who was playing a part, "I ought to apologise to this French gentleman for what has happened, and to tell him that he has a claim on the county for the value of his horse. Which is his door? I'll be down directly."

The two officers and the landlord descended the stairs, and the sheriff's messenger tapped at the door of Claude's room. It may be supposed that Duval had lost not one word of the preceding conversation, and he felt his danger, but the confidence he had in his disguise supported him, and he said, in a firm voice but a foreign accent—

"Come in."

The sheriff's man opened the door and walked in; Sam, too, stood upon the threshold, and Claude rose, cautiously saying—

"Sir, I shall ask you to sit you always."

"Thank you, sir, I have only come to say that I am sorry your horse has been stolen."

"Vat you say—my horse—stoled? Sacre!"

"Yes, sir, Claude Duval, a celebrated highwayman, has stolen it. Nobody can help it. Gone it is, and there is an end of it. I think you may make good a claim against the county, but I don't say so for certain. However, sir, it's worth the trial."

"*Diable! Quel betisse!*" exclaimed Claude. "I must go for to think. Carry to me one chaise post at the door immediatement. I shall go at London."

"Very well, sir, the chaise shall be got ready. You will soon have it, for one was ordered and nearly ready for another purpose only just now. Good-morning, sir."

"*Bon soir! Sacre—ou est mon cheval? Le volour de grands chemin.* I shall go at London with much complaints."

"It's your best plan, sir. And any assistance the police can render you, of course you may command."

The sheriff's man made his bow and trotted down stairs. Claude mad a sign to Bill, who had off his boots in a moment, and went noiselessly after him. There was a door at the foot of the stairs to the left, which opened to the parlour. To the right it led through another door, the upper half of which was glass, to the front passage, and so on out into the open air past the bar. It was the left-hand door that the sheriff's man opened and passed through. It shut behind him with a weight and pulley, but Bill pushed it open about an inch, and peered into the room. The two officers and the landlord were there. Bill was witness now to rather a curious scene. It will be remembered that this same sheriff's messenger

had talked a great deal about his own cleverness, and vapoured, in fact, so much that, to take him at his own account, one would have considered him something more than a match for half a dozen Claude Duvals both in courage and artifice; but certainly his appearance now by no means corroborated such opinion concerning him, even if they had been for a moment entertained. He was ghastly pale, and his knees were shaking. His tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and it was quite clear that for some few moments he had not power to utter one articulate word. When the landlord and the two officers saw him in this condition, they stared at him as though he was bewitched, and the silence, accompanied by the look of consternation that prevailed the whole party, had about it something essentially ludicrous. It was the landlord who first found breath to say—

“Bless my heart and life, what is the matter?”

“Hush! hush! hush!” gasped the sheriff’s man, as he sunk into the seat that was nearest to him. “Hush! hush!—I—I—hush!”

“What is it?” said both the officers in a breath. “What is it?”

The terrified man waved his hand, and again said, “Hush!” Then, having to some extent recovered from the shock he had received, he said in a whisper—  
“Claude Duval is up stairs. Hush!”

“The deuce he is!”

“Hush! Don’t you know him? How many men’s lives do you think he always takes care to have in his power? I tell you we shall have him, but we must be cautious. If we now—four men that we are, counting the worthy landlord—were to go up stairs to take him, he would, as sure as fate, shoot two of us, and the question is, who is to be shot?”

“I beg your pardon,” said the landlord, “it’s no question at all as far as I am concerned, for I won’t go on any consideration whatever. What have I to do with it!”

“Hush!” said the sheriff’s messenger. “Hush!”

“Hush!” said the two officers, who now had become to the full as fearful as he. “Hush!”

Then they all inclined their heads together, and said in whispers, “What’s to be done?”

Bill had heard enough to convince himself of the imminent danger to which Claude was exposed, and he darted up stairs again, and into Claude’s room. When there, he uttered but one word, and that was, “Blowed!”

“What!” said Claude, “you don’t mean to tell me, Bill, that that stupid looking fellow has penetrated my disguise, do you?”

“Blowed!”

“The deuce it is. How could it be? Ah, I see.”

Claude took a look at himself in the glass, and he saw that one of his false moustachois had given him the slip. This at once accounted for the discovery which the sheriff’s messenger had made, and which gave that individual much more terror than it did Claude himself. He hastily heard Bill narrate what had passed in the room below, and then seizing his hat, he said—

“Come along, Bill.”

“Blaze away,” said Bill; that’s the ticket. Oceans of pluck.”

Claude darted across the corridor and into the spare room opposite. To lock the door upon the inside was his first movement. Then he said—

“Bill, are you sure there are horses in the stables?”

“Yes: two rum ’uns. The officers’, you know.”

“Good; come along, I’ll give you a twist over.”

“Murder! Thank you,” said Bill, as the next moment he found himself sprawling in the yard, having been twisted over the little balcony by Claude with a vengeance. The quantity of stable refuse, however, that was just there, saved him from any hurt, although he rose in not the most savoury condition. Claude was at his side in a moment. The yard was pitch dark now.

“The horses! the horses!” said Claude.

“All’s right—down as a hammer,” said Bill. “I knows the way to the animals’ cribs. Hold hard, and I’ll bring ’em to the gate at end there, afore you can say John Robinson.”

Bill flung open the stable door; but at the moment he did so, Sam, the ostler, appeared from the inside with a small lantern in his hand.



“I arrest you, Claude Duval,” said the sherriff’s man, “and I claim the reward.”—“Take it,” said Claude, “and make the most of it.”

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“Holloa !” he said, “what’s the row ?”

“Nothing,” said Bill, and with a slashing blow in the ostler’s face he sent him insensible to the further end of the stable. “Blaze away ! all’s right. Now my peonies, kim up.”

Bill got hold of the horses’ harness, for he had noticed w here it was hung, an d

he flung the two saddles and accoutrements towards the gate leading to the meadows, where Claude was standing. Then, liberating the horses from the halter that confined them, he took hold of an ear of each and led them quietly enough across the yard.

"Now, Captain," he said, "all we have got to do is to saddle the animals, and shove a bit in their mouth, and be off. Blaze away!"

It would have been no easy matter for persons unaccustomed to the care of horses, to make those two fit for service in the dark; but Claude and Bill were experienced, and they had got about half through this work when the ostler, who had been stunned, recovered sufficiently to know what had happened, and rushing out of the stable, he made his way towards the house, crying as he went, in a voice loud enough to wake the dead—

"Murder! thieves!—Murder! thieves!"

"Blowed again," said Bill.

Claude did not speak, but rapidly proceeded with placing the bridle properly upon the horse. The creature was, no doubt, alarmed at the sudden cries of the ostler, for it began to get rather restive. Every moment was of vital importance; to attempt an escape on foot, and leave the foe's horses with which to pursue them, would be madness.

"Are you ready, Bill?" said Claude.

"Not quite. Blaze away! blowed again! Here they is."

The cries of the ostler had been effective. At the end of the yard, nearest the house, appeared the two officers, the sheriff's messenger, and the landlord. The latter carried a couple of lights, and as the night was a still one, they burnt well, and cast a faint gleam upon Claud, Bill, and the two horses.

"There they are! There they are!" cried the sheriff's messenger. "Remember, the reward for Claude Duval is three hundred pounds, and therehe is."

These words were intended to stimulate the two officers and the landlord to lend their aid in securing Claude, while he, the sheriff's man, had a lively hope of being able himself to pocket the reward.

"Shall I shoot that fellow?" whispered Bill.

"No, no," said Claude. "Do not fire unless they do, and then don't throw away a bullet."

"We are too many for you, Claude Duval," said the sheriff's man. "You had better give yourself up without bloodshed. Alive or dead, I must and will have you."

Claude never spoke, and then one of the officers, drawing a pistol, said, as he fired it at Claude—

"He'll be off, as sure as fate, if you don't touch him with a bullet. Come on, under cover of the smoke."

The assailants made a rush forward, and Claude was upon the point of firing at the officer who had already attempted to shoot him, when he heard a scream from one of the windows of the house. It was Kate, anxious for his safety, who uttered the cry; and it had the effect of distracting his aim, for although he did fire, the bullet flew wide of its mark. Bang went one of Bill's pistols at the same moment; and Sam the ostler bawled out that he was wounded in an ignoble part of his animal economy.

"If it must be, it must be," said the sheriff's man, and taking a deliberate aim at Claude Duval, he fired. The bullet whizzed past his face in rather disagreeable proximity.

"I owe you one for that," said Claude, and he pulled the trigger of another pistol. - It missed fire.

"Hurrah!" said one of the officers; "he has thrown away his pistol-shots. Come on! We have him! Hurrah! Three hundred pounds are lying in this stable-yard, and I'll pick them up."

He made a rush forward, but bang went Bill's other pistol, and he fell to the ground with a deep groan.

"Number 2! Blaze away, my tulips,"

"Now for it," said the sheriff's man; "they have fired two shots each, and that uses up a pair of pistols each man. Come on. We are all safe now. Hurrah! Here's more force. This way, gentlemen. Follow me."

A couple of rough-looking men had now come from the part of the house where they had been drinking porter, to the assistance of Claude's assailants; but the sheriff's man reckoned without his host when he thought it was safe to run in upon Claude, for the latter had a pair of well-charged pistols left, although Bill had no more than he had used.

"I arrest you, Claude Duval," cried the sheriff's man, "and I claim the reward."

"Take it," said Claude, "and make the most of it."

As he spoke, he fired over the horse's back into the fellow's face. He sprang up into the air with a yell, and then fell huddled up and shivering upon the cold stones. The landlord had followed with the two lights so close upon the sheriff's man, that he fell over him, but rolling a pace or two, he half rose, still holding the lights towards Claude Duval, in an attitude as though he were imploring him not to take his life, as he had just taken that of the wretched man who lay in a death struggle within a few paces of him. Claude had but one pistol now left, and he cried—

"I have a life still at my disposal; whoever his tired of his existence may come on and lose it."

"Rush on him. He will miss. It's a £100 a-piece," cried the officer who now succeeded, "and that's worth a chance shot!"

They made a dash forward, but there came suddenly a blaze of light from the other side of the gate leading to the meadows. There was the tramp of a horse's feet, and Claude, upon looking round, beheld a sight that filled him with astonishment. A couple of swarthy looking men, with crape over half their faces, held lighted flambeaus, and close to the gate was Sixteen-string Jack upon Claude's horse, holding a pistol in each hand, pointed at the paralysed throng in the inn yard.

"Mount, Claude, and away," cried Jack. "Did you think I could go further from here, than sufficient to pick up some assistance for you? Oh, no—off and away! Now, you rascals, come on, and you'll every one of you be food for worms."

"Mount," said Bill. "Blaze away. The osses is right as trivets. Here goes."

He and Claude were mounted in a moment. Then one of the rough-looking men with the torches sprang up behind Sixteen-String Jack, and Bill made good room for the other. All this was done so rapidly, that the people in the yard, who had made so sure of capturing Claude Duval, stood like statues. Claude took off his hat gracefully, as he said—

"Gentlemen, I have the honour of bidding you all good night. I suppose you have had enough of us for this time, but if not, you can hunt me up again, and I shall be happy to see you upon the same terms."

"Blaze away!" said Bill, "and douce the glimmeries!"

The flambeau was extinguished in a moment, and off flew Claude and his friends into the profound darkness of the open country, leaving those in the inn yard in a state better to be imagined than described.

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## CHAPTER LXXX.

### A RESOLUTION.

It was a quarter to twelve, upon that night, while Cicely, Markham and May Russel were sitting together, in most anxious consultation concerning Claude, that the servant of the house, where they had taken up their lodging, came and

said, that a Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones had called, and wished to see Mr. Brereton. Markham could hardly command his voice, as he said—

“Show the gentlemen in.”

Two well-dressed persons were ushered into the room, and the servant closed the door. There was a few moments' silence, to allow her to get out of hearing, and then one of the new comers walked up to Cicely, and said—

“My darling!”

With a cry of joy she flung her arms around him—

“It is our Claude!”

“Hush! hush!” said Claude. “Be discreet both in joy and in sorrow. You see, Markham, I am safe, and I have performed my mission, This is my friend Jack. By-the-bye, how does your wound fell now, Jack?”

“Much better. It is so well bandaged, that I have but little inconvenience from it. Ladies, I feel that I ought to apologise for this intrusion, considering who and what I am.”

“You are my husband's friend,” said Cicely, “and that is a sacred title. I recollect and know nothing else of you. Be seated. Oh, Claude, Claude, what have I not suffered in anxiety since I last saw you, and what may I not still have to suffer.”

She wept convulsively upon his bosom, and May could not conquer her tears either. It was then that Markham Brereton spoke, saying—

“Now, Claude, will you listen to me? You see me; you see Cicely, whom you love; and you see your sister May, whom you love likewise. I am inclined to think that for me you have a friendship. You hear, I say, nothing of yourself; but now at this time that you are free, I ask you to think of the happiness of those who are about you.”

“Yes—yes!” said Cicely.

“Say on!” cried May. “Say on!”

“Do you listen to me, Claude, with anything like seriousness?”

“I do.”

“Then you remember, Claude, what I said to you once before. I implore you to leave England, and seek for reputation and happiness in another land.”

“How can I? What means have I?”

“Leave all to me, Claude. If you will say that you will leave England for ever, you shall have the means. I am now in a condition to provide means for us all. Indeed, with the hope that I should be able to do so much as to prevail upon you to follow my advice, I have already made some arrangements. Your consent is all that is wanted. I wait your answer, Claude.”

“And I too, Claude,” sobbed Cicely. “I—your wife!”

“And I too, Claude,” said May. “I—your sister!”

“God of Heaven!” said Claude, “what would you have me do? Am I not a proscribed man? Is not a price set upon my head? Am I not described to the very passengers of the streets in hand-bills, so that all men's hands should be raised against me? And yet you ask me to do this or to do the other, as though, like yourself, I were free to go hither or thither, and no man could say to me, nay!”

“Hear me out, Claude,” said Markham.

“I will.”

“Then let me assure you that the reasons against your going from England are the very reasons why we wish you to go. We cannot say that you will succeed in going; but what we wish is, that you should make the attempt to get to some place where you will not be proscribed, and where you will be free to go hither or thither as you please, and no one to say to you, nay.”

“And your plan?”

“It is this. If you can make your way to Southampton, you will find at the mouth of the Itchen a small bark, called the ‘Rendezvous,’ bound to Cherbourg. Go on board and say you are No. 1, when it will push off at once with you. Onco landed, you can write to me, and we will all three meet you by the speediest means of conveyance.”

Claude was silent.

"My Claude," said Cicely, "the life of alarm I lead will kill me."

"Jack," said Claude, holding out his hand, "will you go with me?"

"To the end of the world, Claude. You know you have but to say the word to me, and I am game for any plan, here or elsewhere."

"And what think you of this plan?"

"I like it. Besides, Claude, I think you are bound to attempt it in deference to those whose happiness depends upon you. We will go together, if you like."

"I am determined," said Claude. "Let it be so. If those who of late have hunted me will let me go in peace, I will go."

"Oh! joy—joy!" cried Cicely. "We shall be happy yet."

"It is joy, Cicely," said Claude, "to hear you speak in such accents. The bloom, too, of old times, comes once more to your cheeks. Do with me what you will. Direct me at your pleasure. Heaven knows I have sufficiently been the bane of your young existence, not to hesitate to take any step which promises you something of your former happiness. I will leave England if I can, Cicely."

She could not reply to him for the tears that crowded to her sight, and she looked a thousand things that no tongue could utter. Claude's resolution was fixed.

"Hear me, Mr. Brereton," he said. "When I say to you that I will do this thing, I really mean it. If those who now persecute me will allow me in peace, with Jack, to leave England, I will leave it; but if in the attempt to do so I am hunted to desperation, woe be to those who so hunt me, for I will turn again and discard from my heart all feelings of pity that have hitherto influenced me, and against the powerful and the rich I will, in this country of weak piety and religious cant, wage an exterminating war!"

"But you will succeed," said Cicely. "Yes, Claude, you will escape."

"I hope so. But now at this moment I seem to feel——"

"What?—Oh! what?"

"No matter. You will all of you call me superstitious, so we will say no more upon that head. Jack, you and I must carefully think over the best plan of carrying out this resolution."

The feeling which had come over Claude was a dismal presentiment of failure and misery, that were to be consequent upon the enterprise to which he had now pledged himself. A sort of shudder came over him, but he repressed the exhibition of the feeling, and having once passed his word to make the attempt, he would not draw back. The presentiment of evil was true, though; for although this was the most extraordinary of Claude's adventures that he was about to undertake, so was it in its results the most calamitous to him.

## CHAPTER LXXXI.

### A MAN HUNT.

As Claude Duval is now at the commencement of that string of extraordinary adventures and audacious proceedings which have been hitherto kept secret from all chroniclers of the career of that wonderful man, it becomes necessary that we should briefly state the position in which the authorities found themselves with regard to him. His repeated and daring escapes had got up a feeling of aggravation in the minds of the London and suburban police, which had completely turned into a personal feeling against Claude; and although no one could say that he had taken a life except in self-defence and to avoid arrest, and then only when hard pressed, the higher authorities of the country chose to brand him as one of the worst of murderers. Now Claude Duval was a highwayman, and as a highwayman he

"Did his spiriting gently."

He robbed the rich, and he robbed without violence if he could. He always treated females with courtesy, and an appeal to his feelings or his generosity was never made in vain ; but he was, to all intents and purposes, a highwayman, and what is worse, he had escaped from Newgate. He had enlisted upon his side all sorts of popular sympathies in consequence of his conduct in the affair of Markham Brereton ; he had defied the authorities, and finally, he had shot Long, who was one of the pet officers of the Home Office. The result of all this was, that Lord William Bathurst, who was then Home-Secretary, sent for the sheriffs, and said—"Gentlemen, a £1000 is at your disposal from the Treasury so soon as I am assured of the apprehension of the notorious Claude Duval. Let him be taken dead or alive : but, mark me, gentlemen, he must be exterminated !"

"Your lordship may depend upon us," said the sheriffs.

Within one hour after this interview it was advertised and placarded over the city and the suburbs, that one thousand pounds would be paid for the arrest of Claude Duval, dead or alive, to any one or more persons who would bring him or his dead body to Newgate. This set every officer in the metropolis on the alert, and there commenced what may be literally called—*a man hunt*. We shall see how Claude Duval, accompanied by his old friend Sixteen-string Jack, got through it ; and now for "danger the first" which they had to encounter. The servant at the house where Markham Brereton, Cicely, and May lodged, had found out that there was some mystery going on ; and when Claude and Jack arrived she went into the next room, and by placing her ear against a small hole in the wainstcot, where a knot in the wood-work had been removed, she heard something, but not all that passed. In about a quarter of an hour that servant crept down stairs into the kitchen, and so frightened was she at the mere name of the renowned Claude Duval, that she there and then, after trying to say something to her mistress, fainted away. This extraordinary conduct upon the part of the servant naturally alarmed her mistress. Some hasty but efficient restoratives were used upon the spur of the moment, and the girl recovered sufficiently to pronounce the name of Claude Duval.

"Who?" said the landlady. "Why, what is the girl dreaming about?"

"Missus, missus, Claude Duval is up stairs, and he's going to Southampton on board a ship ; but before he goes all our throats are to be cut across and across !"

Upon this, being seriously affected by [the vision of the throat-cutting, which she owed entirely to her own imagination, she fainted again. Now, the name of Claude Duval had scarcely less effect upon the mistress than upon the maid, and leaving the servant in her state of syncope, she ran out of the house and round the corner to a public house, the landlord of which was a constable in his own right, and rushing into the bar, she screamed—

"Claude Duval ! Claude Duval !"

Now, the landlord of the Cat and Cucumber was not a hero, and he forthwith thought that this was no other than Claude Duval himself in some artful disguise ; so he popped into a cupboard and shut himself in, clutching the door fast by the panneling, at the expense of all his finger nails. The woman who had so terrified him flung herself into a chair and while she screamed out at the top of her voice, "Claude Duval is in my house !" she executed a fit or two of hysterics after the most approved fashion, and alarmed the whole house in the course of a few minutes. Landlady, chambermaid, cook, boots, pot-boy, and bar-maid, all congregated around her, and then the landlord emerged from the cupboard. He fully intended by so doing to exercise a pacifying influence upon all persons there assembled ; but somehow or other he failed, as very many people do, of producing the effect he intended, but was strikingly successful in producing the very reverse, the more especially as he prefaced his appeal with the exclamatory observation of "Here I am ! here I am !"

Who could the assembled commons suppose it to be but the veritable Claude Duval himself ! and therefore it was no wonder that the chambermaid fell over the landlady, and the pot-boy fell over the chambermaid, and everybody else fell over these.



"It's me, I tell you!" cried the landlord, and he danced round the throng like a wild Indian; and then the idea struck him that the information he had received might be worth something, so snatching his staff from a peg, upon which it proudly hung by the side of a silver tankard and two punch bowls, he rushed from the house and made the best of his way to Newgate. The valorous landlord of the Cat and Cucumber was not disappointed. His information was valuable, and highly appreciated in the classic regions of the Old Bailey; and while he is there making a sensation, we will return to Claude and his friends. They had not the remotest suspicion of what an untoward accident had occurred to already proclaim Claude's whereabouts, and the consultation continued, and ended by Claude and Sixteen-string Jack agreeing that their best plan would be to start at once, and make a first stage on horseback as far as they could conveniently go, so as to leave London and their more immediate enemies behind them. Both Jack and Claude were quite familiar with the road they were going to travel up on as far as Bagshot, and they did not expect to reach so far before finding it necessary to halt to refresh their horses, which were now at the public-house yard in Drury Lane, where Claude had directed Jack to go from the inn near Barnes. We will, therefore, now rapidly shift the scene, and get our readers to stand with us at the door of the Old Moon Tavern in Drury Lane. Two horses are there ready caparisoned, and upon one of them is Sixteen-string Jack already mounted. The other stands close to the foot-way, and Claude Duval has his left hand over the saddle, while with his right hand he is shaking the landlord by the digits.

"God bless you, my body," said old Anthony, "take care of yourself."

"I mean to do so," said Claude, "and if we should ever meet again, Anthony, you will hear of me."

"Meet again? Pho! We shall meet again, lad, take my word for it. You are a Knight of the Road, and a Knight of the Road you will be till—but no matter. They won't let you go, boy, I tell you; but you can try it. I say we, shall meet again."

A lad came up at the moment, and said—

"Anthony, can you hold that lantern up a bit, and give a fellow a light?"

"Ay—ay, that can I. You are one of the right sort."

The lad had a piece of printed paper in his hand, which he was about to twist up for the purpose of making a pipe-light of it, but touching his hat to Claude, he said in a voice of respect mingled with affection—

"Captain, you would perhaps like to see this first?"

"Do you know me?" said Claude, as he took the paper.

"Yes, captain. You saved me once from the grabs, at the risk of your own capture. Read it."

Claude took the paper, and saw it was the notice offering the thousand pounds reward for him. He handed it back with a smile, as he said—

"Do people light their pipes here with thousand pound notes? Why, here I am, and any stout fellow might take me, or shoot me at all events."

The lad shook his head, and lit his pipe with the placard.

"Ah, Claude," said Matthew, "you leave good friends behind you; but if you will be off—good-bye, and the sooner you go now the better."

Claude shook hands with the lad, and then vaulted into his saddle. He gave the rein to the noble steed he bestrode, and he and Sixteen-string Jack trotted over the uneven pavement of Drury Lane, and making the best of their way westward they soon cleared the houses, and got upon the high-road to Brentford, hoping at all events to reach Staines before it would be necessary to make any very considerable halt. They were both plainly dressed, but each had strapped to his saddle-back a small valise, in which there were materials for some very opposite disguises, and each had a good pair of pistols upon which he could rely. And now we must for a very short time indeed leave them to trot down the Brentford Road, while we state that they had not left the lodging of Markham Brereton, Cicely, and May, a quarter of an hour, before a quiet ring came at the

area bell, and the servant, who had recovered by this time, crept into the area—servants will do at times, to ask who was there? She was yet all of a tremble as she afterwards declared, with the idea that Claude Duval was still in the house, although she had heard the street-door opened and shut once very recently, as if to let some one out of the house.

“Open the door as quietly as you can,” said a voice, that sounded like some one trying to file the teeth of a saw as harmoniously as it was possible to conduct such an operation.

“The Lord be good to us, who are you?”

“Don’t ask questions, but open the door at once, or you may have your throat cut.”

This speech so chimed in with the girl’s fears, that she was near fainting again, but she did manage to crawl up stairs and open the street-door, when she fell upon her knees to beg for mercy and protection—a proceeding of so unexpected a character to the man upon the step, that he at once fell over her, and lay sprawling in the passage, making more noise than was sufficient to alarm the street. He swore and the girl screamed, so that if Claude had still been up stairs, it would not have been their fault if he had not suspected something was amiss. Five more men, who had been dodging about the neighbouring doors, came up, and they assembled in the passage, drawing each a pistol from his pocket. The one who had fallen, and who had been sent forward, on account of his skill in finesse, to get the door open, gently gathered himself up, crying—“Guard the door, you two. Guard the door as agreed, you two. The rest follow me. It’s as good, one way and another, as two hundred pounds a-piece. Come on.”

The four, leaving two to guard, commenced an active search, holding their pistols ready to fire; and there can be no doubt that these six officers, who had come direct from Newgate, had made up their minds to shoot Claude the moment they should clap eyes upon him, since the reward of one thousand pounds was to be paid for him alive or dead.

“What’s the matter?” said Markham Brereton from the top of the stairs although he guessed pretty well what was the matter.

“There he is! There he is!” cried one. Bang! went a pistol, and then they all saw by the light that Markham carried, that he was not their man. Luckily the shot missed him, and Brereton, as he entered his room, cried—“Thieves! Thieves! I’ll soon give them a warm reception. Where are my pistols?”

“No, no!” shouted one of the officers, “Good God, no! It’s a mistake. We are police officers. Don’t, sir. We are looking for Claude Duval.”

“Yes,” cried the servant, who had recovered sufficiently to sit upon the doormat, “and he’s up stairs, and he said he was going to Southampton to bid England a *doe*. I heard him say a *doe*. If there’s any reward a going, perhaps, gentlemen, you’ll think of me, Susan Grates, with only eight pounds a-year, and find herself in everythink.”

“Claude who?” cried Markham.

“Duval, the famous highwayman,” said one of the officers. “Remember it’s felony to harbour him, sir.”

“Stuff, I know nothing of Duval. Now that I know who and what you are, you may come and search and welcome; but I’m not at all obliged to you for the pistol-shot you sent at me.”

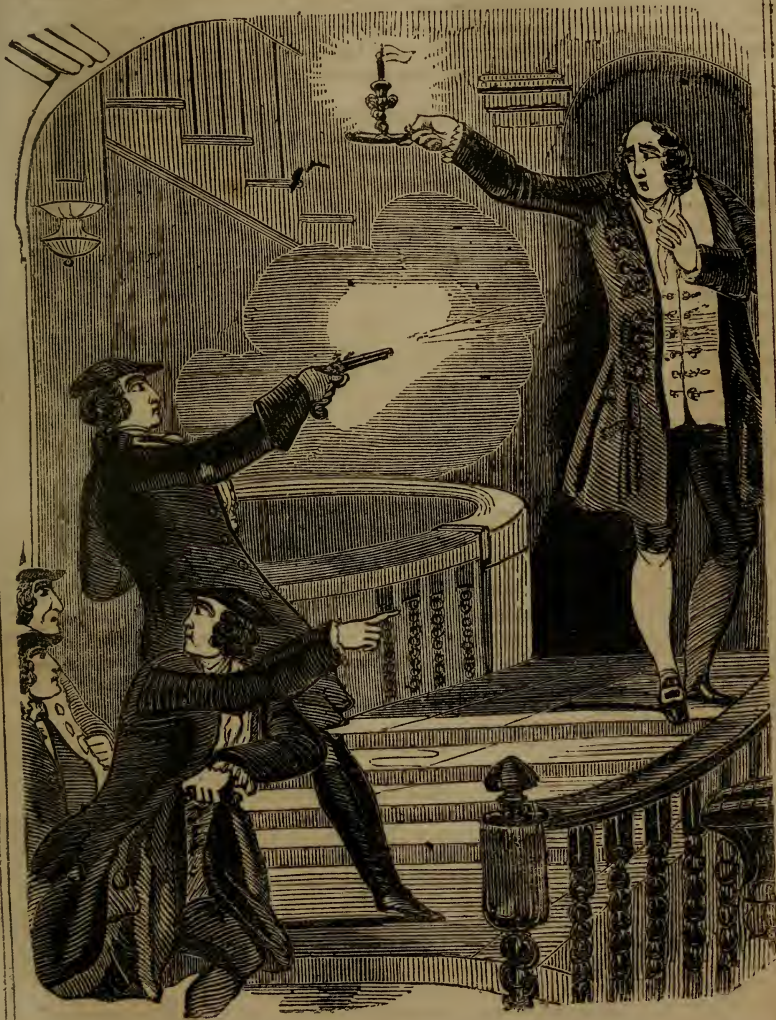
“Never mind it, sir. It wasn’t meant for you. If so be as it had hit you, it would have been all a mistake, so never mind about that, sir.”

The officers had concluded their search of the lower part of the house, and now they mounted the stairs; but their tact in such matters soon convinced them that if the bird had been there at all it had flown, and they looked amazingly disappointed, as one of them said, “Why, the girl here declares she heard Claude Duval himself speak of going to Southampton, and so on to leave the country.”

“The girl may declare just whatever it may please her whim or fancy, but

there is no Claude Duval here to my knowledge; I and these ladies may have been talking of him, as many folks do, and that may have misled the servant, who has been listening probably at key-holes."

"Very likely," said the principal officer. "Come along, comrades; I see it is



MARKHAM BRERETON IS FIRED AT BY MISTAKE.

all a mistake. We must wait for better luck; and I can only say, sir, that we apologise to you for the trouble we have given you."

"Oh, I suppose you must do your duty."

The officers all left the house, but when they got round the corner of the street, he who had last spoken, said—

"Comrades, the information was correct—I know that fellow. It's Mr. Brereton; and you may take your oaths Claude has been there, and has gone. We will be off to the sheriff's at once, and something must be decided on. That was the nest, although the bird was not in it."

At the very moment that the officer was making such a sagacious remark, Markham Brereton said in a whisper to May and Cicely—

"Claude's route is discovered, and some means must be taken to warn him; I will think and act as quickly as possible."

What measures they were that Markham Brereton took, we must leave to be developed by circumstances, while it behoves us to detail the extraordinary steps which the police authorities, backed by the Home Office, took for the apprehension of Claude. A body of men, no less than thirty in number, was collected together; and, as the authorities did not for a moment doubt that it was really the intention of Claude to get to Southampton, whether for the purpose of embarkation or not, they, by hard riding across the country, stationed these men in parties of three along the high-road, with directions for them to trot for some miles to and fro upon the road, and intercept any one suspected. Now, the clear distance from London to Southampton being seventy-five miles, these thirty men commanded the road extremely well, and more particularly so, as they did not commence their surveillance until they got to Hounslow and its vicinity. Their orders distinctly were to capture or kill Claude Duval.

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## CHAPTER LXXXII.

### CLAUDE'S PROGRESS.

AGAIN we ride with Claude and Jack upon the high-road to Brentford. The night was anything but pleasant. A drizzling rain was falling, and the boisterous south-west wind was blowing, which, when it came across the trees, made such a howling and wailing noise, that one would have thought a thousand devils were trying to tear them up by their roots. They did not ride fast, for Claude was desirous of sparing the horses, not knowing what untoward circumstances might yet disturb the serenity of their route. It was a wise precaution, although neither he nor Jack had the least idea that their intentions were known, or that such formidable preparations were making against them. They had passed through the long straggling town of Brentford, and were half way to Staines, when some clock in the vicinity of where they were struck three. Claude counted the strokes, but just as he said "three," Jack held up his hand and cried—

"Listen!"

Claude inclined his ear, and heard quite plainly the tramp of a horse's feet coming after them upon the road they had taken. It was quite clear, from the sound, that it was only one horseman, and Claude said—

"Let us go on at a walk, Jack, till this horse comes up to us. I suppose we are a match for one mounted man, if he should prove an enemy?"

"Hush!" said Jack again. "What's that?"

"What's what, Jack? You are full of alarms to-night, or rather this morning."

"No, Claude, no. Hold my horse while I dismount a moment, and listen closer to the ground, for my ears much deceive me if I do not catch the sound of horses' feet in the meadow to the left. I shall soon know, Claude."

Jack dismounted, and crouched down with his ear almost touching the long grass on the way-side, and then springing up, he cried—

"I was right, Claude. Some horsemen are coming at a hard canter across those meadows."

"Never mind those just now, Jack," said Claude; "but remount, for our

friend in the rear, if he be one, will be upon us directly, and here he is. Hold!"

Claude wheeled his horse into the middle of the road, and faced the advancing rider, who reined in his steed with a force and suddenness that threw it upon its haunches, as he cried, in the well-known voice of Markham Brereton—

"Thank God, I am in time! Claude, I have news for you."

"For me? Of Cicely? Oh! tell me—she is well?"

"Quite. But your route and intention of escaping are both discovered, and the bloodhounds of the law are now upon your track. £1000 are offered for you, dead or alive; and exertions, such as never were before made, are now making for your apprehension. Thank Heaven, I have overtaken you to warn you!"

"You hear, Jack," said Claude, in a saddened tone. "My prophetic feeling was correct. I thought that we should not be permitted to go in peace. Mr. Brereton, from my heart I thank you. Go to London again, and protect Cicely. Do not risk being seen here in bad company. If I succeed in what I am attempting, you will hear from me; if I fail, you will hear of me. Farewell, sir; I owe you much, and you have had much to forgive in me."

"No—no, Claude. No."

"Hark!" said Jack; "they come."

"They?" cried Brereton. "Whom mean you?—enemies?"

"To us, perhaps, Mr. Brereton, but not to you," said Claude. "We hear some horsemen hurrying across the meadows. I pray you leave us, and do not stain a spotless reputation by even seeming to exchange courtesies with such as we are. Farewell!—farewell!"

"No, Claude—hear me. You are now engaged upon, perhaps, the only enterprise of your life with which I can truly sympathise. You are seeking the road and the means of procuring an honourable career, and it behoves me to help you on. I will not desert you. If these be foes who are approaching, they must be met. Better for three to meet them than two. I am armed."

"And will you, indeed, aid in my defence, knowing who and what I am?"

"Yes; for you are endeavouring to be that which you are not now. I am not helping the highwayman, but I am helping Claude Duval, who is trying to be honourable and honest."

"Here they are!" cried Jack. "Here they are!"

Six horsemen dashed through a little edge, and gained the highway.

"Stand!" cried one. "In the king's name, stand, whoever you are! We are officers! Declare your names and condition, or we will fire upon you! Our present duty doesn't stand on ceremony!"

"Forward!" cried Claude; and he spurred his horse towards the officers—  
"Forward against the bloodhounds who are in for a man-hunt!"

He fired one of his pistols as he advanced, and Jack did the same. The officers hastily discharged a volley at Claude and his friends, and then they were all mingled up together. Claude struck one officer senseless from his horse with the heavy silver-mounted but-end of his discharged pistol. One had been shot. Jack grappled with another, and Markham Brereton was assailed by two, one of whom had to hold his horse until the other should get a fair aim at him to shoot him. Claude flew to his rescue and dashed down another of the foe, at the same moment that Jack and the one with whom he was struggling both fell from their horses together. Jack, contrived, however to keep his horse's bridle over his arm; but the officer disengaging himself, and finding that his party was getting the worst of it, ran off on the London-road, shouting "Murder! murder!" at the top of his lungs. Markham Brereton had knocked down the one with whom he grappled, and who so obligingly tried to hold him to be shot; and the sixth, who had fired, but ineffectually, two pistols, and kept rather aloof of the fray, set spurs to his horse, and galloped off at a break-neck pace, expecting every moment to hear a bullet whizzing after him.

"Jack—Jack, are you hurt?" cried Claude.

"No, Claude! And you?"

"Not a scratch!"

"Nor I," said Markham Brereton, "to signify. Claude—Claude, what will you do now?"

"Pursue my journey, and by the high-road, too. I know my danger. I will do what I have undertaken if I can, and woe be to those who stop me. Your hand, Mr. Brereton. The successful issue of this first struggle I owe to you. And now I implore you to leave me. Remember that Cicely and May, if I fall, have no friend in the world but you."

"That is true. I thought, at the moment, of going with you; but you have decided me. Farewell, Claude, until we meet again. Farewell!"

Claude and Jack had now mounted again, and Markham Brereton turned his horse's head to London. Claude waved his arm, and then off they went separate ways; but Markham Brereton, with the honest heart his bosom had ever known found his feeling in favour of Claude Duval had reached its highest pitch, at the very time he believed him to be, in a manner of speaking, doomed to destruction; for he did not think it at all possible that Claude could escape the powerful means now resorted to for his apprehension.

"He is doomed!—He is doomed!" was the exclamation of Markham Brereton, after he had left Claude and Sixteen-string Jack. "He is doomed! and, as he truly says, I shall be the only friend of poor May Duval, and of my sister Cicely."

Jack and Claude trotted on about a mile before either of them spoke; and then Claude, rising somewhat in his stirrups, said—

"Jack, where are we now? Can you guess? That little racket with our old friends the police, has, I confess, put me somewhat out of my reckoning."

"We must be close to Staines," said Jack. But, Claude, tell me truly what you think of our chances?"

"Just what I always thought, Jack, neither more nor less."

"And that?"

"That is, that we shall fail. Now look you, Jack. My crimes, as they choose to call them, are nothing in the eyes of the officers, but only consider how valuable I have become. I am a £1000 note, you know, dead or alive, to whoever can take me, and do you not think that amply sufficient to arm half the nation against me? No, Jack, we will try to do this, because I have promised it to those whom I love; but we shall be battled with, and taken back once again into the angry turmoil of life. Be assured we shall not escape."

"Then why not strike across the fields to Hounslow at once?"

"I have promised Cicely."

"Well, Claude, you shall take your own way; and, fail or succeed, I am with you. And there is one thing I have made up my mind to, which is, if they do kill you they shall kill me too, for I will only live long enough after you to baulk some of them of the enjoyment of the expected reward."

"You must think differently, Jack. But come on. Our horses don't fail, and we may get through Staines yet."

The rain had by this time blown off, but the wind was high and squally; and when they came near to any open space, it blew in such buffeting gusts against them, that the horses frequently swerved from the high-road several paces to avoid its violence, and in this way they got on for a couple of miles further, when the lights of Staines became distinctly visible to them. Thus provided, they found no foes to oblige them to forego their intentions, and they resolved upon waiting for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour to give the horses some refreshment. They wanted nothing in particular themselves, but they both felt of what importance it was to keep the cattle in condition.

"Stop, Jack," said Claude, "at the first inn you see. It can't matter which; and by no means go inside, or stray above a few paces from your horse. One don't know who in Staines might be glad of a £1000 this damp and gusty night. Push on, we shall be there in ten minutes."

They put their horses to increased speed, and soon reached the picturesque suburbs of Staines, and drew up at the door of a comfortable-looking little inn, in front

of which was a good horse-trough and a pump. A man was quite busy pasting a bill upon the face of the pump, and whistling carelessly as he did so. How heedless was he of the pang that bill might give to some fellow-being! Claude, as he dismounted, glanced at it, and saw that it had at the top, in large letters, "£1000 Reward." He knew those letters at once. He had seen one of those bills in Drury-lane. Claude reached close up to the pump, and read the bill through, which the man observing, he said—

"Do you think they'll catch him, sir?"

"No," said Claude.

"Well, they means to try arter it. Three of 'em galloped through the town arter giving me twenty-five of these here bills to stick; so, in course, I'm a sticking of 'em; howsomdever, I do hopes as they won't nab him, arter all. I've heard some good of the chap."

Claude walked slowly away and rejoined Jack. The ostler of the house had issued forth to take charge of the horses, and touching his cap to Claude, he said,

"Will you leave 'em here in the yard, sir? Capital 'commodation, here, sir."

"No," said Claude; "rub them down a little, wash their feet, and give them a few mouthfuls of wet hay. That will do."

"Wery good, sir—wery good. Humph! a precious knowing-looking blade that."

The landlord now came out, and waving his hand in quite an oratorical manner, he said to Claude and Jack—

"Walk in, gentlemen—walk in; everything of the best, gentlemen. Private room, or capital parlour. We pride ourselves on our ale, gentlemen; this way, if you please."

"No, thank you," said Claude. "We make no stay; but bring a couple of glasses of ale, if you please, and we will drink them. Your accommodation inside is so good that if we were to cross the threshold, who knows but we might not be able to tear ourselves away?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the landlord; "very good. Well, gentlemen, it's as you please, of course. I'll bring the ale in a moment."

The ostler, with the hissing noise peculiar to his class, rubbed down the horses with a whisp of straw, and the landlord appeared with the ale, while Jack was reading the bill on the pump.

"Ah, gentlemen!" said the landlord, "it's a shocking thing to see £1000 notes flying about in such a way, ain't it? It would be the making of me now if I could nab him. Ah, dear me! a £1000! What a set-up to a struggling man."

"Well," said Claude, "I only wish you may get it. Are the horses ready, ostler?"

"Yes, sir, here they is, as fresh as daisies, and as rosy as apples in August. Thank you, sir. Hilloa!—more customers; why, what is the matter? They seem half dead ones."

A strange cavalcade was within sight of the inn. It was now about five o'clock in the morning, and there was sufficient light just to make it a puzzle to know if it were best to have a lantern or not; nevertheless, those who approached carried a light, and it was evident that some of them were wounded. The idea that they might be the officers with whom he, Claude, accompanied by Jack and Markham, had had the recent encounter, crossed his mind in a moment, and touching Jack upon the arm, he whispered—

"Mount, and away!"

"All ready," said Jack, as he vaulted into the saddle.

Claude followed his example; and then that strange spirit of fun or mischief, call it what you will, which was a part of his nature, came over him; and at that inopportune moment, and regardless of the possible inference that might be drawn from his conduct, he beckoned to the landlord, and when that worthy came close to his stirrup, Claude touched him, and said to him in a confidential sort of voice—

"My friend I don't think you will ever be set up by the £1000 you will get

for the apprehension of Claude Duval. Good night!—you are too wise here by a good deal.”

Claude touched his forehead with his finger, and then accompanied by Jack, galloped from the door of the inn, just as the approaching cavalcade of men on horseback and on foot were within fifty paces of the door.

“Now, Jack,” said Claude, “this will be a case of the devil take the hindermost. Hold on, and scamper away as though the dead Jew doctor were behind you, who brought you to life again, after your little adventure at Tyburn.”

“Don’t mention it,” said Jack; “that’s a subject I never willingly refer to.”

“Excuse me, then; but ride on.”

“Most willingly.”

They both now put their horses to their utmost speed; for from what Claude had said to the cunning landlord of the public-house, as well as from the descriptions that would be given of them, there could be no doubt that they would be hotly as well as immediately pursued, and they wished both to get such a start of the party who would follow them as, at all events, not to be at the mercy of every little petty accident that might happen to them on their route. Thus far this desirable state of things would certainly not fail to be soon accomplished, if they continued at anything like their present rate for long without pursuit; but that was not to be. As Claude had foreseen, the advancing party soon found they were upon the track; and although now those who came on foot were completely thrown off the chase, the horsemen, stimulated both by cupidity and by revenge, took to the road in good style, and it would evidently be no fault of theirs if they did not hunt to death the man upon whose head society had set its bane and its price. Alas! poor Claude.

## CHAPTER LXXXIII.

### CLAUDE AND JACK IN NEW CHARACTERS.

“HARK!” cried Jack; “do you hear anything, Claude?”

“No—no. Don’t draw bridle up yet, Jack; push on one mile further, if you think your horse will stand it.”

“Not at this rate, Claude.”

“Then slacken a little.”

They now decreased their speed nearly a third; but yet they went at rather a slashing pace, and got over in the next five or ten minutes a considerable stretch of ground; so that even Claude began to think it would be just as well to listen a little to ascertain if their pursuers were or were not upon their track.

“Now, Jack,” he cried, “hold in a bit.”

Jack did so, and the panting steeds, with right good will, paused in the middle of rather a miry piece of roadway. As soon as the clatter of their own horses’ hoofs ceased, there could be no mistake about the fact of their being pursued, although it was quite clear that they were considerably in advance of the mounted party who were so anxious to come up with them.

“Jack, where are we?” said Claude.

“I am looking about me to find out. Ah, I know now. Why, we have got into a cross-road by some means, and have passed Bagshot.”

“Indeed?”

“Yes, Claude, indeed we have, and what is worse, I know we are near a public-house called ‘The Weavers’ Arms.’”

“Friendly?”

“Quite the reverse, Claude; let us avoid it by all means. It is kept by a man named Clink, who is one of the greatest rascals unhung. He has committed crimes all his life, but continued, somehow, to keep upon the right side of the law.



He would give us up for ten pounds, and go twenty miles to see us both hung, if he were promised our boots for his trouble."

"The deuce he would! Trot on, Jack."

They were now trotting along the road, and Jack added—

"Yes, Claude, I know the rascal well. He keeps the house with his wife and niece, and does little business; but some say they would not sleep there for a night for five hundred pounds, or the hopes of it, if they were alive in the morning to claim it."

"Humph! You know, Jack, that our great object just now will be to put our pursuers upon a wrong scent."

"Of course. Shall we strike into the meadows?"

"Why, no, Jack; I have made myself a positive promise that I would go to Southampton if I could, and by the high-road, too; and, please the pigs, I will do so if I can. I don't mean to say that I would hesitate, if obvious reasons demanded it, to turn aside from my path into the open country, but I will only do so as a last extremity."

"That is like you, Claude; but, for God's sake, listen."

"I hear them coming, Jack. Ah! what light is that I see glimmering yonder, like a faint star amid the trees? Do you know it?"

"Yes; it is at the door of the Weavers' Arms."

"Come on, then, I have thought of something which may answer our purpose, and which I will communicate to you as we ride on. Desperate circumstances, you know, Jack, require desperate remedies."

"They do, indeed."

As Claude and Jack now rode rapidly on, the former, in a very few words, communicated to the latter the scheme he had hit upon, but which will best, to the reader, show itself in the performance. Jack, to be sure, held up his hands, and gave a sort of groan, to which Claude carefully responded—

"You think I am mad, Jack?"

"No—no, Claude, not mad; but of all the daring and desperate things that ever you did, or I have, from popular rumour, heard of your doing, this transcends them."

"Will you aid me, Jack?—that is the question."

"No, Claude, that is not the question, for you know well it is beyond all question. Only tell me what you would have me to do, and I will do it, even if it were to ride back and meet those who are upon our track, and ask them the time of night. I am with you upon this enterprise, and I will live or die with you in it."

"Then, Jack, we will do things that all we have done shall, in comparison, sound tame and commonplace. Come on. Ah! here we are. Is that a man at the door?"

"Yes—yes."

"Do you think they will recognise you?"

"Certainly not. They think we with the dead. Besides, I have altered myself very much, as you yourself admit; so, in the name of all that's desperate, come on."

"Good," said Claude; and trotting up to the door of the inn, he said—

"Hilloa! Ostler! ostler!"

"Here you are," said a surly voice; "what now? Can't you see a fellow when he's standing at the door, in conseskense o' hearing the osses' feet?"

"Very good, amiable creature," said Claude. "Have you anybody in the house?"

"Yes."

"Well, who is it? and here's a crown for you."

"O! that alters the matter; when I see a gemman is a gemman, it's quite another affair altogether. There's nobody in the parlour but Jake's the lawyer."

"Well, take them two horses into the stable."

"The yard, to cool, you mean?"

"No—the stable at once; so do as you are told, and recollect, you have not got the crown yet, although you will have it. Come now, Joe, look sharp."

"Well, that's odd," muttered the ostler; "how comed he to know as my name was Joe, I wonder; for Joe it is, and no sort o' mistake. Howsomedever, a crown is a crown."

With this wise apothegm, the ostler took the two foaming horses by the bridles and led them through a gate into the inn-yard, and thence to the stable. Claude and Jack followed him closely, and entered the stable with him. They waited until he had lit a little piece of candle end, and stuck it to the wall, and then Claude, stepping close up to him, laid hold of him by the collar with one hand, and clapped the muzzle of a pistol against his head with the other, saying as he did so—

"If you speak one word, except in answer to me, or make the least alarm, I'll blow your brains out as soon as I would take a mad dog by the tail and smash him."

The ostler's mouth opened to an extraordinary width, and he glared at Claude like a man possessed.

"Now, Jack," added Claude, "quick!"

Jack, with great dexterity, dragged the ostler to one of the racks, and so tied him up by the halter round his neck, that any very violent exertion would infallibly hang him; then with a piece of strong twine that he had about him, Jack had the fellow's hands securely tied behind him.

"Now, my friend," said Claude, as he laid the five-shilling piece upon the ground, "I promised you a crown, and a crown you shall have; but one of us intend to keep guard in the yard, and if you make any noise, you will be a dead man."

"Oh, sir!"

"Silence!"

"Yes, yes, yes, sir; oh, no, no, don't; I am silent—oh dear, yes!"

Claude and Jack closed the stable-door, and then at once went into the house. To the right hand of the passage was the bar, with all its bright array of glasses, and pots, and jugs, and into which there was an entrance by a little half-door, and, immediately opposite, was the door of the parlour, in which Claude had been informed that Mr. Jakes the lawyer (whoever that individual might be) was solacing himself. There was a good light burning in the bar, and in it sat the pious landlord of the Weavers' Arms, and his wife, while a young lass, his niece, was receiving a severe lecture upon the impropriety of wearing her hair in curls.

"It only encourages the filthy men," said Mrs. Clink, "and that's what you do it for."

"Indeed, aunt!"

"How dare you," said Clink—"how dare you contradict your aunt? 'Honour your parents, that thy days may be long in the land,' and as you are an orphan, that text may be very well altered to 'honour your uncle and aunt.' Remember that we keep you from the workhouse."

"No, uncle."

"What?"

"I say no, uncle, because that is not the fact. I act here as your servant, and the only great difference between me and the other servants is, that I get no wages, and am expected to be more thankful seemingly upon that account than my conscience will let me."

Mr. and Mrs. Clink held up their hands, with a kind of holy horror, as though they could have said—"There's gratitude for you. That's what you get for feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked!" and at that moment Claude and Jack entered the house. The last few words of this controversy were not lost upon Claude. He gathered hope from them, that the niece might not feel so very much hurt, if he were to the uttermost to carry out his plan of operations. Walk: g right on, until he came to the little half door that led into the bar,

Claude opened it with all the coolness in the world, and to the utter astonishment of the landlord, stood in the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Weavers' Arms.

"Have you a cupboard?" said Claude.

"A cupboard?" gasped the landlord.

"A cupboard?" said Mrs. Clink.



MISTAKES IN AN AWKWARD "FIX" BETWEEN CLAUDE AND MARY ANN.

The eyes of both of them wandered to a door in the wall, and Claude at once stepping to it, flung it open, and saw a tolerably-sized pantry.

"Good!" he said; and as he spoke he drew from his breast-pocket a pistol. "Now, Mr. Clink, I will trouble you for those linen sleeves you have on and for that apron, after which you will do me the honour of getting into that cupboard;

and you, madam," turning to Mrs. Clink, "along with him, or I swear by all that's sacred I will blow your brains out, and make you famous as the Clinks who were murdered by Claude Duval, in all time to come."

"Claude—Duval!" gasped the landlord.

"The Lord look down upon us!" said the landlady.

Jack, however, gave neither of them much time for reflection. He stripped the linen sleeves from the landlord, and took his apron likewise, and then thrust him into the cupboard, with a shock that nearly sent all the breath out of his body.

"Now, madam, follow your spouse," said Claude, "and if I hear so much as a cough or a sneeze, or even a breath too hardly drawn, and calculated to excite attention, I will send the contents of a pair of double-barrelled pistols through the panel of this door. There's a thousand pounds reward for me alive or dead, and you may both earn it if you like, by sacrificing your lives for it, and it will make a nice little fortune for your pretty niece here."

Bang went the door of the cupboard, and Jack locked it, while Claude, hastily divesting himself of his coat, hat, and cravat, put on the landlord's sleeves and apron. Jack made the same preparations, only turning up his shirt sleeves; so that, as they both stood there, no one would have supposed that they were anything else than belonging to the place. All this while the niece had sat in silent amazement, and Claude now turning to her, said,—“My dear, you know who I am, and what a sum of blood-money you would get by betraying me. Every guinea would look red with gore. I use no threats to you, but I make one promise.

“Nay,” continued Claude, with that soft and handsome smile, which at times would light up his features as though a ray of sunshine had come across them. “Nay, be not alarmed. Nothing can be further from my purpose, than to cause you a moment's pain. The promise I make you is, that if you can have the heart to betray me, you may do so with perfect personal safety, as neither my friend nor I would raise an arm against you. Now, Jack, be busy. Remember, you are Sam the waiter, and a bit of a fool as most Sams are, and I am the landlord of the Weavers' Arms, and we have heard a couple of fellows ride by here at a breakneck pace, some quarter of an hour ago.”

“Agreed. All's right,” said Jack. “Listen!”

Claude did so, and distinctly heard several horsemen arrive at the door of the inn. One of them cried out—

“Come on. What are you lagging behind for? If he is here, we ought, as many of us as possible, to be in at the death. Come on.”

“My nag has gone lame,” said another. “Don't dismount any more of you, Jefferson and I will go in and see if he is here, or has been past. Confound the fellow, what a dance he leads us; but we must have him. Who on earth can it be he has with him?”

“Ah, that's a puzzler,” said another.

Jack had now, with a towel in one hand and a glass in the other, gone out to the passage; and as he met the two officers, he said—

“Want your horses seen to, gentlemen?”

“No—no. What house is this? We are from London.”

“Weavers' Arms, gentlemen, at your service. Master's in the bar. Want bed, gentlemen?”

“No—no. Oh, are you the landlord?”

“I ought to go for to be,” said Claude, who had lit a pipe, and was smoking it with all the deliberation in the world. “Is anything amiss, sir?”

“Nothing particular. Have two horsemen passed your door lately, landlord?”

“Two fellers going like mad—one a long 'un with a slouched hat, on a dark bay?”

“Yes—yes.”

“Lord bless you, yes. Why, they are five miles off by now, if they keep up their pace.”

"Confound them!"

"What, do you want 'em? Lord love you, if I'd only now have known that, I could have hailed them from my door, and told 'em to wait a bit till you came up. What a pity, wasn't it now, really?"

## CHAPTER LXXXIV.

### THE ROAD AGAIN.

THE officer turned to his companions, as he said—

"Why, this fellow is a born fool. I tell you what, master landlord, one of them men on horseback was Claude Duval, and there's a clear £1000 offered for him alive or dead; so you see a nice chance has gone by you."

"A thousand pounds?"

"Ah, yes. Neither more nor less"

"Why I shall be a made man—when I catches him. Well, if ever I sees him behind this here bar, I'll know now what to go for to say to him. A thousand pounds? Oh, my eye!"

"Stupid, is there any one in your house?"

"Only mad Mr Jakes," said the landlord's niece. "He's a gentleman whose wits are not all right, poor man, but quite harmless, and we let him sit in the parlour of an evening. He knows nobody, poor silly creature, and sometimes he miscalls both me and my uncle, and thinks himself all sorts of things, sometimes the captain of a ship, and sometimes a king, and at times a lawyer."

"What, Kate," said Claude, taking at once the judicious hint thus thrown out to him by the landlord's niece, "is poor silly Mr. Jakes in the parlour?"

"Yes, uncle. Didn't you see him come in?"

"Not I, faith, my gal; but howsomdever—"

At this moment the parlour door was opened, and the face of a middle-aged red-whiskered man appeared at it with a large tumbler with a spoon in it, and a slice of lemon at the bottom of it, in his hand.

"Mr. Clink," he said, "just fill this again if you please, and make it a little sweeter than the last. Eh?—Lord bless me—why—why—eh? What's all this?"

"Is that the mad fellow?" said one of the officers. "He seems to be getting worse rather. What an odd look he has got, to be sure. Why he looks like a man who was never so much astonished in all his life. Come—come, Jakes. Lie down, sir!"

"What!" said the attorney, "am I mad?"

"Not a doubt of it. Lie down, sir. Come—come! Upon my word, landlord, you ought not to permit a man in such a state of mind to have mixed liquors. What, now, if he were to go off quite furious all of a sudden?"

"Not allow 'ne to have mixed liquors?" cried the attorney, as he advanced to the bar, and looked at Claude with an air of astonishment. "Who are you, I should like to know, and where is Clink?"

"I never seed you so bad as you is to-night, Mr. Jakes," said Claude; "I shan't let you have any more brandy and water. Go home, do. Go home, now, and you shall be a captain of a ship. That pleases him generally," added Claude in a whisper to the officers.

"Oh, does it? It's always best to humour these mad fellows, I think. Go home, Captain Jakes, go home, do, there's a brave fellow. You are a captain, you know—poor fellow—go home."

Jakes stood with the tumbler in his hand, and his mouth wide open with astonishment. He shook his head, and passed his hand over his eyes. It was

quite clear that Jakes was getting extremely doubtful whether he was awake or asleep. At length, with a stamp of the foot, he cried—

“What the deuce is the meaning of all this? Are you all drunk, or do you want to drive a man out of his senses? I am an attorney.”

“There, gentlemen, I thought as how he'd come to that.”

“Where's Mr. Clink? and who the devil are you?”

“There he goes—there he goes! Do you hear him, Kate?”

“Kate? Why, she's no Kate. She's the landlord's niece, and her name is Mary Ann. Good God! what, in the name of all that's abominable, is this horrid mystification about? Am I mad? or have you all taken leave of your senses? or is this some detestable stupid joke to bewilder a man by swearing him out of his own identity, and his judgment of others? Speak, some of you, for, upon my life, it's enough to make the most peaceable man in the world violent to be treated in this way like a fool.”

“Well,” said the principal officer, “we must be off again. We can't stop here any longer. Claude Duval may by this time have fallen into the hands of the next party on the watch for him; but it don't matter, as we have all agreed to share the reward among us. We shall trot on gently the next five minutes.”

“But won't you try to catch him?” said Jack.

“Oh, we must have him. We are tracking him regularly down the road. Oh, thank you.”

The niece feeling that if Claude was asked to draw any liquor he might, by his not knowing exactly which tap to appeal to, and a certain awkwardness in such an office, betray himself, had filled two nice little glasses with brandy, and placed them before the officers, who tossed them off in a moment, and one tendered a shilling in payment.

“Oh, no—no,” said Claude. “I stand that.”

“You are very liberal,” he added, “and you may depend we shall give your house a profitable visit on the first opportunity; so good-night to you. We must be off now, for business is business, you know.”

“Oh, of course. Good night, gentlemen.”

“But stop a bit,” cried Mr. Jakes, “stop, I say, I'm sure there's something going on. I'm an attorney, and can see a thing or two. Stop, I say, if you are officers. Don't be made fools of, for I begin to suspect——”

“Ah, poor devil!” said the principal officer, as he mounted his horse. “What a thing it is for a man to lose his wits in such a way. He begins to suspect, does he? Ha! ha! Good-night landlord. You will see us again some day.”

The officer was not illiberal, for he threw a sixpence to Jack, who held his horse by the bridle for him to mount, and in another moment they were off at a good round trot, that took them soon a mile from the Weavers' Arms.

“Triumph!” cried Jack.

“Hush!” said Claude. “Hush, Jack! Don't hilloa until we are fairly out of the wood.”

“But we are.”

“I hope so—I hope so. My dear Kate, or Mary Ann, or whatever your name may be, I beg to return you the grateful thanks of one who never forgets a kindness. You have saved two lives to-night.”

“Two lives?” said the young girl.

“Yes, for my friend and I had made up our minds to perish, both of us, in fighting for our liberty, rather than yield to those who are hunting us for our blood's value. You have saved us. And now, sir, a word with you.”

Claude dashed out of the bar, and caught Mr. Jakes by the arm, and then added—

“You will please to come into the bar and sit down, sir, while I give you a few words of advice.”

“But who—who—where?——”

“Ask no questions, but mark me well. I and my friend are going to leave this place. Be assured we shall hear if anything of a malicious character occurs after

our departure. I feel a conviction that I shall not fall into the hands of my enemies, and I will, when this man-hunt is over, begin to think of who I have to thank, and of what I have to revenge. Do not presume to stir from where you are, as you value your life for the next half hour."

"I—I—won't. But who are you?"

"Claude Duval!"

"Good God! you don't say so; and the one thousand is——"

"Not for you, Mr. Jakes.—Jack, can you get the horses from the stable, for we must be off again as quickly as we can. There is no rest for us yet. Perhaps there never will be upon this side of the grave; but still if such be the case, I will take good care to keep others equally restless."

Mr. Jakes sat upon the chair Claude had pointed out to him, glaring about him like a tiger at bay. He was probably thinking how the whole affair would tell in the London papers, and what a subject of ridicule he would be, at the bare recital of how he had been taken in. He was a man in vigorous enough health and by no means weak. What he wanted in true and genuine courage, he made up in a kind of passionate ferocity, and now as he looked at Claude alone in the bar, he thought what a capital thing it would be to earn the one thousand pounds all to himself. These thoughts each moment gathered strength. If he had been in possession of fire-arms he would most undoubtedly have shot Claude, and then run his chance of flying from the house, to escape the vengeance of Jack. But he was unarmed, and yet by a vigorous effort, he thought surely something could be done. Claude's back was towards him, and it struck Mr. Jakes that if he were to spring upon him, and bring him to the ground, he might succeed in killing him. Regardless, then, of the consequences of possible failure, and seeing nothing in his imagination but the dazzling heap of gold that made up a thousand pounds, Mr. Jakes suddenly sprang upon Claude with a savage sort of yell, and clutched him by the elbows, twining his legs around him, and hoping to overcome him before Jack could arrive from the stable with the horses. Now, Claude was, to tell the honest truth, rather astonished and taken at unawares by this proceeding, which argued an amount of courage or folly, it was hard to say which, that he, Claude, would not have given any lawyer in the world credit for. Under those circumstances, then, for the moment, we must say Claude was astonished, but he very soon surprised Mr. Jakes, although at the time he could not make out the meaning of a sudden howl of bodily anguish which the lawyer uttered. The fact was, that Mary Ann, in her indignation at Jakes, caught up a toasting-fork, and inflicted with its three prongs so severe a wound on the hinder portion of Jakes's legal economy, that he very nearly relaxed his hold of Claude. But what toasting-fork, or any fork, except the trident of the gentleman below, will induce a lawyer to let go a chance of such a sum as one thousand pounds? No! He held on like a martyr. Claude, however, soon put an end to the joke.

"Will you get down, Mr. Jakes?" he said.

"No—no—I apprehend you. You are my prisoner, and the reward is mine. You had better yield."

"Very well, we shall see."

Claude walked forward two steps, and then suddenly retreated with so frightful a rush, that Mr. Jakes came against the cupboard-door—Claude did not mean that, though—with a force that not only half killed him, but burst open the panel, smashing it to splinters. Again did Claude charge backwards, and then bang went Mr. Jakes into the cupboard, to the serious damage of Mr. Clink and the pious Mrs. Clink.

"Murder! Oh, gracious Providence, murder!—my back's broke!" gasped Jakes.

"Serve you right," said Mary Ann.

"So it does," said Claude, as he found himself free from the encumbrance of the lawyer's weight; and upon leaving, saw that he was fairly wedged into the smashed woodwork of the door of the cupboard in which were the sanctified Clinks.

The whole affair now, although really serious for the parties concerned, partook much more of the ludicrous than the grave. Mr. Jakes looked something like a clown in a pantomime, who sticks fast in some small aperture through which the harlequin has darted with ease and agility. However, the cupboard being originally certainly not larger than would accommodate Mr. Clink and his wife, those two highly proper personages were now by the intrusions of the broken panel, and a large portion of Jakes's anatomy, almost crushed to death, and roared aloud for mercy, not having the least idea either of what was going on, or by what horrible contrivance Claude Duval was half murdering them. We cannot help recording that all this furnished much more amusement than pain to Mary Ann. Jack soon made his way back with the horses, and was quite astonished to hear a terrible outcry in the inn.

"Claude, Claude," he said, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing," said Claude; "are the horses ready?"

"Quite. I can't come in, for I am holding them, as they are rather restive from being alarmed at a tussle between me and the ostler. I just got to the stable in time, for he had managed to get loose."

"Farewell," said Claude, as he kissed Mary Ann, "perhaps you will hear of me again some day. I shall not forget you."

"Ah," said the girl, "if you would reform and take up some other and better kind of life, what a happy reflection it would be to me that I had saved you from those who would gladly have taken your life—not that they loved virtue, but because there was a price upon your head."

"True, my dear," said Claude, "that was it; and as to my reformation, I say 'amen' to the wish, if they will let me do it—but they won't. Farewell!"

"Farewell!—Heaven help you, as you wish to be a better man than you have been!"

Claude waved his hand, and reaching the door, he sprang upon the back of his horse, which Jack held, and then, performing the same office for Jack, the latter mounted.

"Farewell," said Claude, "to the Weavers' Arms."

We should have remarked that they had both restored their costume to its original state, Claude carrying out Jack's coat to him—so that once again, when they took to the road, no one could have thought them the same persons who, a short time before, had stood behind the bar of the Weavers' Arms, looking so like the ordinary inhabitants of the place.

"This is an escape, indeed," said Jack.

"And a rare adventure."

"Most rare. Of all your exploits, Claude, I must confess, with the exception of your visit to the Governor of Newgate, I consider this the most daring."

"Do you, Jack?"

"In faith, Claude, I do; and henceforth I shall have such faith in the power of your——"

"Impudence?"

"No, no—not exactly that."

"What then, Jack?"

"Cool determination."

"Well, perhaps it may be called such. I will reach Southampton, and embark in the ship that awaits to convey me to another land, if I can—but I don't think they will let me. Push on, Jack—something strikes me that we shall have more wonderful adventures than any we have yet seen before we get fifty miles upon this most strange journey of ours."



## CHAPTER LXXXV.

## A SON OF THE CHURCH.

JACK was silent after these few words of Claude's, and they continued on the road at an easy pace; for, in truth, the work the horses had already done was something very considerable, while the rest they had had at the Weavers' Arms was scarcely worth the mentioning. Now, in relating those events at the inn, we have been under the necessity of taking up considerable space, while in point of fact, with such rapidity did everything happen, that certainly twenty minutes did not elapse from the period that Claude Duval had his foot in the stirrup to dismount, to the time when he again placed it there to mount and ride away.— There was a hazy mistiness now in the air, which showed that it was loaded with aqueous particles, by the manner in which it fell upon their clothes, their faces, and the trappings of their horses. In fact, for the next half hour or more, our travellers passed through as heavy a dew as Claude or Jack had ever in their lives experienced, and their knowledge of night in the country was by no means of a limited character.

"Where are we?" said Claude; "I am getting now, I think, beyond my latitude altogether, Jack. But you, perhaps, know the road."

"I do," said Jack, "for, to tell the truth, I have taken some pains to study it. It strikes me, Claude, that we are somewhere near a junction of roads, of which we may take our choice, as both lead to the same point, while each makes what may be considered to be a detour."

"And where do they lead, Jack?"

"Why, the road to our left will reach Farnborough, through a little place called Frimley, while that to the right goes to Blackwater, and so on to Basingstoke.

"Which shall we take?"

"The latter, I think, Claude. I dare say our enemies are upon both. But do you really think of keeping the high-road?"

"Why, look you, Jack, I'm fairly of opinion that the high-road, although beset with foes, is the safest. If we were to go among the meadows, and so try to blunder on towards our place of destination, the odds are that we should be seen and hunted like foxes, for we should always, you know, be upon some man's land, while the high-road is free to all; and, besides, there are, along with a thousand dangers, a thousand resources and means of escaping from those dangers. I know, Jack, it looks like an act of temerity to keep the high-road; but it is only in looks, for, upon my word, I think it the safest."

"You have convinced me, Claude, and I feel easier than I did; but when I remember that you have got those praying for you who love you, I tremble for your safety."

"Don't mention them, Jack. You may chance to unman me, perhaps, when I want all my powers about me. But what strange light is that yonder?"

"Why, Claude, I thought you were sufficiently a night-bird to know that. It is the east."

"By heavens! and the first streak of day-dawn, too. How the hours fly, Jack."

"They do, indeed."

"It is cold and beautiful," said Claude.

They both paused to look at the strange sickly tinting of the eastern sky as the first faint streaks of sun-light appeared, and after a few moments, Jack said—

"I know that people differ about sunrise—some call it beautiful, but I have no such opinion. I differ with them *in toto*. To my mind, no thing can be more truly cold—more truly chilling and comfortless, than sunrise—or perhaps I ought not to say sunrise, for the words 'early dawn' describe what I mean better. The

colours in the sky are leaden and wretched—the air is keen and biting, and the whole affair about which poets and painters war—who, probably, have never once in their lives got out of their warm beds to view it—is about as gloomy as I can well imagine.”

“Really, Jack.”

“Yes, really, Claude. I grant you, that when a real ray of light, instead of the frosty-looking reflected beam, falls upon the world, there is the beauty.”

“Then what do you say to sunset?”

“Ah! that is quite another affair. Always beautiful it is, and sometimes sublime.”

“I am of your opinion, Jack, to a hair. Push on.”

“With all my heart.”

The horses had taken a few mouthfuls of fine sweet grass while this short digression concerning sunrise took place, and they now went on at a brisk canter at though they were quite fresh, and so another mile was traversed, which brought them to the place where the road divided to the right and to the left.

“And we are to take the right?” said Claude.

“Stand!” cried a voice, and a horseman dashed from the cover of a tree into the very middle of the road. “Stand! you can’t pass here until we know more of you.”

“And, pray,” said Claude, “who may ‘we’ be?”

“You will soon see that. There’s my authority.”

As he spoke, the man produced a small constable’s staff, with the well-known little brass crown at the top of it; and gave a knowing sort of nod, as though he would add, “I hope and suppose you are quite satisfied now?”

“Dear me!” said Claude, in a jeering tone, which the constable took very ill; for, rising in his stirrups, he called aloud—

“Wrotham! Wrotham! Bring them on. Here’s a very suspicious character on horseback here—two suspicious characters, I may say, on horseback. Come on!”

“It’s a lie!” said Claude, as he spurred up to the man. “There’s only one suspicious character here, and he is not on horseback at all.”

As he spoke, Claude struck the astounded officer such a blow in the face with the butt-end of a heavily mounted pistol, that he fell from his horse, although he was not rendered insensible.

“Now, Jack,” added Claude, “be off and away again. The man-hunt goes on bravely, and we may all yet be in at the death. On—on, Jack! That’s brave. Why, our horses seem flying instead of galloping.”

Down the right-hand road they almost flew like lightning, and had got a good half mile before the party of six men which was stationed at that junction of roads had got up to their fallen comrade, from the manner in which they were hidden, and from him had learnt which road the audacious fugitives had taken. The pursuit was indeed commenced with determination and vigour; but, as they say at sea, “A stern chase is a long chase.” Now, Claude and Jack, all down the road, had gathered confirmation of what they had heard previously—namely, that at intervals there were parties of officers stationed to capture him, Claude; and from this knowledge it followed that if he and Jack continued merely to fly from one party, they must inevitably fall into the hands of another. The only chance they had of preservation was in baffling party after party, so as to puzzle them whether they were on the road or not.

“Stop!” cried Jack, suddenly.

“Good God!” cried Claude, “are you mad, Jack?”

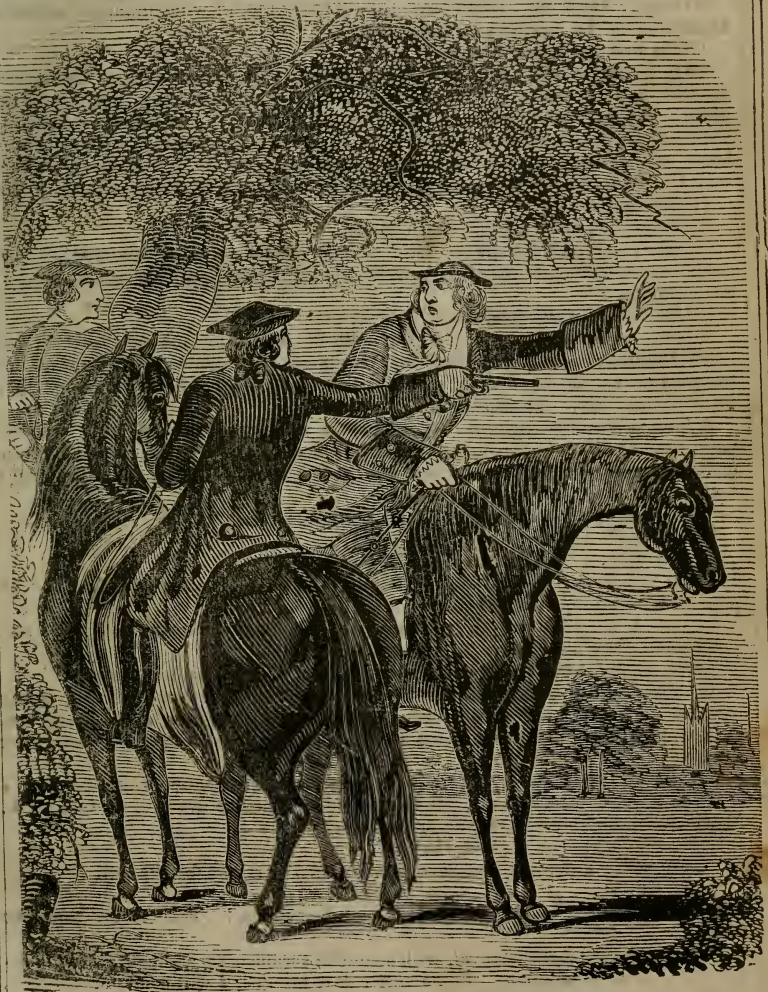
“Not at all; this is a turn of the road, and we are out of sight. Do as I do, Claude, and trust to my knowledge of the localities. Quick—quick! there is not a moment now to spare. Follow—follow on, Claude, if you love me as yourself.”

Jack sprang from his horse, and forcing his way with the animal through a hedge on the left-hand side of the road, gained a field. Claude followed him

with difficulty, for he made his horse jump the hedge, but Jack urged him to dismount, and lead the animal, merely saying—

“On—on, and follow me, Claude. It is our only chance just now. This way—this way. Make for yon little cluster of trees. On—on—on.”

The field they were in was very miry; but Claude got on after Jack and his



JACK AND CLAUDE ARE SLIGHTLY OBSTRUCTED BY A CONSTABLE.

horse as fast as he could; and in about three minutes they reached the shelter of the trees, when Jack stopped and said—

“Listen! listen! Ah! there they go!”

They heard a rush of horses' feet, and the officers had passed the spot through which our adventurers had found their way into the fields. Claude drew a long breath, as he said—

"Jack, I admit that, for once, the high-road was not the safest place. Shall we go back? I suppose that will be the best way—will it not?"

"No, Claude; we shall come upon a pretty little lane presently, that will lead into the Frimley-road; and now that this one leading direct to Blackwater is too hot to hold us, we had much better pursue the one to Farnborough."

"Good! Lead on. In an adventure of this kind, of what immense service a knowledge of the localities is, to be sure."

"It is half the battle, Claude."

They both mounted again now, for as the party in pursuit of them had passed on, they had no longer any fear of their heads being seen above the top of the hedge; and, moreover, although the day was breaking, it was not yet sufficiently light for any one to see many yards with any degree of certainty. The cluster of trees, too, was of good service, for, as Jack mentioned to Claude, they would be between them and the men who had galloped down the Blackwater-road for the next mile or two.

"Then we breathe again," said Claude.

"Yes—yes, for a brief space. Oh! Claude, does it not seem to you as if something was protecting us upon this journey, notwithstanding all the serious dangers we encounter?"

"Don't be superstitious, Jack."

"Well—well, I know you don't feel with me upon such subjects exactly; but here's the lane, just by yon thatched farm-house. I hope we shall meet no one to interrupt us, for our nearest way is across yon ploughed field. Humph! they are milking early. Do you see?"

A buxom lass was engaged in a little close, milking the cows; and for a few moments she did not see the two horsemen looking at her through a blackthorn hedge. When she did so, however, she gave a start of alarm, and dropping a curtsy, she then said—

"A fair morning, gentlemen. Shall I shout to measter?"

"No—no."

"He's afore. I'll shout to him, shall I?"

"No—no, I say," cried Claude. "All we want of you is a draugh of milk. Can you allow us so much, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, sir, you are welcome enough. Only wait a moment while I strain you some. You'll find measter round the barn."

"But we don't want your master, I tell you. All we want is the milk."

The girl laughed, and soon brought them a quart in a wooden pannikin, having strained it through a piece of linen as pure as snow; and both Claude and Jack thought they had never tasted anything so deliciously refreshing in all their lives.

"After all," said Jack, "there is nothing like a pure country life for me."

"Pho! pho!" said Claude. "You would get sick to death of it in a week. My dear, whose house is that upon the hill?"

"Oh, that's Parson Lamb's, that is."

"Very well: now, will you have half-a-crown or a kiss for the milk?"

"Lor, sir!"

"Come—come, Claude," said Jack. "Remember! This is no time for trifling."

"True—true," replied Duval, with a sudden seriousness, as he threw the milk-maid the piece of money. "Some other day, my girl, I will come for the kiss. Is this the lane to—where is the place, Jack?"

"Farnborough—it's all right—round by those stacks, I think, will take us to it."

"Yes," said the girl; "you must keep Giles's close on your right hand, and don't fall into the pond."

"No—no; we won't. Good-morning."

Off they both went; and having cleared the hay stacks, they saw a low stile which led into the lane; but before they reached it, a short, sturdy-looking man, in

mud boots, met them, and said in a voice of authority that proclaimed him the girl's "measter—"

"Who be you upon my land?"

"The man in the moon," said Claude, "taking a morning ride with the devil. How do you get on, old gaffer?"

Before the rather slow thinking wits of the farmer could thoroughly make out what was said to him, or at all devise anything in the shape of a suitable reply, both Claude and Jack had jumped the little low stile, and were going at a good trot down the lane, which was indeed in rather an awful state of mud. If the farmer had any suspicion—which, to be sure, it was not at all likely he could have—regarding the two mounted men who treated him so cavalierly, he might have seriously compromised the safety of Jack and Claude by following them down the lane, seeing that before they emerged from it into the road they were compelled to resort to an experiment for their better security, which with a witness would have lost all its chance of success. What that experiment was particularly, and what was the danger that provoked it, will be seen very shortly; suffice to say, that for about half a mile nothing in the shape of danger showed itself, while the thick mud completely deadened the sound of their horses' hoofs. Jack, however, was wisely enough determined not to emerge from the lane without a better warrant against the presence of enemies near at hand than this silence bespoke, and he said to Claude—

"Now, hold my horse by the bridle, and I will climb the bank, which is here very high, and take a good look all round me."

"Good," said Claude; "but don't show your head, Jack, one inch higher than is absolutely necessary."

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## CHAPTER LXXXVI.

### DESPERATION.

JACK successfully scrambled up the high bank, upon the top of which grew a thick-set hedge, and took a long and anxious look around him. By degrees, however, he fixed his eyes more particularly in the direction of the high-road which lay at the end of the lane than anywhere else, and after an attentive observation of about five minutes, he came down.

"Well?" said Claude.

"Danger!"

"Ay, I thought as much. Nothing but danger, Jack."

"Never mind, Claude. All may be well at last. We will hope so."

"I don't mind, Jack; danger is no companion to me, and I can say with the hair-brained soldier in the play—

——'From this nettle danger  
I pluck the flower safety.'

So now tell me, Jack, in what the danger consists—where it is—and what you think it is in our power to do to avoid it, so as to turn its sharp edge upon those who prepared it for us?"

"I saw to the end of the lane, and there stands a cottage, presenting nothing at all remarkable, except that in the garden there are five horses ready saddled, and at the garden gate, partly hidden by some large laurels, a mounted man, who looks as like an officer as any person ever I saw in my life, and my conclusion is that we are close on the post of one of the little parties waiting for us, and that the mounted man acts as a kind of sentinel, while the others take their breakfast inside the cottage, from whence, as you may easily fancy, they would all issue in a moment, armed to the teeth, upon the slightest alarm from him."

"No doubt."

"Well, Claude, that is the gloomy side of the picture; the reverse is, that by scrambling over the bank, and then through an orchard and a small meadow, we shall gain the high road, about a quarter of a mile on the London side of the end of the lane; but we must disguise ourselves well, for which you know we have convenience in our saddle vallises. What say you?"

"Humph! We have not yet tried our resources in that way."

"No, and I feel inclined to do so, for on we must get. It is not as if back again or forward was all the same to us, you know, Claude."

"It is not, indeed. Come, Jack, what can we most readily do in the way of disguise, think you?"

"Turn your coat, which, luckily, is made for the purpose; change your cravat, and assume as serious and old an air as you can, while I make up as a groom, which you know I can do with great rapidity and ease."

"Very well—here goes."

They both dismounted, and Claude turned his coat inside out, when from a bright beaver it was changed to a silver kind of gray. He put on a white cambric cravat, with lace ends, and by adjusting his hat more at the back of his head than he usually wore it, so completely altered the contour of his face, that few would have known him at a hasty and superficial glance. He, moreover, took a book from his valise and held it half open in his hand, as though he had been jogging on and reading. Neither was Jack at all behind hand in making an alteration in his appearance. He put on a livery coat that he took from his valise, and placed around his hat a gold band, by which means he effectually altered his appearance, and looked like some very respectable, quiet groom, in a good family.

"Excellent," said Claude.

"I repeat the words as regards you," said Jack; "you disguise yourself always with great taste; but now, for Heaven's sake, let us get through the orchard meadow as quickly as it is possible so to do. Come on, Claude, it is best to help and walk our horses by the bridles over this precipitous bank."

This was the most difficult part of the affair, for the earth of the bank was soft, and saturated with moisture, so that the horses, with all the willingness in the world to mount it, could get no fast hold. However, perseverance conquers obstacles, and after some trial the whole party—horses and men—got into the orchard. Luckily no one was there, so, mounting and trotting on, Jack and Claude were through it in two minutes, and out in the small meadow on the other side, that shielded it from the high road.

"Safe and sound," said Duval, "so far. Now, Jack, behave yourself like a decent and devout serving man, if you please, or else I shall have to discharge you, you know."

"All right, master," said Jack, with a smile, "I don't want to lose my place, for if you don't know when you have a good man, I know when I have a good master; so make yourself comfortable and trot. Oh, no—hold, Claude."

"What is it?"

"Look up the road. Who the devil is that?"

Claude did look, and there, within a hundred yards of them, coming leisurely along, as though from Frimley, which the reader will recollect was nearer London than our two adventurers now were, he saw a portly personage upon a tall, well-fed horse, which came on at a walk, and with quite a stately air. The rider was dressed in black, and there was no such thing as mistaking the clerical cut of his habiliments and hat; a parson he was, to all intents and purposes, and a well-fed and most pompous-looking one he was too. There was no bare and hungry curate kind of look about him—oh, dear, no.

"Who, in the name of all that's troublesome, is that, I wonder?" said Claude.

"Parson Lamb, you may depend, that the milk-maid spoke of. She said that house upon the hill, you recollect, was his."

"She did, indeed, and it surely is more likely to be him than any one else, Jack.

This may be an absolute piece of good fortune. That fellow is well fed, and I'll warrant, clings to life like many a better man. Suppose I force him to vouch for our respectability, if it should be questioned as we pass the officers at this next post?"

"Nobody but you could do it, Claude, or think of doing it."

"Oh, pho! You do me too much honour. It was just what you would yourself have done, Jack, in your past days, when I first knew you, and you held Hampstead Heath against all enemies. Ah, Jack, do you recollect the waggon into which you sprang, horse and man?"

"Claude—Claude, do not speak to me of the past, I pray you."

"Forgive me, Jack, I would not pain you, as well you know, for the world, but these old recollections are endearing to me. Now for the parson. Just trot gently after me, and as close as your notions of a groom's propriety will let you."

"I will."

On they both went directly in the path of the approaching clergyman, who bent upon Claude an insolent look of inquiry as he came up to him, as though the whole parish was his, and it was a crime for any one he did not know to be upon the high road even. So Claude returned the look of the arrogant priest, and he was not far wrong in his estimate of the character of the Reverend John Lamb, who was rector of Frimley, and lived in the great white house, no doubt, to show his humility like a light and beacon to all men whatever. A few moments, and the highwayman and the parson met face to face.

"Sir," said Claude, "is your name Lamb?"

The reverend gentleman knit his brows, and looked as though to ask him his name upon the highway was an insult.

"Well, sir," he said, "and what then?"

"Oh, I perceive," said Claude, as with admirable dexterity he brought his horse close to the side of the reverend personage, "I perceive at once, by the manner of your answer, that you are a follower in the footsteps of Him who loved the meek and the humble. Now, sir, I intend to make a vacancy in the rectorship of Frimley if you in the smallest matter dispute my orders. You see this pistol? It is loaded with a couple of slugs, and I swear by all that to you ought to hold sacred, that I will lodge them in your brains if you attempt to escape."

The countenance of the priest turned of ashy paleness, and his nose, usually so rubicund, looked blue, as he stammered—

"I—I—what—what, do you wish to rob me? Are you a high—way—man?"

"Exactly. But I don't want to rob you; I have other fish to fry just now, my reverend friend. You see my groom there? Well, he is as good a shot as I am, so beware that the evil spirit don't tempt you to do anything foolish in the way of attempted flight; for so sure as you do, before your horse can make two bounds, down you will come."

The reverend sinner shook in his stirrups, and Claude continued in the same provoking cool tone of voice—

"Now, sir, I think you understand me, and I think I am not wrong in assuming that you prefer your personal safety to any other earthly consideration. It is upon that supposition that I act, and now proceed at once to tell you what you have to do. Please, in the first instance, to walk your horse a little slower."

The clergyman complied.

"Don't be shaking so, as if your last hour were come," added Claude; "you are safe enough if you will be prudent enough to ensure your own safety. There are some gentlemen at the corner of the lane a little further on, who might, possibly, not knowing me, ask me who I am. Now, I dare say you are well known; so I will trouble you to ride with me, and state, if any questions are asked, that I am an old friend of yours, by name, the Rev. John Brown."

The parson gave a groan, as he gasped out—

"I am a magistrate for the county, and—and—you—are—if I mistake not—the notorious Claude Duval. Why, I—I was going to speak to the very men you mention. What can I do?"

"I tell you what I would do," added Claude—"if I were in your place, I would prefer death to dishonour, and rather be shot at once, than connive at an affair which will cover you with disgrace."

"No—no. Oh, dear, no. I—I can't think of dying upon any consideration. I have a pretty property—a very pretty property, indeed. It's a most uncomfortable situation. Dear me—the Rev. John Brown are you to be?"

"Yes, and that other highwayman behind you, who is a most deperate fellow, is my groom—you understand? You can vouch for us both; and now mark me, in your folly, you may fancy that as you come up to the six police-officers you may accomplish something towards your own extrication from this dilemma and my capture, but I warn you, that before I make the ghost of an effort to save myself, I will make a ghost of you."

Another groan from the reverend gentleman followed this speech, which cut off all hope for him, and on they went, Claude having the little book in one hand, while the other was what, in Ireland, they call "convenient" to a pistol-stock. This little conversation, so deeply interesting to both parties, had been sufficiently long to bring them both nearly to the end of the lane, and there, sure enough, was the mounted police-officer, keeping a capital look-out. He espied the two gentlemen in a moment, and gave some sort of signal, for two more of the officers immediately made their appearance at the door of the cottage.

"Who is it?" cried one.

"Oh, it's Mr. Lamb," said another.

"Ask them if they have caught me," said Claude, in a low tone.

"Have you captured Claude Duval?" stammered the parson. "A—hem."

"No, sir," said an officer, stepping close up to them, and looking rather curiously at Claude.

"No, sir, but we hope and expect he will come this way; and we keep such a good watch that no one passes whom we don't know."

"My friend," said Claude, "do you know me? for I really do not know you. Perhaps my old friend, Lamb, will tell you who I am."

"Yes, yes. This is the Rev. John Brown, an old acquaintance of mine, and this is his groom, as you perceive. A—hem!"

As he said this, the parson-magistrate gave a groan, and the officers looked from one to the other of them, rather puzzled; upon which Claude, glancing at the book, and giving a slight nod at the officer, said—

"Well, Lamb, as you were saying, you think this rather latitudinarian in its theology than otherwise. I will read you the next passage."

"Yes—yes; do, friend Brown."

They passed on, and Claude added, in a whisper—

"You must ride a mile or so with me, for that fellow has his suspicions, although he is so puzzled that he don't know what shape to put them in. Don't look back, sir; remember, I am desperate as well as a cool and determined man."

"So I find—so I find. Gracious! how will this adventure of mine tell in the papers. I shall have to give up the commission of the peace."

"A good job, too; you will have more time to look after the commission of the gospel, with which you pretend to be charged."

By this time Jack had got up to the spot where the officer was still standing, and that individual took a long look at him, with a very peculiar expression upon his face, as though he suspected something, but, as yet, had not very well defined to his own mind what it was.

"So that's your master," he said, "is it?"

"Very fine, indeed," said Jack; "but we shall have rain shortly, I think."

"Confound you, are you deaf?"

"Thank you all the same, but I can't stop to take anything; my master, you see, is like a good many people—he's all very well when he has his own way; but when he don't, why, I'd rather not be in his way, I can tell you. However, it's very civil of you, and when we meet again I won't forget it."



"The idiot is as deaf as a post," said the officer, turning away.

"None so deaf as those who won't hear," muttered Jack to himself, as he slowly trotted after Claude and the parson.

## CHAPTER LXXXVII.

### THE SHERIFF.

JACK was well aware that something was amiss, and although he carried things off with a high hand, he shook for Claude's safety the while. Not one selfish thought of his own life crossed his mind—it was Claude, and Claude only, that he thought of and trembled for. Each moment, however, added to the chances of safety, and Jack felt much relieved not to hear the clatter of horses' feet behind him. When he was quite near to Claude and the reverend gentleman, he spoke, saying—

"All's right; but a quick pace is a good thing when danger is behind."

"Thanks, Jack," said Claude, "I am mindful of all things. Now, sir, what were you going to say just now in such a hurry? Pray speak out."

"I was only going to remark," said the clergyman, "that, with perfect safety to yourself, you might now let me go home; I have falsified my conscience by saying that you are a friend of mine, and you ought not to expect any more from me. I promise, for my own sake, to keep the transaction a profound secret."

"I think you would," said Claude; "but you must excuse me for preferring your company for another mile. I do not think that even your voucher for me quite answered all the purposes. Yon officer has sharper eyes and a clearer head, I fancy, than most of his craft."

The parson bit his lips, but said no more, and the slight pause that ensued was about to be broken by a remark from Sixteen-string Jack, when tramp, tramp—clatter, clatter—upon the road behind them came horses' feet. Claude Duval glanced behind him and saw the officer who had seemed to be rather suspicious, rapidly approaching, with one of his mounted companions.

"Keep as close as will not look too close, Jack," said Claude; "but do not betray any alarm for your life's sake. Caution will do everything now."

"Not quite everything, young man," said the parson.

"Courage, then," said Claude, "and a remorseless determination upon the first show of real danger to shoot you through the head will do what remains."

"But," replied the parson, turning of a whitish purple colour. "But—it—it is hardly fair to take my life, if I don't betray you."

"I shall take it," said Claude, "for the negative crime of not saving me. I think you can do so if you like, and if you don't you are a dead man as sure as you are now a living one."

Duval had no real intention of murdering the reverend pluralist, for such he was, but he thought that a world of safety might be in the fact of persuading him that he was in hands so absolutely careless of human life as to sacrifice him from mere spite at being captured, even should it not be at all by his instrumentality. By the time that their little argumentative dialogue was over, the two officers had ridden up, and he who had spoken before, cried—

"We beg pardon, gentlemen, but as the road is far from safe, we thought you would have no objection to our escort for a mile or two."

"Is there anything to fear?" said Claude, in an indifferent tone to the parson.

"Not—not that I—I know of," stammered that personage in reply.

"Then," said Claude to the officers, "we would rather ride alone."

"Really, gentlemen," said the officer, "you don't know, permit me to say, what the danger is exactly. We are well aware that the notorious Claude Duval is upon this road; one of his freaks is to reach the port of Southampton, which he has sworn to do in spite of all the officers of police, and all the power of the town and country constabulary. He is not far from here, we know, and therefore is it that we consider the road particularly unsafe at present."

"If you wish them to attend us," said Claude to the reverend gentlemen, "let them do so."

"Very well."

"At the next inn we come to," added Claude, as if continuing the conversation he had been holding, "I will get out of my valise the manuscript notes on *Exodus* I have mentioned to you. My horse, too, will not be at all sorry to have half an hour's rest. Is there a halting place near at hand?"

"If you please, sir," said Jack, respectfully touching his hat, "there is an inn a little further on, called the 'Old George.'"

"Oh, very well, Robert, that will do. We will dismount there; and as for you, gentlemen, who are so kind to escort us, I hope you will not refuse a little refreshment, at the expense of myself and my old friend here."

"Yes, yes. Oh, we ought to do something liberal," said the parson, while his colour went and came like that of some young girl who feels that somebody is about to say something uncommonly decisive in the matrimonial line. Had a hundred lives depended upon it, the rector could not play, with an easy air, now, the part that Claude had cast him in.

Duval rode very close to him and said—

"Bark you, reverend sir. I left my purse at home; oblige me with yours. I really mean to treat these fellows who are so kind as to thrust their company upon us, whether we like it or not. Come, sir, quick, and do it with the best grace you can."

"Surely you will not now rob me, after I have done you such an essential service?"

"Indeed I will, though. I should lay it all to my conscience if I were to be in company with one of your cloth on the highway, and not make him contribute to my ways and means. Oh, yes, sister Anne is married, and I think as happy as folks can expect to be in this world. Say 'Is she really?'"

"Is she really?" said the parson mechanically.

These latter words of Claude's were sufficiently loud for the officers to hear them, and they heard the reply likewise; so that he even who was most suspicious that something was amiss, began to think that he was mistaken, and giving himself a world of trouble about nothing at all; and yet a something had taken place that had put him upon the scent. He had noticed that Claude wore a wig, and that the butt-end of a small pistol was at times quite visible somewhere about the breast of his apparel. Now both these circumstances were compatible enough with the fact of his being the old friend of the rector; but when they came to be combined with a something in the rector's manner that was anything but easy and comfortable, they had their due weight, and perhaps a little more than their due weight, in the mind of that sharp-looking, ferret-eyed officer of the London police. Both Claude and Jack were perfectly satisfied in their own minds that something had gone amiss, but what it was they could not for the lives of them make out, although the thoughts of both were busy upon the subject. However, there was nothing to be done but to be guided by circumstances, and to adopt the best course that might present itself at the moment to them. The parson took a tolerably well-filled purse, and handed it to Claude, who put it in his pocket in a moment, saying—

"Is this all you have with you?"

"Yes, except a bank-note in my pocket-book, which does not belong to me."

"Very well; I will not interfere with it, then, to even ask you its amount. You shall not say that even I treated you ungenerously. Oh, yes, of course. We have always expected you at the hall, although we knew your time to be pretty well



CLAUDE DUVAL INTRODUCES HIMSELF TO THE SHERIFF OF HANTS.

occupied. But where there is a will you know, old friend, there is a way.—Say I shall certainly be there soon.”

“I shall certainly be there soon,” half groaned the parson.

“What do you think of that?” whispered one of the officers to the other, as they rode a little out of Jack’s hearing. “It is surely all right, ain’t it?”

“I’m bothered. It sounds right, but it don’t look right. This stoppage, however, Bill, that is to be at the Old George, will settle it. We will all dismount, and then they don’t get on those thorough-bred horses again, I can tell you, until I am quite satisfied. If it should be Claude Duval and the unknown fellow he has with him as a companion, we are made men.”

“Yes—but how about the rector?”

"Mum! I have an idea about that. I was not born yesterday; and, as I told you only an hour ago, Claude Duval has as many shifts, and doubles, and tricks, as all the foxes in the world. But don't let you and I be whispering together. Keep up to them. There's the sign of the Old George only half a mile ahead."

"You are generous in your way," said the parson; "and yet you talk of killing me?"

"Assuredly I do: and will do it, too. What are you fidgetting about in your pocket so far? Any tricks, eh? You stand upon a mine! Beware!"

"No—no—nothing—it is nothing.—I—I—only felt for my pencil-case, that's all: and I find it is here. I commonly keep it in my waistcoat, and, missing it there, I wondered where it was; but I find it here, so all's right. I hope you will leave it with me."

As the parson drew his hand from his pocket with a gold pencil-case in his grasp, a small, crumpled-up piece of paper fell to the ground. Claude saw it, and he cried—

"Robert, pick up that little memorandum that my friend has dropped, if you please."

Jack saw that the piece of paper was of importance by Claude's manner, and he had flung himself from his horse to grasp it before either of the officers could make the attempt. He only narrowly succeeded, and handed it to Claude with a touch of his hat, and then mounted quickly again, and fell back in his old place, which was about fifteen paces behind Duval. Claude glanced at the paper, and the parson, quivering in every limb, murmured—

"For God's sake have mercy upon me! You would have done the same under my circumstances. Spare me for the sake of my children!"

Claude gave but one glance at the paper, and saw written upon it in strange, scrawling characters, such as a man might form in his pocket, terribly cramped up, the one word—

"Help!"

Claude looked him sternly in the face.

"Mercy!—Mercy!" gasped the rector. "I have children."

"Hush!"

"Yes—yes. I—I am quite still; I will say or do what you like. Only spare me."

"You have named your children," said Duval, "and you have by so doing saved yourself for this time. When you look upon your little ones again, remember that to them and their gentle influence you owe your life. I will not kill you, if you do not force me so to do, by tampering with me too far; but once more I say to you, Sir Priest, beware, for I am a man of sudden passions and sudden impulses. Society is in arms against me, and I alone fight a community—I am hunted. Beware, then, that I turn not upon one of the dogs, and use my fangs."

"I am sorry I did what I did."

"'Tis past; now keep better faith with me, and with yourself, or there will belong to this fair piece of road a tale of blood, that will be told when you and I are both crumbled into dust."

During this little dialogue, so fearfully intended to the rector, the officers had not left Jack quite alone.

"Why, Robert," said one, "you were as deaf as a post just now; but you heard your master, fast enough, when he told you to pick up the little piece of paper. What was on it, now?"

"A text from scripture," said Jack.

"Oh, you can read, can you?—And pray what was the text?"

"The wise man heedeth that which concerneth him and his; but the fool meddleth with all things, and perchance scorseth his fingers."

"You call that a text from the scriptures, do you? Come, come, Master Robert, you are not what you seem exactly; would a hundred pounds appear an acceptable sum to you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, tell us who your master really is."

"Who my master really is?"

"Yes. Come, come, don't be shamming stupid, man. It won't do. You had better make hay while the sun shines; and a £100 is not to be picked up every day upon the king's highway."

"It don't require a Solomon," replied Jack, "to know that. But if you are particularly anxious to know who my master is, all that I can say is, that he is a friend of the rector's."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, gentlemen, I really can't tell you anything else, I'm sure. He's a very good master to me, and gives two suits of livery in the year, and never asks any questions."

"Really! But you have not told us why you pretended to be deaf?"

"I didn't pretend. I am deaf at times. There comes a singing in my ears all of a sudden, and then for a little time I'm deaf till it goes off. The doctors call it by some hard name that I can't recollect, and could not pronounce if I did."

"You don't say so, Robert!"

"Yes, I do.—Are you deaf?"

"No, not exactly. But here's the Old George, and your master has promised to stand treat, so we will all dismount and go in. You must not think anything of what we have said, Robert. We were only joking, you know."

"I'm very sorry to hear that."

"Sorry, are you? What makes you sorry to hear it? I thought you would be quite the contrary, as things are."

"I don't know what you mean," said Jack, "by 'as things are;' all I know is that you talked amazingly big of £100, and that it don't seem now to be at all forthcoming."

"Perhaps it will be, though, and a few hundreds more at the back of it, for somebody, before long," replied the officer, with an exceedingly knowing look.

Claude, upon whom Jack kept his eye, gave a slight movement of his head, to signify that he would say a word to him, and Jack was by Claude's side before the officers were aware of what he intended to do.

"Don't dismount," said Claude.

Jack nodded. By this time the whole party was at the door of the Old George, which was one of those old-fashioned country inns with a large porch entwining evergreens with clematis and woodbine.

"Stir an inch at your peril," whispered Claude to the parson. He nodded to the officers—"now, gentlemen, name for yourselves what you would like to have."

He dismounted as he spoke, and so did the two officers. Jack had never considered Claude in so much peril before.

"Nice nags," said Claude, as, with the bridle of his own horse over his arm, he made a step or two towards the officers' horses.

They might have seized him then, but they had agreed together that it would be far safer and better to do so in the house.

"Very nice nags," added Claude; "I wonder if they can run well when they are put to it?"

He had a thick whalebone horsewhip in his hand, and, with the rapidity of lightning, he gave to each of the officers' horses such a cut with it, that, plunging forward with smarts of agony, the two creatures tore along the road as though they were mad. Before any one could speak or move, Claude was mounted again.

"Good day, gentlemen," said Claude; "you can take what you like to drink at the Old George, and score it down to Claude Duval. Come on, Jack."

"Look at the parson," said Jack.

Snap! went a little pocket-pistol that the reverend gentleman held in no very agreeable juxtaposition with Claude's head.

"Why, it has missed fire, old friend," said Duval. "Ah! you should always be sure of your priming before you chance your life upon such a cast. Take it, as you will have it."

Bang! went Claude's largest pistol, with a horrible report, right in the rector's face, who, with a shriek, fell from his horse.

"They'll have fleet steeds that follow," shouted Claude. "Hurrah for the road again!"

The two dismounted officers looked bewildered, and it was not until Jack and Duval were sweeping off like the wind that they were recovered sufficiently to send three or four unavailing pistol shots after them, which spread their death-dealing contents harmlessly in the muddy road.

"Look ahead," said Jack. "There's a good-looking carriage about half a mile on."

"I see it, Jack," said Duval.

## CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

### WINCHFIELD HALL.

THE carriage was going at a good pace, but by no means so fast as Claude and Jack on horseback; yet, as the sailors say, "a stern chase is a long chase," and it would evidently take a considerable period of time to obliterate the distance between them. As they neared it, they saw that it was a very handsome vehicle indeed, and was driven by a coachman, with a powdered wig and three-cornered hat, while a footman of portly dimensions was behind.

"Somebody of consequence in his own eyes," said Claude, "if in no one else's."

"Not a doubt of it," replied Jack. "I wonder how those officers feel now, Claude? I suppose their horses have taken to the fields?"

"Most probably, Jack. It was a narrow escape, but you see what impudence may do."

"Yes, there is only one thing I regret."

"And pray, Jack, what may that be? You look uncommonly serious about it, old fellow."

"I am serious, too, Claude: I am vexed at the death of that clergyman, who said he had a family of children, you know. I know he provoked you; but still I regret it."

"Ah! ah! ah!"

"Don't laugh at it, Claude, don't laugh."

"Why, my dear fellow, I can't help it. If he be dead, it is no fault of mine. You know my large holster pistol has two barrels—well, one had a ball in it, and the other only a heavy charge of powder, with a piece of brown paper well rammed down. It was the latter that I fired in the parson's face, although he amply deserved the other. No, Jack, I never take a life if I can possibly help it; and as for folks having a shot at me, it is no more than what I can fairly expect in my line of life. No doubt the rector will find himself confused for an hour, and reminded, by the marks of gunpowder upon his face, of this day's adventure as long as he lives; but unless he dies of the fright, he is as much alive now as we are."

"You don't know what a relief that is to me, Claude."

"Poh! You ought to have known me better; I like a joke, but I don't like a murder. No, Jack, they may say what they like of me, and hunt me as they will, but they cannot call me blood-thirsty."

"Indeed, they cannot, Claude. But we are nearing the carriage."

"Yes, Jack, and a thought strikes me that we are now in more danger than we have been in yet. We shall soon have these officers and their companions upon

our heels, and no doubt we are not any great distance from another lot of them. Now, if we can get past the next police post, we shall have baffled our pursuers, I think, and shall be able to go on again, at all events, with nothing but the danger that lies before us."

"How is it to be done, Claude? What a series of desperate shifts and adventures this journey is."

"Yes, Jack. Well, I have been thinking that a respectable carriage would carry us on nicely—don't you think so? Such a one as that now travelling so comfortably up yon hill before us."

"Yes; but, Claude——"

"We have not the pleasure of possessing it, you would say, Jack."

"We certainly have not."

"That is not an obstacle, you know, Jack, for we, in our practice, have restored the primitive age, when people followed the good old plan——

'They may keep, who have the power,  
And they may take who can.'

So, upon such a principle, you see, the carriage before us becomes a sort of floating property—and we may say with Shakespeare——

'——'Twas mine——'tis his,  
And may be slave to thousands.'

You see, I have lots at hand, Jack, to suit me upon occasions; so let us come on a little briskly, for it will be well to come up with the vehicle upon the brow of the hill, from which I fancy we shall get a good prospect of the surrounding country, and see if there be any danger approaching. You don't flinch, Jack, I hope, from this adventure?"

"Oh, no, Claude. Your doings upon this occasion far transcend any of your former exploits; but if you were to propose the most outrageous plan of operations in the world, I would stick to you. I have said that I would live and die with you, and I will keep my word, Claude."

"I know you will, Jack. Spur on, and we will soon see what sort of force we have to contend with in the carriage ahead of us. Yon footman who keeps looking round seems to be uneasy already."

"He does, indeed; and now he has turned round completely to stare at us, and is fancying, no doubt, his attitude very fine, as he holds on with those straps under his arms, and the cords dangling down on each side of him."

"Perhaps, Jack, we shall pull down his conceit a bit. I will ride on first, but take care to be sufficiently close to me, in case there should be anybody in that carriage of a belligerent character, for we must conquer."

"Assuredly, Claude."

Duval was now sufficiently near to the carriage to be able, by putting his horse to speed, to ride up to it; and he did so just as the horses gained the brink of the hill; and, according to the rules of good driving, they ought to have had a moment's pause to recover the strain of the ascent. Claude rode direct to the carriage door, and looked in. There were two persons inside—an elderly woman, dressed out in all the tawdry colours of the rainbow, in a vain attempt to look youthful and engaging, was one; and the other was a man of middle age, with a sour, morose-looking aspect. His face was full and bloated, and his brows were knit; while his little protruding gray eyes betokened both sensuality and ferocity. As Claude stopped the view and the light from the carriage-window, this amiable-looking personage gave a savage sort of growl, and cried——

"What's that? Drive on, Peter—drive on. Drive on, I say!"

"Stop, Peter," said Claude, "stop!"

The coachman looked astonished; but he raised his whip, and in another moment would have brought it down upon the horses' backs, when Claude, coolly pointing a pistol at his head, said——

"Move on another inch and I'll blow your brains out!"

Peter dropped his whip, and Claude, turning to the carriage window again, said—

“Who are you, sir?”

“The sheriff of Hants, sir,” cried the male occupant of the carriage. “Who are you?”

“Claude Duval, the highwayman.”

“The devil!”

“Not exactly. You seem alarmed, sir. Why you have not half the courage of this young lady by your side, whose beauty and bright eyes, I suppose, render carriage lamps quite unnecessary to this vehicle.”

“He’s a remarkably polite young man, at any rate,” said the lady.

“Polite! Bah!” cried the sheriff. “I suppose you want to rob me, eh? Do you know what you are about? You will find that it is no joke to rob the sheriff.”

“I never thought it was,” said Claude. “You are an unsociable brute. Pray, where are you going?”

“To Winchfield Hall, close to Basingstoke,” said the lady. “I hope, Mr. Highwayman, as you are a gentleman, that you will behave as such. Here’s my purse, and I hope you will spare my rings.”

“Madam, I hope I shall take nothing from you but your good opinion. It is a pity that the sheriff, who, I suppose, is your father, is such a surly old brute. Are you going through Basingstoke, or are you about to stop on this side of the town?”

“Through it,” said the lady, who had not had so many compliments paid to her for a long time. “The sheriff is my husband, sir. Come, Sir Harry, give the gentleman your purse, and have done with it. If we are to be robbed, we had better be robbed by one who knows how to behave himself, and likewise knows female—”

“Loveliness,” added Claude, “when he sees it. Do you know, madam, what this carriage reminds me of—or rather, I should say, its occupants?”

“No, sir—really—what?”

“Beauty and the beast!”

“Bah!” cried the sheriff. “Two much of this. There’s my purse. I don’t feel inclined to risk myself or my life for a few paltry guineas. Take them, and I only hope you and I may meet again, my friend, at the quarter sessions. That’s all.”

“Bah!” said Claude. “Ha! ha! ha! You are an amiable brute; you are indeed. Here, Jack! Jack!”

“I’m busy,” said Jack.

“What about?”

“Why Job, he can’t keep his eye off my pistol-barrel; and they are open so wide, and his mouth too, that I don’t think he will shut either again.”

“Dispose of him, Jack.”

“Oh!—murder—no! Dem my whiskers, no!” cried a voice. “Dear, good, kind, handsome-looking gents, only say what you wish me to do, and I will do it at once, dem me, and no sort of mistake!”

“Remain where you are, then,” said Jack, “and wait further orders.”

“Job—Job,” cried the sheriff.

“Dem it, yes, Sir Harry, I’m here.”

“Knock these fellows down.”

“Yes, Sir Harry, I would in a minute, but somehow, I don’t think they’ll let me. Perhaps, Sir Harry, they would not mind your doing it, as you are a man of consequence, you know, but, dem it, I positively decline. Oh, dear me, I could not do it on any account.”

“Job is prudent,” said Claude; “Jack, take care of my horse, and ride on as close behind the carriage as you can. Perhaps it will be as well if you make a little change in costume, and see to the horses’ legs and heads, Jack.”

“Yes, I will be ready in a moment.”

This order to see to the horses’ legs and heads requires some small ex-



planation, which will be best given by watching Jack's proceedings. Rapidly unstrapping the valise, he took from it another coat, with which he disguised himself. Then, with a piece of chalk, which he likewise had, he gave the horses a white foot each, as well as a good change of colour upon the face, and then with some change in the trappings, rapidly effected, made the whole turn-out look as different as possible, seeing that it was really the same, from what it had been. Strange and contradictory as it may seem, these partial disguises were more likely to succeed with close and minute observers, like officers of police, than anybody else. They, no doubt, had taken such notes of Claude's and Jack's horses, that any deviation from this would induce in their minds a doubt which never presents itself to a mere casual observer, to whom a horse is just a horse, and who does not look to see if he has a white foot or a black one, or a spot upon his face or not. When Jack, too, had another wig on, and with a piece of burnt cork, which he had carefully wrapped up in a piece of paper, had blackened his eyebrows and removed his false whiskers, he looked quite a different man. Job looked upon all the proceedings, rapidly executed as they were, like man in a dream, and when they were finished, and Jack was mounted, he beckoned to him, and said—

"Don't be afraid of me; I have given him a month's notice a week ago, and as the place don't suit me at all, you may do what you like."

"All's right," said Jack, "you will get a twenty pound note if you keep to that."

"A twenty pound note? Shall I? Won't I keep to it above a bit, that's all. Only put me on my oath, and, dem it, I'll swear anything you like; I've often had an idea of being a highwayman myself, it is so uncommonly romantic."

"Hey!"

Claude, with all the coolness in the world, now opened the door of the sheriff's carriage and got in. The moment he did so, he let down one of the front glasses, and touched the coachman with the muzzle of a pistol. When that personage glanced round, and saw it, he turned as white as a sheet.

"Peter," said Claude, "remember that if you attempt to play any tricks, or dispute orders, or in any way attempt to bring danger upon me, you are a dead man."

"I won't—I won't," groaned Peter.

"Now drive on," said Claude, "and recollect that your life is in your own keeping. And now, Mr. Sheriff, you and I must understand each other. Madam, I hope I don't incommode you? How came you to throw yourself away upon such a brute—and an ugly brute, too, as this?"

"D——tion!" growled the sheriff.

"Fie, sir!" said Claude, "recollect that you are in the presence of a lady, and endeavour to behave yourself like a gentleman, for once in the way. I have only to say to you, that if you do not answer any questions that may be asked of you in the manner to keep me safe—what manner that is, I need not dictate to you—I will not be taken alive, nor shall you be in at the death, for I will assuredly send a couple of bullet into your skull."

The sheriff hesitated.

"Drive on, Peter," said Claude.

Peter put the cattie in motion, and off went the whole party, Jack bringing up the rear with the two horses. They went on at a slashing pace, notwithstanding a shower of rain that came on and a rushing wind that gave promise of a gusty day. The sheriff sat in an extreme corner of his carriage, glaring at Claude as though he would gladly have eaten him with the smallest quantity of salt by way of a relish; and the sheriff's made-up old lady put on a girlish manner, and looked at him from behind a fan, which she hoped only exhibited what she considered the most fashionable part of her face. Claude had fairly turned the good lady's head by his flattery, and she really considered that the most agreeable circumstance that had happened for a long while, was this meeting with the handsome and gallant highwayman, who announced himself to be no other than the celebrated and widely-famed Claude Duval.

## CHAPTER LXXXIX.

## A WEDDING. |

TRULY "a more complete *cortege* could not well be imagined than the sheriff's now was. To be sure, it would have had a better appearance if Jack had gone on in front, as a sort of outrider; but still the whole affair did very well. And if the sheriff, with a laudable wish to preserve his life, did what Claude required of him, all would still go on well.

"I have often heard of you, Mr. Duval," said the sheriff's lady.

"Madam, I am the more highly honoured."

"Oh, don't mention that. I have always heard that you were quite a lady's man."

"Well, madam, I plead guilty, certainly, to a sort of devoted feeling for the sex, particularly when it is a gratification to me to say, as in the present instance, that gallantry is sanctioned, and, indeed, rendered absolutely agreeable by beauty."

"Oh, sir!"

"How can you, Sarah," cried the sheriff, "be such a fool as to believe the hoaxing of that puppy? There's no fool like an old one."

"Sir," said Claude, "you must be a lunatic."

"And a brute upon two legs," said the lady. "I'm often inclined to faint right away, do you know, Mr. Duval, from the ill-usage of this monster in human form; and it's quite well known that they made him a sheriff because he was decidedly the ugliest man in all the county."

"The devil, madam!"

"Yes, as ugly as the devil," said Claude. "I understand that perfectly. Oh, my dear madam, fate ought to have dealt more kindly by you, than to attach you to any such a baboon."

"A what?" cried the sheriff. "I won't stand this any longer—I can't stand it, I—Oh! murder! Spare my life!"

"I tell you what, sir," said Claude, "you may say just what you like, so long as you say it in a quiet, respectable sort of a way; but if you begin any confounded row, I will make a vacancy in your office as sure as you are now a living man."

The sheriff shrunk back again into the corner of the carriage, from where, with his little pig-like eyes, he glared at Claude as though he had been some ogre.

"Coming!" said Jack, suddenly, in a clear voice.

Claude understood him, and turning to the sheriff again, he said—

"It is your duty, and will redound much to your fame after you are dead, if you say to the officers of police, who are now rapidly approaching, here is Claude Duval—seize him. But, it will be much more satisfactory to you to live with the comforts and the dignities you have about you, than to die for the commendations of the whole country; therefore, you will say that no horsemen have passed this way, and that the groom and the two horses behind belong to you, if you should be asked any questions; while I am your cousin Walker."

"My cousin?"

"Yes, Walker."

"May I be—"

"Very good."

Click went Claude's pistol, and the lady whispered—

"If you do shoot him, put him out of his pain quickly."

"No, no," said the sheriff, "I am not tired of my life just yet. All I ask of you is, never to relate the story, and I will save you if I can. A man is bound to preserve his own life if he were sheriff of all the counties in England, and I won't commit what may be called suicide—I'll do it."

"You are wise," said Claude, as he threw himself back in the carriage; but then a thought struck him, and, leaning forward, he touched the coachman, saying—"Peter, remember!"

“Oh, good gracious! Yes, I'm all over of a cold perspiration, and shall never forget to-night as long as I live, I know.”

“Very good.”

“Halloa! whose carriage?” cried a loud voice, “whose carriage is this?”

There was a great scampering and scuffling of horses' feet, so that it was



THE SNUG REPEAT.

quite evident to Claude that there were at least five or six horsemen upon the spot.

“The sheriff's,” said John.

“Sheriff! Sheriff of what?”

“Of Hants.”

“I suppose you come from London, s'u't, and think ther's no sheriff in

the world but those you see in the gilt coaches on lord Mayor's day. Eh spooney?"

"We must speak to the sheriff of Hauts, then. Coachman, pull up."

"Pull up," whispered Claude.

The coachman stopped, and the officers surrounded the carriage; little did they dream that once again their prey was in their grasp. The principal—and he was one of those whose horses had been started off by Claude, at the door of the Old George Inn—advanced, and, touching his hat, leant down to the carriage door, saying—

"Beg pardon, sir, but we are police-officers from London, upon the track of the notorious Claude Duval. He is upon this road somewhere, with a companion. They are mounted well upon dark bay horses, and have played us one of the most slippery tricks we ever had played us in our lives."

"Indeed!" said the sheriff.

"Well, my good man, go on," said the sheriff's lady, "we ain't highwaymen, are we, cousin Walker?"

"No, Sarah," said Claude, "certainly not."

"Sarah be—ahem! what a cough I have got," said the sheriff. "Ahem—ahem!"

"You can give us no news, sir?" said the officer. "Have no mounted men passed your carriage, sir?"

"None, of course; I hope you may catch him."

"Oh dear, yes," said the lady, who was willing to play her part well, that Claude was in perfect fear that she would over-play it; "oh dear, yes, of course we wish that, don't we, cousin Walker?"

"Yes, Sarah," said Claude.

"We must apologise, sir, for stopping your carriage," said the officer, "but we have a very onerous duty to perform. I and one of our party have lost our horses, and these we have are only hired upon the spur of the moment. If they have not been seen by you or your servants, sir, it's of little use our pursuing this road, more particularly as, upon the outskirts of Basingstoke, there are six of our people on the look-out. Perhaps, sir, if you see anything of the fellows, you will be so good as to give advice to our little party of it."

"Yes—yes."

"Oh, dear me, certainly," said the sheriff's lady, "of course we will, and Jenkins, our man, who is behind with a spare horse, shall lay hold of him if he meets him, shan't he, cousin Walker?"

"Ah! madam," said the officer, "it would require a good many Jenkinsons to catch Claude Duval."

"I think it would," said Claude. "Don't you, Sarah?"

"Yes, cousin Walker."

The sheriff gave another groan, and the officer touching his hat very respectfully, withdrew from the carriage-door to hold a consultation with his companions. The coachman, in obedience to the order conveyed in a whisper from Claude, was about to drive on, when the officer rode up again to the window, and said—

"Sir, will you permit one of our men to ride along with your carriage and servant to our next post, as the party there may as well be in full knowledge of what has already taken place?"

"Oh, certainly," said the sheriff, with an air of satisfaction, and then he added, sarcastically—"Don't you think that will be quite a good thing—cousin Walker?"

"Quite, sir," said Claude. "Drive on, Peter."

The cavalcade again proceeded, and, with Jack, who little relished such a companion, rode a mounted officer, who began in a garrulous sort of a way to tell him all the particulars of how Claude had, as he termed it, "dished" them at the door of the Old George.

"You don't say so?" said Jack.

"Yes, and it has made us all so savage that I do think the first of us that comes

across him, will not make the least attempt to take him, but will blow out his brains without a single moment's hesitation about it. This rain is not so pleasant, though, is it? I wish I had brought a top-coat with me. I shall get wet through."

"Very likely," said Jack.

They now trotted on after the carriage for some time in silence, for the officer could not but see that his companion was rather taciturn than otherwise. The fact is, that Jack was deep in thought as to how he could get rid of the fellow, in case anything suspicious should take place. He was armed, but he hoped a necessity for using his arms would not occur, and he breathed more freely as the distance between this single officer, who accompanied the carriage, and his five companions—for there had been six of them—momentarily increased. A result, however, of the rapidly falling rain was slowly, but surely, taking place, which did not at all occur to Jack until he was very disagreeably reminded of it by the officer suddenly remarking, with a puzzled and dolorous air—for he was not exactly a conjurer, that man, who had been selected to accompany the sheriff's carriage—

"What on earth is that odd white stuff all about your horse's feet? There's some on his face, too!"

"White stuff?" said Jack, who now immediately comprehended that it was the chalk with which he had disguised the horses, running off in the rain. "White stuff? What do you mean by white stuff?"

"I should like to know what you mean by it? It can't be kicked up on the road, or else it would be upon my horse's feet as well. How do you account for it?"

"I don't see," said Jack, "that I am obliged to account for it at all."

"But it's very extraordinary."

"Very. How do you account for it, eh? I don't profess to know anything about it myself. Do you know?—if you do, I should like above all things to know what it is. Go on."

The officer looked Jack in the face, and Jack looked at the officer for some few moments in silence, and then the latter said—

"Do you know, old chap, it looks to me as if something had been done to those horses' feet and heads to disguise them."

"Really?"

"Yes; and it is sufficiently suspicious in these times to make a man——"

"Look after himself!" said Jack, suddenly clapping a pistol to the breast of the officer. "Stir one step, and you are a dead man!"

"The devil!"

"Or Claude Duval—which would you rather have at your elbow?" said Jack.

"B—woo!" cried John, the footman. "My eye, here's a *romance* for you! Blaze away, gents. Blaze away, and don't mind me. Go it. Lord bless you both, I won't interfere. Oh, dear!—oh dear! what a dodge that was about the chalk, to be sure. If it hadn't been for the rain, now? Well—well."

"You are Claude Duval, then," said the officer, as his very lips turned of an ashy whiteness, "and my very life is not worth a moment's purchase. You killed the rector."

"A lie!" said Jack. "There was no ball in the pistol."

"I know you are Duval now," said the officer. "Fire away—Good-bye to my little ones."

Jack saw a tear flash in the man's eye, and he said to him—

"Don't be a fool.—If you can't take me, you can take care of yourself. I don't want your life.—Why should I?—You talked of shooting Claude Duval the moment you saw him; but why should you be so blood-thirsty? God knows what a child of your own—for you talk as if you were a father—may come to. Fancy the gentlest, and the one you love best, hunted like a wild beast from place to place."

"You—you won't kill me?"

"Not if I can help it. Your are armed?"

"Yes."

"Give me your arms, then, and you will see your little ones again, as far as I am concerned; and when you think of me, don't fancy that because a man is hunted by his fellows, that he must of necessity be as bad as to deserve such treatment."

The officer's hands shook so as he handed Jack a pair of pistols, that he nearly dropped them.

"Now," said Jack, who still wished to keep up the delusion in the man's mind that he was Claude Duval, and had in some audacious and mysterious way attached himself to the sheriff's *cortege*. "You must do your duty, or seem to do it. You look as if you thought I behaved generously to you. I only ask you in return for a little forbearance. Let us jog on as before, and you have nothing to report to your comrades when you reach them, but what you knew a quarter of an hour ago."

"And you will trust me?"

"Yes, if you promise. I have always gained more by trusting people than suspecting them."

"Listen, then," said the officer; "may I never look in the eyes of my wife and children again, in this world or in the next, if I betray you! Are you satisfied?"

"Most abundantly."

"You will not repent it, then. So now come on, and you will find that you have made a friend where you had not the least possible chance of expecting one."

"Come on," said Jack with a smile; "is not this better than my leaving your a bleeding corpse upon the highway? I trust you with all my heart, and shall be loth, indeed, to suspect you. Let us trot on. The carriage has got further ahead than I wish it."

He and the officer spurred onwards, and soon came close up to the carriage again.

"Well," said Jack to himself, "this is one of the most incredible of my adventures. It may be nothing to Claude to convert an enemy into a friend, but I must confess that I never before succeeded in such a thing."

If Duval, snugly esconced as he was in the carriage, had had the least idea of what was going on in its rear, he would probably have felt any way but at his ease, notwithstanding the affair turned out so well; but so it is—our greatest dangers, probably, always pass by us without our being aware of them, while we start and turn pale at a thousand petty chances, which, taken in their aggregate, would not make up the sum of one great risk which in its coming and in its going utterly eludes our observation. The situation of what we may call the sheriff's party was now rather curious. There was Peter the coachman in a state of mortal trepidation, expecting each moment that from some sudden whim or suspicion upon the part of the highwayman, he might be shot. Then there was the sheriff, so angry that purple lines and cavities were all over his face, and he absolutely snorted with suppressed ire. There was his lady all smiles, and simperings, and little sweetnesss, looking at Claude with "Oh, you good-looking wretch!" sort of expression; and then there was Claude, seemingly careless, but in reality most acutely observant of everything that passed. Nor did John the footman and Jack and the officer form a less anxious triumvirate than that which occupied the interior of the sheriff's showy and most luxuriously appointed travelling carriage.

## CHAPTER XC.

### THE BENIGHTED TRAVELLERS.

THE town of Basingsstoke was now about two miles and a half only from the carriage, and the day was getting pretty well advanced, for the adventures of Claude Duval and his friend Sixteen-string Jack had been sufficiently numerous since the dawn of morning to occupy a tolerably considerable portion of time.

They had never intended to push on both day and night. There was one consideration which put such a made of proceeding completely out of the question, and that was, that their horses were but flesh and blood, and required rest.

Where to get them that rest, was a point upon which Claude Duval earnestly reflected, and he would have been glad to have had five minutes' conversation with Jack upon that subject, for he felt quite sure, that after, by the assistance of the sheriff, passing the next party of officers, his best plan would be to lay by if possible until night, by which time the cattle would be refreshed, and, besides, night was the time when the most audacious schemes could be put in practice, and when disguises passed muster, which in the eye of daylight would have looked anything but the thing. To attempt putting up at any inn at Basingstoke would be by far too hazardous a proceeding, and yet where else to go it was a puzzler. Jack, however, knew more of the country through which they were passing than Claude, and hence the latter earnestly wished to speak to him. There was time enough for that, however, after they had passed the next party of officers, which was a very great point to be gained, inasmuch as when it was accomplished it would leave a world of danger behind them.

"Mr. Duval," said the lady of the sheriff, "is it true that you stopped the carriage of the Bishop of Exeter, and made his lady get out to dance a minuet with you? I have heard it reported."

"It is true, madam, as regards the fact of my dancing the minuet with the bishop's lady, but she might have declined honouring me so far, if she had pleased. I used no compulsion."

"Is she handsome?"

"Until to-day, madam, I thought her the most engaging person I had seen."

The slight bow which accompanied this delicate and well-timed compliment sufficiently pointed it, and the sheriff's lady could hardly conceal her gratification. Alas! many a long and dreary year had passed away since any one had spoken to her in such tones. No wonder that they came across her ears with all the fascination of early recollections—she had been handsome, and a coquette, too, in her time. Youth and age!—oh! how changeable are thy destinies! Time was when she—but no matter, we are glad that Claude Duval broke through the cobwebs of years, and let her once more hear the soft language of youth.

"There's two men a-coming," suddenly said Peter.

"Mounted?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, if they ask you to stop, do so, and then utter one word, and you know the consequences."

The tramp of horses' feet came plainly on their ears, and then there was the dark shadow of a man and horse outside the carriage window; and then a voice said—

"Gentlemen, have you come far down the Winchfield road?"

"I can tell you," said the officer who rode with Jack, suddenly riding forward.

"Oh, is that you, Griffiths?" said one.

"Yes; where's the rest of your party?"

"About a quarter of a mile on; but as we saw this carriage coming, we trotted on to meet it. Is it not the sheriff's?"

"Yes; and he is in it himself. You had better speak to him, and he will tell you the state of the road. He might be offended, you know, if you were to take a report only from me, while he is here."

"Likely enough."

The officer stooped to the window of the carriage, and touched his hat, as he said—

"Sir, we are on the look out for Claude Duval. Perhaps you will be so kind as to inform us if any suspicious-looking characters have been upon the road? We are sure to have him, but we don't know when exactly. He has a companion with him."

"I know nothing about it," said the sheriff, gruffly. "Ask your fellow officer

there, who has followed my carriage for the last five miles. He can give you the report of the road, I believe, better than I."

"Thank you, sir. I regret having troubled you upon the subject."

"Oh, it's no trouble."

"And not the slightest consequence," said the lady. "Peter, you can go on."

"Go on," said Claude.

With rather anxious eyes, and with apprehension that he would not for the world have let him see possessed him, Jack watched the proceedings of the officer, named Griffiths. He cannot be said to have actually suspected him of treachery but still Jack had seen enough of human nature to expect almost anything, however black and abominable it might be. He well knew that man, made in the image of his creator, and destined to immortality, was capable of any amount of wickedness, villany, and ferocity that the most dissuasive imagination could conceive; so it would not greatly have astonished him, if Griffiths had not actually turned upon him, and tried to capture or to shoot him, even after what had passed between them. The officer, however, was not among the worst species of humanity. Jack had, in consideration of his children, spared his life. A recollection of those children kept the officer bound, and he kept his word with the man whom he considered was worth a thousand pounds to anybody at any moment. This was real virtue. Before he rode off with his companions, he approached Jack, and held out his hand, saying—

"Good-by. I hope we shall never meet again."

"Don't say that," said Jack; "I hope we shall, and that, when we do, I may be able to do you a kindness. Good-by, to you. Remember me sometimes, along with the old proverb, that the devil's not quite so black as he is painted."

"I never thought he was; but there's one thing that puzzles me yet."

"What is it?"

"How came you to induce the sheriff to say that all was right, and to own you as belonging to him, when he knows that such is not the case? And you were not sufficiently near him to prevent all dangerous mischances. One word to those two friends of mine, from him, would have settled the matter, and they would have stood between him and any danger from your resentment."

"I have a friend in the carriage," said Jack.

"Ah, indeed! Cousin Walker, I'll be bound."

"The same."

"If I did not suspect it, may I—well, well, I see it all—I see it all."

"Not quite all," thought Jack, "for you don't see that I am not Claude Daval, and it is just as well that you should not see that part of the business."

The officer shook hands with him again, and then joining his companions, they went on towards Basingstoke again, at a much quicker pace than the carriage proceeded at. The first houses of the town were now distinctly visible, and Claude began to betink himself of when it would be best to leave the sheriff and his lady. After some consideration, he said to the sheriff—

"I will trouble you, sir, to accompany me through Basingstoke, until we are quite clear of the houses, and then I will leave you, trusting to your discretion to say nothing of this adventure, provided you will not promise silence. If you do promise it, I shall trust to your honour."

"Of course he'll promise it," said the lady. "Ah, promise it—Sir Harry, promise."

"I may as well," replied the sheriff, "and I do. There is my money."

"No, sir," said Claude, "you have afforded me, whether willingly or not, the shelter of your carriage, and I will not rob you in return for it."

"Do you mean that?"

"I never say, by any accident, in such matters, what I do not mean."

"Very well. Perhaps this may not be the worst action of your life, or the least likely to do you some good at another time; and—1—1. But no matter. I have said too much already."

"And you will take nothing from us?" said the lady.



"Nothing, I hope," said Claude, "but your pity."

"Yes, you must oblige me by accepting of this ring, which I give you in the presence of my husband. He knows it as well by sight as I do, and I hope that if you get into any serious difficulty, and it is nothing connected with the taking of life, you will not scruple to send it to either the sheriff or myself; and I am sure he will do what he can, consistent with his high station and his duties, for you. Sir Harry is no every-day man, Mr. Duval."

"I can see that," said Duval, with a slight glance at the lady.

The sheriff's vanity was tickled, and he gave a growling assent to what his lady, whom he really thought much of, had said, so that Claude Duval really seemed likely to part with that most ominous functionary to gentlemen of his complexion—a sheriff—upon the best of all possible terms, considering all things.

"I do not know your right name, sir," said Claude.

"Sir Harry Ross," replied the lady, for the sheriff.

It was at this moment that the carriage drove past the six police-officers and Griffiths, who had a little station just upon the commencement of the High-street, Basingstoke. The danger, in its worst aspect, was now passed. It was quite clear that the sheriff did not intend to break his word, and that was a consolation to Claude. It was equally clear that Griffiths did not intend to break his word, and that was a consolation to Jack, so that they were both well enough pleased as things went. On went the carriage at a good pace, although the horses were getting fatigued, and the long straggling town of Basingstoke was soon left behind, and once again between hedgerows the carriage took its course.

"I am now, I presume," said Claude, "taking you out of your way?"

"Yes," said the sheriff; "we turn off at a cross-road some quarter of a mile or so now behind us."

"Very well. Stop, Peter. Now, sir, and you, madam, I and my friend will bid you good day."

The carriage stopped, and then Claude opened the door himself, and dismounted. Jack rode up to him, and whispered—

"Have you a twenty-pound note about you?"

"I think so.—Yes.—No. Here are two ten-pound notes, they will do, I suppose, as well?"

"Certainly."

Jack went to the back of the coach again, and gave the notes to John, saying—

"You have done Claude Duval a service, and he sends you these. Don't hesitate about taking them."

"I didn't expect it," said John.

"Never mind; take it, that's all, and keep your counsel. Mind what you say when we are gone. It's very easy for you to ascribe the whole of your conduct in the affair to my pistol being close to your head. You understand me?"

"Oh yes, yes."

Claude now mounted his horse, which Jack had been leading, and then, taking off his hat, he said, in a low voice—

"Sir Harry, and you, madam, I thank you, and wish you all the happiness in the world. This ring will not leave my finger until it is taken from a dead man."

The sheriff sat far back in the carriage and said not a word. He was terribly ashamed of the whole transaction, but his lady kissed her shrivelled fingers and looked over her fan languishingly. Peter turned his horses' heads again towards Basingstoke, and in a few moments Claude Duval and Sixteen-string Jack were alone on the high-road. The sun was high in the heavens, and the birds were singing merrily upon the bushes that grew around in abundance. Claude and Jack set spurs to their horses, and galloped a good mile before they drew reins again, and then it was to look about for a resting place.

"Behold!" said Jack; "good entertainment for man and beast, Claude—there's the sign."

Glancing out from amid a cluster of trees was an old-fashioned inn. It was the very picture of repose and quietness, and just such a place as, upon a summer's

day, would have induced any lover of the quiet picturesque to turn aside from his path, merely for the purpose of sitting for a brief space beneath the soft shadow of the gigantic trees that had grown for many a long year within the sound of lusty yeoman, cheering their hearts with the good things of the old inn.

"This will do," said Claude. "There is an air of repose about the place which seems to invite us to rest for a time in it; and we will, if the police will be graciously inclined for a time to allow us to do so. What say you to the old house, Jack; do you think with me about it?"

"I think we are safe, now," said Jack, "for a time. They won't think of stirring from their posts now until they get something like positive information to go upon. What a famous old inn this is, to be sure. Did you ever see such ivy, Claude?"

"Seldom, Jack—very seldom indeed. I think with you, that if the sheriff keeps his word, and your new friend Griffiths keeps his, we may comfortably enough remain here until night arrives again to show us our way, and put other folks out of the way."

"Dismount, then, Claude. We will chance it, shall we?"

Claude said "yes" with a heartiness of manner that quite assured Jack he felt quite clear about the propriety of the proceeding; and so firm a reliance had Jack upon Claude's judgment, that he could be scarcely said to think for himself when Duval was present. They both rode up to the porch of the picturesque inn, and there dismounted. A rosy-cheeked damsel peeped at them from over a red blind, and an ostler, with such an abundance of fat upon him, that all his clothes seemed upon the full stretch, took charge of their horses.

"Put them up," said Claude. "We shall not want them for some hours."

"All's right, sir."

"Spare nothing on them. The best food you can get is not too good. Where's the stable?"

"Round the corner," said the ostler, in the true Hampshire dialect, which will persist in cramming in an *a* where, an *o* ought to be.

"Very well. I always like to see my nag comfortable before I look to myself."

"And I too," said Jack.

They both followed the ostler, for it was a common measure of precaution with both Jack and Claude, always to know where the stable was, so that in case of any sudden emergency, they could themselves find their horses and prepare them for the road without being indebted to any one else, who might do reluctantly what might be essential to the safety of their lives in a case of sudden and serious danger from their enemies.

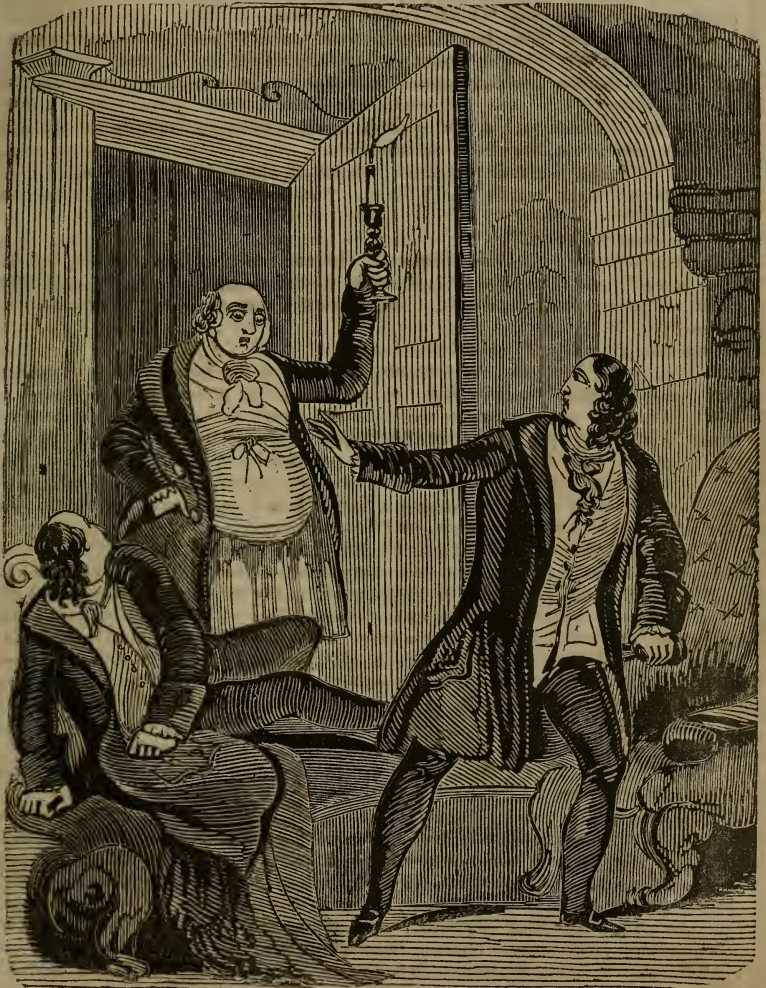
## CHAPTER XCI.

### MIDNIGHT ALARMS.

HAVING then seen the two horses properly attended to, and accommodated with a good feed each, and an abundance of litter—which a tired horse, or indeed any horse enjoys as much as his food—they entered the house themselves. It will be remembered that now, for many hours, they had had only the draught of milk which they owed to the kindness of the girl at the farm; so that it may be well supposed that they were both ready enough to set to well upon whatever provision the good folks of the inn could afford them. Cervantes, in his world-wide celebrated romance of "Don Quixote," gives an amusing account of the grandiloquent prowess in the way of good fare of Spanish innkeepers, as contrasted with what they really at length place before the famished traveller; but such is rarely the case in English inns. It was not the case at the one to which good fortune had conducted Claude and Jack. The innkeeper was a jovial-looking soul, and his wife and their buxom daughter looked as though gaunt famine, or even short commons,

were quite unknown in that locality. They were the very personifications of ruddy health, and they had such a profusion of smiles ready at hand that it seemed as though they must be upon the broad grin even in their sleep, in order to be so perfectly practised at it.

"Can we have anything to eat?" said Jack.



CLAUDE AND JACK AROUSED FROM A SIESTA AT THE 'VINE TREE.'

"And to drink?" said Claude.

The innkeeper looked at Claude intently, and then seeming to be satisfied with the scrutiny, he said—

"If you ain't too proud to sit down with me, you can have a snack wi' us. What say ye? we shan't eat thee."

Claude was rather in a difficulty as to Jack, whom he wished, of course, to dine

with him, although he was in the costume of a servant. He got out of the difficulty, however, by saying frankly—

"If you have no objection to let this faithful fellow of mine sit down with us I shall feel the greatest pleasure. He has known me from my childhood, and although my servant, I cannot help looking upon him more in the light of an old and attached friend."

"Come now," said the innkeeper, with a nod of his head and a twinkle of his little merry-looking eyes, "I like you all the better for that. You couldn't have found a shorter cut to my heart than the one you have took, young gentleman. I don't wonder at your having about you an old and faithful servant, not I. You are a good master. Which one of your stuck-up young jackanapes, wife, that we have come here in the red coats and silver-topped whips, in the hunting season, would make such a manly speech as this young gentleman has made?"

"Not one of 'em, Simon," said the wife.

"I'll be bound," said the daughter, "to die an old maid if they could."

"That you never can do," said Claude, "until all the men die except one, and he is blind."

"Go along with you."

"Bustle—bustle, wife," said Simon. "Get our snack of dinner ready, and let's have lots of home made and lots of home-brewed in case of other things falling short. That's right—now for it. Ah, that's the sort of thing, Hannah, for the 'Vine-tree.'"

"Is that your sign?" asked Claude.

"Yes, and it has been, they tell me, the sign of the old house for a hundred years or more, and I only hope it may be the sign of it for a hundred more. I don't think the old oak rafters will give way, and there's some good lumps of stone to hold 'em up; and as for the thatch, why if that goes, it can be put to rights again. Ha! ha! ha!—ugh! ha!—ugh! ha!"

"Now, father," said the girl, "there you go, choking yourself again."

"No—no—ah! oh! It was only a sort of joke I made about the thatch, that was all. That was all, wasn't it, sir?"

"Yes," said Claude, although for the life of him he could not exactly see where the joke was, but it would have been an ungenerous thing of him to have said so.

The wife and daughter bustled about, and in the course of ten minutes the "snack" appeared upon the table in the shape of as superb a haunch of mutton as any one could wish to see. Then there was a piece of bacon that looked like a mountain; and then there was a chump—we can find no more fitting term—a chump of veal roasted, that sent up such a savoury steam, mingling with that from the haunch and the saline exhalations from the bacon as was enough to astonish anybody. Then the heaps of vegetables, fresh from the garden, were astounding, and the home-brewed ale stood invitingly in foaming tankards.

"Now for it," said the landlord; "set to work like Britons. Betsy, I know you is *rather* delicate to day, so I won't serve you with much at a time."

He only placed a pound of veal and half a pound of fat bacon in the delicate Betsy's plate, and then Claude and Jack were served at their own request from the haunch of mutton, which was such a picture. They forgot police—rewards for apprehension—jails—gibbets, and the whole catalogue of evils that were usually present to their imagination, and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the hour with a zest that was truly remarkable in men situated as those two were. What a rich treat—what food for the feelings it would have been for Cicely and for May, and even for Markham Brereton, to have seen Claude Duval and his friend thus far upon their journey, and enjoying themselves in such a fashion at the old inn, as though they had nothing in the world to do but eat and drink, and laugh, and make merry.

"Eat away—eat away!" cried the landlord; and when he saw that Claude and Jack would not consent to stuff themselves to repletion, he found out with a rueful face that the dinner was not at all to their liking.

"But," said Claude, "I assure you it is, and we are already stuffed as though

for a wager, while we are almost afloat with the ale. We are nearly ill already by eating too much of such tempting cheer as this before us."

"Ah, now, if I could but think that, I should be contented. But, howsoever, as you say you can't take any more, why you can't, and there's an end of that, I suppose. You won't go on just yet, I hope. The day looks gloomy-like, and towards sun-down there will be rain; I take it. Don't you hear how the south-west wind is blustering about?"

"Yes, we don't intend to go yet. The fact is, we have been all last night in the saddle, and when we got to your door we were hungry and sleepy; but we are not hungry now."

"Ah, I take it you are sleepy, though?"

"You are right."

"Very well. There's a good sofa in the next room, and an easy chair that would do for an archbishop. It ain't cold, but when a man's asleep, he is apt to get chilly. Betsy, set light to the faggots. There's lots on the dogs."

"Yes, father."

The delicate damsel who had eaten as much as a famished grenadier, and washed it all down with a quart of ale, lit the fire in the next room, and there was soon a cheerful blaze roaring up the ample chimney, as the dry logs fumed and blustered, and crackled, before the presence of the mightiest agent of destruction the world ever knew. Claude pointed to the sofa.

"Sleep, Jack," he said; "I know you want it. Sleep in security while I keep watch over you. You will feel a different creature after a couple of hours' nap. There, I have drawn it nearer the blaze, so that your feet will be warm. Don't lose any time, now."

Jack shook his head.

"No, Claude," he said. "It is my business to watch while you sleep, if a watch must needs be kept at all. You lie down and rest yourself. I can see your eyes are heavy."

"Well, Jack, I tell you what it is. We will chance it, and both go to sleep. You take the sofa, and I'll take the chair, which, of the two, I think I shall like best. I will just put the door into a state of security, and then, I daresay, we may sleep as soundly here as if we were far away, or in Newgate."

"Newgate?"

"Yes, Jack. It is in Newgate that a highwayman enjoys sounder repose than anywhere else; for when he is there he ceases to start from his slumber with the dream of an officer's clutch upon his throat, and the words, 'You are wanted!' in his ears."

"That's philosophy," said Jack, as he stretched himself upon the sofa—"that's philosophy; but it comes in an ugly shape, don't you think, Claude? Sufficient for the day, however, is the evil thereof; so now a good repose to you. I was going to say 'good night,' and 'good day' sounds odd."

Claude shut his eyes, and pretended to sleep. Jack watched him for a few moments, and then, feeling satisfied, resigned himself to a deep slumber; and when Duval made sure that such was the case, he opened his own eyes and roused himself up a little, with the resolution of really keeping watch over the repose of his devoted companion.

"It won't do for two such men as we are," he muttered, "both to go to sleep at once, there are too many hounds upon the scent after such game as we are. No, I will watch you, Jack. At my age I can do without repose better than you can."

Once or twice Claude got up and walked stealthily to the door, to listen if any sounds at all in the way indicative of danger could be heard, but all was still. The serenity of the inn was undisturbed by anything that could by any possibility be construed into a token of any more perils to those two, who had already gone through so much.

"This rest," said Claude, as he again seated himself in full gaze of the fire, "is a real mercy to me and Jack; without it we could not have hoped to get

on much further, but with it we shall now be able to endure even a greater amount of fatigue than we have already gone through; and now I do begin to hope."

He was silent for a time, during which his thoughts were busy, and as he looked at the blazing logs on the hearth, he began to fancy strange shapes of men and houses, and old buildings, and tall ships in the glowing embers. More than once he had suddenly to arouse himself, saying—

"Holloa, Claude! Claude! Is this keeping good watch and ward over your slumbering friend?"

Upon such occasions, too, he would, for a few moments, listen most intently, and then, hearing nothing but the mournful cadences of the south-west wind, he would once more settle himself before the fire, and weave strong fancies out of the burning logs. Sometimes a magnificent cathedral would rise up in all its majesty of gothic tracery before his eyes, and then it would melt away as if before the touch of some enchanted wand, leaving nothing but the squalid appearance of some ruined hovel. Claude's head slowly sunk, and his arms hung listlessly by his side. The warmth of the fire, and his own previous fatigue, together with the hearty meal he had taken, were not too much for his resolution, but they were too much for his senses. In the course of another quarter of an hour Claude Duval was as fast asleep as Jack.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rap! rap! rap!—Tap! tap! tap!—"Sir, sir.—Gentlemen! Hi! what's your name? I say, open the door!"

"What's that?" said Claude, springing to his feet, and feeling astonished to find himself in darkness; "who's that!—what has happened?"

"It's only me," said the landlord from outside the door—"it's only me. Lord bless you, nobody wanted to run away with you here, I'm sure. You need not have locked yourself in so particularly."

Claude flung the door open, and Jack sprang from the couch. The landlord stood upon the threshold with a light in his hand.

"Well, how are you?"

"Oh, all right," said Claude, "all right. Why, it's getting dark. I—I must have slept longer than I thought. It seems as if I had only just nodded off."

"Does it? You have slept six hours; it's nine now, or close on it, and you both of you laid yourselves down at three."

"Is it possible?"

"Perhaps not, but it's uncommonly true. Howsomever, I shouldn't have waked you both up now, only I thought you were the very fellows to like good company, and there's six of the mounted police down stairs, who are on the look-out for Claude Duval, the noted highwayman. They are merry fellows, and have no end of droll stories to tell; so, says I, that will amuse my friends up-stairs, so I came up, that's all. Howsomever, I'm sorry enough if I have waked you up and broke your sleep. I always feels what my missus calls extra stupid if I'm woke up all of a sudden like."

"Oh, I'm all right," said Claude. "And so they are quite merry fellows, are they?"

"Oh, yes, full of their fun."

"You don't say so?"

"Oh, yes. What do you think they have done now? Can you guess?"

"I really can't."

"Well, they have took up two horses, do you know, and——"

"Our horses?"

"Yes, to be sure they have, and placed 'em in quite another part of the yard, and when I asked what they did that for, they only winked at each other, and said—'It's only our funny way, landlord, that's all;' but what they meant by it I'm sure I can't tell, no more can my wife, and she knows a thing or two, nor my Betsy, who, delicate as she is, is no fool."

Claude now staggered, and sank back in the ensy chair, for almost the first

time in his life rather at a nonplus. Rousing himself, however, in a few moments, he exclaimed—

“Only six!”

“Hush!” said Jack. “Hush!”

“What is it? What is it?” said Claude.

There was a sound of voices from below. The landlord suddenly closed the door of the room, and placing the candle upon the table, he at once altered the whole expression of his face, as he said—

“Claude Duval, I know you. What will you give me for getting you safe out of here and on horseback on the road again? I am not exactly what I seem to be. I know you!”

## CHAPTER XCII.

### THE ESCAPE.

BOTH Jack and Claude were utterly confounded at this speech. They looked at each other, and they looked at the landlord; but for a few moments neither of them spoke. At length the landlord advanced towards Claude with a laugh upon his face, and said—

“It’s all right. Don’t put yourself out of the way. I was only joking when I asked you what you would give to be mounted and upon the road again. You shall be there, and all I ask from you is a cordial good-night.”

“Will you indeed thus befriend us?” said Claude.

“Ay, will I. Do you think I want any of their beggarly reward for giving up a poor fellow to be hung? Do you think I want, for the sake of fifty or sixty pounds, which would be about my share of the affair, to be pointed out as the man who sat down to dinner with a fellow, and then told him to sleep in safety, and after that handed him over to the officers, who were snorting after the scent of his blood-money? No—no—I’d rather see every timber of the old house rock again.”

“How did you know me?” said Claude.

“That’s rather a long story, and there’s no time now to tell it. I knew you as soon as I came to speak to you, and what you said about having your friend here to dinner confirmed me in it. But now we have no time for chattering. You must get away somehow, and it must be done in a manner that shan’t look as if I had any hand in it.”

“Just manage it, then,” said Claude, “in any way you please. If you know much of me, you know that I never forgot a benefit conferred upon me, although I have both forgotten and forgiven many an injury.”

“I know it. Now, those chaps down stairs take me for a hard-drinking gonmandising noodle, and so they have been playing off their jokes upon me, and I must confess I should like to play them a trick in return. They have ordered beds, pretending they would stay here all night; but, of course, as soon as they can grab you, they will be off. Now, I want you to come down.”

“They will shoot me,” said Claude.

“No. In the first place, they are not quite sure of their man, and in the second, I have overheard their determination to take you alive. They think you will have the audacity, trusting to your disguise, and finding that you can get away, to sit down among them, and then they will seize an opportunity of springing upon you.”

“I understand. Six men to one is certainly long odds in a struggle.”

“Rather than it should come to that—when you’ve got down stairs—sit down near the door, and order a bottle of port. I will be close, bringing it, and your friend here can come out of the room to hasten me. He will then bring it in, in a decanter. Pass this to them to drink, and leave the rest of the fun to me.”

"But——"

"Now don't say a word. Trust me."

"With all my heart," said Claude. "Come along, Jack; it's all right.—Remember what you said to John, the sheriff's footman. 'There's a thousand times more good got out of people by trusting them than there is by suspecting them.'"

"There is," said Jack. "You taught me the maxim, and I have stuck to it many a time with the best results, and am quite willing to do so now. I know my post very well, and I think, Mr. Landlord, I can tolerably guess what yours will be in this little affair."

"Very likely. I'll just run down, and say you are both coming."

He left the room, and then Jack, looking earnestly at Claude, said—

"This is indeed fine. Do you think this man means honestly by us, Claude?"

"Yes."

"Oh! yes—you are always trustful of people, and I very seldom am. Let us, however, be prepared for the very worst that can happen. Look to your pistols, Claude. I don't feel quite convinced yet that two determined men, fighting for their lives, are not a match for half-a-dozen fighting merely to divide among them a thousand pounds."

"That's right, Jack. My bull-dogs are in good order, any ready to bark and bite at a moment's notice."

"And mine too," said Jack. "Remember, Claude, we must treat everybody to real bullets this time."

"Trust me for that, and if there should be such a thing as treachery, which I really do not look for, Master Serious will not laugh through the savory steam of such another dinner as we have had to-day. He may depend upon that."

The landlord had left the light in the room, and Claude now took it in his hand, and preceded Jack down the stairs. They heard a sound of voices, and in a moment they met the landlord, who said, in broad Hampshire dialect—

"*Thie's ye room.*"

He pointed to a door, and then, giving a nod of intelligence, pointed to a decanter of wine upon a shelf in the bar. Claude felt more and more assured, and opening the door, he entered the parlour of the inn, in which there were the six officers. It was evident that they thought a too close proximity to Claude might be dangerous, for one side of the table was quite deserted—the side next the door, which Claude left ajar. They pretended to be smoking and drinking with great ease and composure; but Claude could see that several of them shook again, as they believed they were about to make, through some peril, without doubt the most important capture they had ever made in their lives. No doubt, although there were six of them, they considered that probably some serious injuries to one or two of them might be one result of the enterprise. They had made up their minds to a particular course, and it was this. If Claude Duval came and sat down with them, they looked upon that as pretty good evidence that he thought himself unknown, and in that case, at some peculiarly favourable moment, a rush might be made upon him. If, however, he should show in any way that he thought his disguise was penetrated, they intended to shoot him at once, for well they could guess that he would otherwise lose no time in concocting some daring mode of action, which, although against such odds it might not succeed, no doubt would involve the death of more than one of them in its consequences.—No wonder that each trembled a little at the idea that he might be the victim, while his companions might reap the reward.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Claude. "Dear me, is that rain?"

Against a window that looked into the garden, there came such a clattering, dashing, shower of rain, that it was almost enough to drown any one's voice.

"Yes, sir," said one, rather nervously, "it is rain—a very rough night, indeed, sir."

"That's unpleasant," said Claude, "for I purpose being on the road soon."

"Towards London?" said one, giving a sly kick to his nearest companion.



"No," said Claude, "quite the other way. My friend and I are commercial travellers."

"In what line, sir?"

"Decidedly the hardware way," said Claude, drily.

"Oh—ah—yes—a-hem! dear me, how the rain does clatter, to be sure. Will you take a glass with us, sir, and your friend, too? We shall be particularly flattered and pleased by your company."

"Thank you," said Claude, as with all the coolness in the world he emptied the glass of brandy and water that was before him, and then rang the bell. The landlord made his appearance with an empty-headed sort of grin—"Roughish out of doors, gents. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fill that again," said Claude, pushing the brandy and water glass towards him, "and let us have a bottle of your best port, if it is decent."

"Uncommon good, sir."

"Very well. Be quick about it—glasses for all, mind. These gentlemen will, I am sure, do me the favour of taking a glass with me. We travellers can afford a bottle of wine; and we alwas put it down to the expenses of the road."

"No doubt somebody pays for it," said one of the officers.

"And handsomely, too," said Claude. "Are you going on far, gentlemen?"

"Oh, no; not another inch. All our business down here we now consider to be nearly transacted; and when it is quite so we get to London again as quick as horseflesh will enable us to do."

"Many a man," said Claude, gravely, "thinks his business comfortably settled, when in reality it is only his own fate that is fixed, and that by a summary process—in the midst of life, gentlemen, we are in death."

The officers looked uncomfortable, and several of them shuffled uneasily upon their seats; but Claude did not give them long time to think, for suddenly he cried—

"Where, in the name of all that's abominable, is that grinning ass of a landlord with the brandy and water? Just run out, Bob, and tell him we can wait for the wine; but the gentleman whose brandy and water I took is without anything before him."

"Yes," said Jack, "I'll rub him up a little."

This was done so well that the officers had not the slightest suspicion that anything was going on beyond what was usual, and they made no opposition to Jack leaving the room to get the brandy and water. In fact, they were all considerably puzzled to know who Jack was, for not one of them recognised him through his disguise. And even if they had thought there was a strong resemblance to a man whom they knew had been hanged, they would hardly have been so absurd as to fancy it was him. In a few moments Jack returned with a decanter of wine in one hand and a glass of brandy and water in the other, saying as he came into the room—

"I have got them both. He was just coming. I never saw such a fool in my life. He is laughing now ready to choke himself, and nobody knows what at. Oh, here he is with the glasses."

"Ah, gentlemen," said the landlord, "I went down into the cellar for the wine, do you know, and the light was nearly put out by a cobweb, and there I think I made the finest joke that ever I heard in all my life. Would you believe it?"

"Really!" said Claude.

"Yes, sir. 'Hilloa!' said I, 'that's a cobweb!' but now, here comes the joke—'But,' says I, 'it ain't a cobweb.' What do you think of that? Ha! ha! ha! Oh, dear! it makes the tears come into my eyes, that it does."

"And it's enough to make them come into anybody else's," said Claude, "to be forced to listen to it. Now, gentlemen, you will take a glass with me, and we will drink 'Better luck next time.'"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the officers. "Very good. 'Better luck next time.' Particularly good." They each drank a glass of the drugged wine but one, and across his mind it seemed as if a shadow of suspicion had come that all was not quite

right, although he could not to himself exactly define what it was he suspected. He refused the wine though.

"As you please," said Claude. "I'll take a cigar, landlord."

"Yes, sir."

The rain came down in torrents, dashing and rattling against the window-panes as though they must inevitably be driven in. The south-west wind, too, to which the landlord had already drawn the attention of Claude and Jack, was blustering and roaring among the trees at such a furious rate, that it seemed a miracle the old house could keep its roof on.

"A very boisterous night, indeed," said Claude. "A regular brawling wind. Well, these south-westers are generally more noisy than mischievous, I believe."

"You have forgotten your wine," said the officer who had refused to drink.

"How do you mean?" said Claude, whose great object now was to gain time.

"I mean that you don't drink any of your own wine, although you talked so much about it."

"Well?"

Claude fixed a calm, penetrating gaze upon this man, and the landlord coming in with the cigar he had ordered, handed it to Claude, who, with his eyes still fixed on the officer, took up the candle and lit the cigar, adding, when he had done so—

"Well, as you were saying. Go on."

"I was saying that you carefully avoided drinking the wine yourself, although all my party partook of it. That is what I was saying."

"Well?"

"Hold—hold," cried one of the officers, suddenly rising from his chair, and then as suddenly sinking down into it again. "I—I—don't feel—exactly as I ought to feel—my head swims—and—and——"

"Swim after it, then," said Claude. "I don't know that you can possibly do better."

"Help! help! I am ill," said another.

A third fell from his chair to the floor with a deep groan, and lay in a state of complete insensibility, while the two others were evidently too powerfully affected by the drug that had been administered to them in the wine to move or speak one word, if they had wished to do so ever so much. All this was very rapid, and the officer who had refused the wine looked quite astonished for a few moments. He recovered, though, more rapidly than any one would have thought, and presenting a pistol at Claude's head, he cried—

"Stir an inch, and you are a dead man!"

"A fool, instead of an inch," said Claude, "if it will answer your purpose. Fire away—I am used to it."

Snap! went the pistol.

"Try again," said Claude, "try again. You are a brave man, and ought to have another chance for your life."

"My life?"

"Yes, to be sure. Why did you fire at me unless you happened to be weary of it? You ought to know me better. It is my turn now, so I advise you to look out, for my pistols are not in the habit of missing fire." The officer was a brave man; but it requires something more than a mere brave man to look carelessly upon the approach of death, especially when neither the feelings nor the passions are at all interested in the object in the pursuit of which death has been encountered. For a moment only he stood firm. Then he dashed towards the window, and made a frantic effort to escape; and Claude, who had certainly not intended to take his life, followed him closely.

"Allow me to assist you."

Duval then gave one of those evidences of marvellous strength which no one would have expected from his appearance. He lifted the officer some four feet from the ground, and dashed him with tremendous bodily force through the casement, demolishing framework and glass alike in his headlong progress into the stable-yard at the back of the inn.

## CHAPTER XCIII.

## THE ROAD AGAIN.

"BRAVO!" cried Jack.

"Hurrah!" shouted the landlord.

"Hush!" said Claude—"hush! Remember, landlord, that you are supposed to do all you can to nab me, and that you are quite astounded at what has taken place in your inn, and cannot make it out in any way to your satisfaction."



CLAUDE INTERROGATES LORD COCKERSTON'S PORTER.

"All's right—all's right!"

"I hope the depth from this window to the yard is not great?"

"Oh, dear, no—only about twenty-two feet."

"The devil! Then I am afraid I have killed that man, but I could not help it. These things will happen. And now, landlord, what sort of a dose have you given these men lying here so still?"

"Nothing to hurt; you be off now, and leave all the rest to me. It's a lucky escape. They thought they had you as safe and sure as they had the eyes in their own heads; but they have learned now to know by their own experience that there is mauny a slip betwixt the cup and the lip."

"Yes, but how much are we indebted to you?" said Claude. "I have met with many hair-breadth escapes, but seldom one in which there was so much real danger as in this."

"Don't mention that."

"Oh, yes, but I will," said Claude. "These are the things that ought to be mentioned. One may be well inclined to say nothing about injuries, but benefits may well be spoken of. I, for one, will take good care not to forget what I owe to you."

"Come, come, be off. That is the best thing you can do. Your horses are already saddled, and you have nothing to do but to mount them, and ride away as fast as you can, for these fellows will be getting up in a little while. There is one thing that puzzles me still, and that is as to who your companion is; but if it is a secret keep it, mind, and forget that I asked anything about it."

"It is a secret," said Claude, "and it is not mine."

"That's enough."

"And odd as it may sound of me to say so," remarked Jack, "it is not altogether mine, for a disclosure of it would affect others as well as myself."

"Then," said the landlord, "let me be one man to advise you to keep it to yourself; and now be off with you at once. You are for London, I suppose?"

"No—no."

"Indeed! There is not much game to be started in the country."

"We are bound for Southampton, although my own private opinion is, that we shall not reach there."

"And yet you'll try it?"

"Yes, I have promised one that I would try it, and fairly try it, too, with whom I would not willingly break faith. What a boisterous night it seems, Jack!"

"Yes, the north-wester seems to be at its height. It does roar, indeed, at a terrible rate."

"Oh, it's not much," cried the landlord. "The trees make half, and more than half the bustle. This way—this way for the horses. Now, my girl, brew a couple of glasses of brandy and water fit for a prince, and then these gentlemen will be off."

'For they are lads who love the moon—  
Who love the moon—who love the moon.  
And they—'

Confound it, I've forgot all the old ditties now, and there was a time when I had them all at my fingers' ends, as pat as may be. Well, well, we all get older; but whether we get wiser or not is quite another affair, ain't it, Mr. Duval?"

"Yes; but don't call me Mr. I am Claude to my friends."

"And the devil himself to your enemies. Ha! ha! ha!"

Claude and Jack had followed the landlord to the yard of the inn, and there sure enough they found the horses all ready for the road, and no doubt much refreshed by the rest they had had. Our two adventurers were mounted in a moment.

"Farewell," said the landlord; "no—God bless me!—stop!"

"What for?"

"The brandy and water, and here's my little wench with it, smoking hot. Ah, she knows how to mix a glass fit for an emperor, when she likes. That's the stuff."

Claude would rather at that juncture have been excused from drinking; but he had received so much kindness from the landlord that he would not offend him by refusing his proffered hospitality, and he drained his glass. Jack did the same, and then waving their hands, off they went.

"You know the way?" said Claude.

“Perfectly.”

They galloped on for some few minutes in silence. The thoughts of both were busy with recollections of the past and anticipations of the future, and we may take advantage of that silence to cast a glance upon the scene around them, and the aspect of the weather. They were in an exceedingly picturesque portion of Hampshire, and their road was shaded on each side by gigantic trees that even at mid-day would have cast a peaceful shadow upon the path. Among these trees the wind made so tremendous a din that it would have been a difficult task just at that part of the road to have carried on a conversation at all, for even the sound of the horses' feet was obliterated to the hearing of both Claude and Jack. Added to the discomfit of the blustering wind, and it was blustering enough to be uncomfortable, was a drizzling, sleety kind of rain that seemed as if it were twisted hither and thither into so many contrary eddies of wind as to come from every point of the compass at once. Sometimes for a few moments it would come perseveringly in their faces, and then without their having in the least changed their course, it would dash into their necks behind with a most abominable perseverance, insinuating itself beneath their clothing in the most artful manner.

“Jack?” said Claude.

“Yes—yes.”

“What do you think of this?”

“Why, my private opinion,” said Jack, “is, that it is about as uncomfortable a state of things as any one would wish to have anything to do with.”

“I agree with you. But I suppose we must endure it. Hilloa! what's this?”

A travelling carriage, the noise of which had been quite drowned by the wind, now dashed suddenly past them, lighting up for a brief space with its lamp the trees, and the road glistening with moisture, and then leaving everything in apparently tenfold darkness.

“Humph!” said Claude. “Quick work. Where is that going, I wonder?”

“I can hardly guess,” said Jack, “unless right on to Winchester, which is now the only place of any consequence remaining before us, and that is not very eminent!”

As Jack spoke, the travelling carriage astonished them both by suddenly disappearing, with all the effect as though it had been swallowed up in the ground, although neither Jack nor Claude were superstitious enough to think such a thing for a moment. They scarcely knew to what circumstance to attribute the disappearance of the carriage, but they at length concluded that its abrupt departure from the high-road must have been caused by its turning to the right.

“A cross-road,” said Claude, “I suppose, to somewhere.”

“It must be so,” said Jack. “Push on.”

At about a couple of hundred yards further on they soon saw by what means the carriage had disappeared, for there were the open gates of some park, and a pretty little lodge at each side of them, upon the threshold of which stood a man in rich livery.

“Whose house is this?” said Claude to the man.

“Lord Cockerton's country seat, sir,” replied the footman. “It's the birth-day of Lady Louisa, so there's ever such a grand party, and a dance in what they call the Templars' Hall, and a grand supper, and all that sort of thing. Why, there's three hundred expected they say.”

“Enough to be merry. Good night.”

“Good night, sir.”

Jack had fallen back in his position of groom to Claude, which accounted for the respect with which the footman treated him. Jack and Claude rode on for about a quarter of a mile, during which it was clearly visible to them both that upon their right hand was an oaken park-paling, enclosing, no doubt, the grounds of the mansion in which so glorious a feast and dance were going on.

“Jack,” said Claude, “this rain is decidedly not the thing for us. In the vallise there are plenty of gentlemanly appointments. Suppose we invite ourselves to this grand party?”

"It's too hazardous, Claude."

"Not a whit. We will find some mode of entrance to the grounds, and then our only care will be to find shelter for our horses, and dress ourselves and go to the house. I don't anticipate any difficulty in the matter. If we cannot find a dry shelter for the horses, of course I shall give up the idea, for it won't do to tamper with them by leaving them in such a drizzling rain as this for some time."

"No, Claude, certainly; and as for difficulties, I never yet knew you found any in the way of the most desperate enterprises you ever planned. Come on, if it must be so, only I won't dress otherwise than as your servant, in which character, which will give me no trouble, I shall be better able to hear if there is any danger gathering around you, than as though I went with you."

"That's as you please, Jack; but I would rather you enjoyed the entertainment with me."

"I could not support the character well."

"As well as I."

"No—no. You, who came off with such flying colours from a grand ball at St. James's Palace, may well feel confidence in your resources, but all that sort of thing is to me an effort."

"As you please, Jack—as you please. Just hold my horse, and I will dismount, and walk slowly along this park-paling looking for a door, for there are always some to be found in such fences at intervals."

Claude dismounted, and that he was right in his conjecture about finding a door was sufficiently manifested by his discovering one before he had gone thirty feet. It was fast locked, but to such men as Claude and Jack a locked door was no very serious obstacle. From a pocket devoted to the care of a few tools and implements of the "profession," Claude took a picklock, and by the feel only he succeeded in a few moments in turning rather a ponderous lock. The door immediately gave way.

"Quick! quick!" said Jack.

"What for?"

"Didn't you hear? There are horsemen upon the road, and by the sound, I should say no small number. We can hear them now that we are free of the trees. Hark! hark!"

"Ah! Come in, Jack—come in, Jack. This door is, indeed, most opportunely open."

Jack and the two horses were now inside the park gates in a moment, and Claude closed the door again. The palings were not sufficiently high to come over the horses' heads, but against the dark foliage behind them it was not at all probable they would be seen by any horsemen galloping past. The danger turned out, however, to be greater than Claude and Jack had either of them expected, for the horsemen did not gallop past. The sound of rapidly approaching horsemen increased each moment in clearness, and at length when Claude and Jack thought they were about to sweep past, and the danger would in another moment be over, a loud voice cried—

"Halt!"

With a clanking and a jingling of accoutrements that Claude was quite sure did not belong to the police, the horsemen paused, and the voice that had cried "halt," said—

"Well, sir; it don't seem that the parties you seek are upon this road. Do you think there is any urgent necessity for my men going at speed?"

"You will remember, sir," said another voice, "that I have not called upon you as a magistrate to press this duty, but rather, as you were going upon the road with your troop to Winchester barracks, requested as a favour that you would accompany me and the police down the road."

"Oh, yes—yes," said the first speaker, who was a cavalry officer. "That's all right. Of course, we are very happy upon an exigency to lend any practicable assistance to the civil power; but you find, that after a hard trot of five miles, we come not upon the fugitives, or hear any news of them."

"And yet Sir Harry's information was very positive upon the subject, although other avocations made it impossible for him to accompany us."

"Oh! ah! Who did you say he was?"

"The sheriff of the county, Sir Harry Ross, who declares that he saw Claude Duval upon the road, and that, to the best of his belief, he is making his way towards Winchester."

"Very well," said the officer. "It just comes to this:—These highwaymen are in all probability much better mounted for speed than we are, and might keep us on the race for miles. Our cattle are not so much adapted for speed, and for dragoons to go hunting is rather an out-of-the-way thing."

"I am obliged to you, sir, for what you have done."

"Oh, don't mention it. A sharp trot now and then is no harm, and if your party like to keep the pace of my party, well and good. We can go on together until I reach my destination; and if anything should occur on the road, in which my men can lend you a helping hand, they shall."

"I am much indebted to you, sir. We are more lightly mounted, of course, than your dragoons, and will ride on. I wish you good evening, sir."

"Good evening."

The magistrate, who had a party of mounted police with him, again set off at a good round trot, and then, after a few oaths between themselves, the officers of the dragoons—who, although they put a civil face upon the transaction, wished the police at the devil, and cared not one straw whether they caught a highwayman or not—ordered their troop to advance again. Silence was soon as profound as before upon that spot.

"An escape," whispered Jack.

"Rather," said Claude. "I must confess it would not exactly have suited us to have fallen in with some twenty-five dragoons. That would have been long odds against us, Jack."

"Too long, indeed."

"Well. That danger, like many others, has passed away, and like others, I forget it. Now, Jack, let us see if we can find shelter for our horses, and then hurrah for the ball!"

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## CHAPTER XCIV.

### THE BALL.

JACK, to tell the truth, did not half like this desperate plan of Claude's, to intrude himself into the mansion, when the festivities upon such a grand scale were in progress; but he knew quite enough of Duval to feel assured that no persuasions would induce him to it give up. If Jack had chosen to ask, as a personal favour, that Claude would give up the notion, there is no doubt but that the latter would have done so instantly; but that was what Jack did not like to do, for then, if within the next few hours any serious danger occurred, he would have the unhappy reflection, that but for him they might have been safe at the mansion of a noble lord. Besides, had not the plan at its very outset saved them from the dragoons? To be sure it had, for if they had not been just in time through the little door in the park-palings, there would in all probability, upon that night, have been an end to the career of Claude Duval.

"Jack," said Claude. "Just look over there, and tell me what you see."

"A roof of something among some trees," said Jack.

"Let's make to it."

"Why, it's most likely part of the house."

"Never mind, Jack. I don't think anything too good for our cattle. A spare room with a window opening upon the park would be just the thing, and the

horses don't want any feeding now, after the good cheer that no doubt they have had at the inn."

"They are, in fact, too full, Claude."

"So I thought. Now lead yours, Jack, and I will lead mine. It's just as well to let those dragoons get a start of us, for however much it might amuse them to overtake us, it would not be near so entertaining for us to overtake them."

"Quite the reverse."

Leading their horses, now, they slowly made their way over the wet grass of the park towards a clump of trees, from amid which they could just dimly see, against the night sky, the roof of some sort of building. What it was, they had not the most distant idea. It was certainly too close at hand to be any portion of the mansion itself. They did not, as they advanced, for some time exchange a word with each other; for they could not tell who might be close at hand, and the horses' feet, as they were quietly walked, made no sound upon the soft wet turf. After proceeding in this way for a much greater distance than they thought the trees were off them, they reached their confines, and then they paused to listen; but not the least sound came upon their ears. All was still as the grave.

"Remain here for a few moments with the horses," whispered Claude, "while I creep forward and thoroughly reconnoitre the place."

Jack did so, and Claude, stooping low, and walking on with the utmost caution, crept through the trees until he came to the building, which he then saw at once was a summer-house, and he might well, as he did, conjecture that in such weather and at such an hour it was deserted. In fact, so clear did he feel upon the subject, that he was upon the very point of returning to Jack, when a faint gleam of light from a little painted window came across his path. Claude paused in a moment.

"Who on earth can that be?" he said to himself; and the idea for a moment came across his mind that perhaps, after all, it would be safer and better to return and give up the adventure; but this, with Claude Duval, was only a momentary thought. His daring courage, and his real liking for anything in the shape of romantic adventure, triumphed over every other feeling, and, instead of retreating, he advanced towards the little painted window from which the gleam of light proceeded. It was a strange colour this gleam of light, for it passed through a tinted pane of glass, and when Claude reached the window he found that he could see nothing through it. He could, however, hear the murmuring sound of voices. After a few moments of vain endeavour to find a peephole, he took from his finger a ring in which there was a small diamond, and by its aid succeeded, without giving the least alarm to the persons in the little pavilion or summer-house, in cutting out a small pane of glass from the stained window through which the gleam of light came. In a moment he commanded a clear view of the interior of the place. It was one of those tasteful little buildings, with painted walls and showy drapery, which in the summer season afford such a pleasing and cool retreat from the glare of the sun during a stroll through such a park as that in which it was situated. But Claude's attention was only cursorily bestowed upon the summer-house; it was the occupants of it that rivetted his gaze. A young girl of singular beauty, and whose dress and air showed that she was one of those highly cultivated beings only to be found in the most wealthy classes, and then not often, was standing by the side of a young man, whose left arm was round her waist, while with his right hand he held her left, and at times covered it with kisses. A loose cloak—it looked like a gentleman's—was thrown over the girl, and the young man was attired in full evening costume. The light they had was a little bit of wax candle, in a small silver taper-stand, and it seemed as though they had stolen away from the festive scene at the mansion to enjoy love's soft converse alone in that summer-house, when, upon such a night, they were not likely to be observed, however much they might be missed. The maiden was weeping bitterly, and he who held her affections in bondage was striving to console her, as the voice of the loved one can only console.



"My darling," he said, "you quite unman me by these tears. Ah, my Lavinia, let me implore you to look more hopefully upon the future."

"Alas, Charles, how can I?" she sobbed.

"Can you ask? Do we not love each other, my own true-hearted love? Why should not the future be full of hope to us, and full of joy?"

"But—but ——"

"But what? Surely since forbidding me to address you as a suitor, your imperious mother has not superadded any further tyranny? Your heart seems to-night to be full of affliction."

"It is—it is."

"Who, then, should share it but myself? Have you at length, my own girl, a secret from me?"

"No—no. Oh, no, Charles, I will tell you all, however repugnant to my feelings it may be, but I have so accustomed myself to look upon you, and to think of you as a second self, that I am unhappy if you do not know all that passes in which your poor Lavinia is interested. Listen to me, Charles.—My mother—"

"Ah, yes, your mother! All the unhappiness that you and I endure is caused by her."

"It is, indeed."

The young girl wept more bitterly than before, and it was probably highly necessary to her recovery from such an accession of grief, that Charles should bestow upon her so many kisses as he did. At all events, they seemed to have the desired effect, for in a few moments she was able to proceed.

"My mother, then, Charles, has set her mind upon my marriage with Sir James Raffles."

"Yes—yes."

"And it was only to-night that I really ascertained the unworthy inducement which she had to sell her child."

"Sell?"

"Yes, Charles, that is now the proper word. By mere accident, I overheard the bargain between them. She was to persecute me with a marriage with him upon condition that he was to pay her twelve thousand pounds down, to relieve her from what she calls her difficulties, and likewise give one thousand pounds per annum unknown to any one, to enable her to indulge in play and other extravagances to which she is attached."

"Oh, shame—shame! have you no blush?"

"My soul revolted, Charles, against this horrible compact."

"As well it may."

"My father allows my mother a queenly income, for he is rich and weak, and what she can so much want money for, that she would sell her child to procure it, is beyond my imagination to conceive."

"My darling," said the young lover, and his voice trembled with passion as he spoke, "your mother—is—is—your mother; therefore, natural delicacy will forbid me saying to her what natural feelings would prompt; but as for Sir James Raffles, he, as a man, shall answer to me for this insult; and now, Lavinia, I again urge you to place a barrier between your mother's tyranny and yourself, which she cannot cross.—That barrier must be a husband. Fly with me, and we will go at once to my aunt's in London, where you will receive the welcome of a mother in reality, and a few days will join us to part no more."

"Oh, if I dared."

"Dared? Ah, Lavinia. Do you love me?"

"Do not ask me, Charles. Oh, let me not think—I—I—believe, I shall go mad."

"No, my darling, You will, on the contrary, fly with me. I have loved you since you were a mere child, and surely you may trust me now."

"I know I can trust you, Charles. You, in all the world, are my only friend. God will bless you."

"God has blessed me dear one, with your love."

"I shall be missed. Oh, Charles, this interview has already lasted too long. I must leave now."

"Stop, Lavinia. It is now a quarter past ten. By twelve o'clock I will be upon this spot, waiting for you, and outside the park-wall I will have a carriage prepared for your reception. In a few hours you will be in the arms of my aunt."

"Ought I--dare I?"

"You ought. If your mother, in urging upon you this hateful union with Sir James, had been conscientiously seeking your happiness in life, however she might have been mistaken, you might hesitate to leave her, but when you know she only seeks to make you the victim of her own gross selfishness, the case is indeed most widely different."

"I heard it from her own lips, Charles."

"That was conclusive."

"And horrible."

"It was horrible, indeed, for a child, and that child a young girl, to hear such words come from one so near to her as a mother. I do not wonder at your tears, my darling."

"I felt, Charles, that from that moment I had no mother."

"You will fly with me?"

"I will—I will."

"Ah, my Lavinia, you will never repent this step but in years of happiness, and then you will look back to it as the one taken in the right direction, which rescued you from an intolerable persecution, and united you to one who will cherish you as the dearest gift that God in his goodness can give him."

There was some more kissing.

"D—n it," muttered Claude, "I hate that when I am not a party concerned."

"Do not accompany me to the house," said Lavinia; "we might be seen by some one."

"I will only watch you from here, love. Remember—be near as near to twelve as you can."

"I will, Charles, I will."

The lover carefully folded the cloak around the beautiful girl, for beautiful she really was, and then he watched her small sylph-like form as it went towards the mansion.

"May Heaven forget and desert me in my hour of utmost need, and when all the hopes and wishes of this world have faded away, if, willingly, I ever give cause to my Lavinia to shed one tear of sorrow!"

"Humph!" said Claude, "I hope they will get off all right—perhaps it may fall in my way to lend them a helping hand. We shall see. At all events, Jack and I must be off, I suppose, at twelve; two of our horses are to find refuge here. I must examine the place—Hilloa!"

The young man named Charles suddenly extinguished the little piece of wax candle, and then Claude could hear him rapidly and lightly go towards the mansion. Duval had always with him plenty of means of procuring a light, and making his way now into the summer-house he ignited a match, but he could not find the wax candle. He glanced around him by the light of three or four little matches which he lit in succession, and he saw a door leading to another room; he passed at once through it, and found it led out to the open air again, and as there was no furniture in this other room, and it could be got at without passing through that in which the meeting of the lovers had taken place, Claude decided upon it as best adapted for his and Jack's horses. Having settled all that in his own mind he made his way back to Jack, and briefly informed him of all that he had overheard, adding—

"It would give me much satisfaction to assist these young people, for I am convinced of the truth and sincerity of the lover from what he said when he fancied no one was at hand to hear his thoughts uttered aloud."

"There can be no doubt of it, I think, Claude; we do as much good as we go along as people accuse us of doing harm. Don't you think so?"

"Why, I confess to a little of the knight-errant feeling about me, Jack. But I think it rather arises from a passionate indignation against the oppressor, than from any very great sympathy with the oppressed."



THE SECRETS OF CHARLES HERBERT AND LAVINIA OVERHEARD BY CLAUDE.

"Never mind, Claude, what it arises from, so that it takes a right direction."  
 "Your philosophy is, in my opinion, quite correct, so now let us go on, and win."

They had not to lead the horses above twenty feet to the door of the room in the pavilion where Claude purposed leaving them, and they were soon both housed. The animals, no doubt, were a little surprised to find that they were upon a Turkey

carpet instead of a bundle of straw, but beyond that, they seemed to relish pretty well their accommodation, and, at all events, to be anything but sorry at escaping the rain.

"They will soon be down, I'll be bound," said Jack.

"Do you think so?"

"Oh, yes. A horse, if he is in health, will, like a man, make himself comfortable where and when he can; it is only when he is ill that he gets particular, and would prefer clean straw to a featherbed."

"You still persevere, Jack, in your resolution not to dress for the ball?"

"I do. As a matter both of policy and convenience, I prefer being as I am."

"Very well. Now light a piece of taper, and come into the other room with my valise. I must be a little particular in my toilette upon this occasion."

Jack found, among the miscellaneous collection of odds and ends in his pockets, a piece of wax taper, which he lit, and by its aid, Claude plainly attired himself for the ball, avoiding all outward and extraneous flourishes; so that he, while looking in all respects a gentleman, was by no means attired in a manner to attract more than a common passing share of ordinary observation.

## CHAPTER XCV.

### AN ELOPEMENT.

THE ball-room at Winchfield Hall was, indeed, a gorgeous apartment. Imagine a room of a hundred feet in length, and seventy in width, the roof of which was of a corresponding height, while from twelve large windows there hung crimson satin draperies, adorned with a profusion of gold fringe and bullion tassels—imagine mirrors set in the most costly and elaborate frames upon the walls, at only about four feet distance from each other, while the intervals are filled up by gilt columns, upon which are vases overflowing with flowers—imagine a ceiling covered with fretwork in gold over an azure ground, from which depended three chandeliers of the most magnificent cut glass—imagine, then, a thousand and one little articles of furniture in the shape of gorgeous seats and ottomans, and you may have some idea of the ball-room at Winchfield Hall upon this memorable occasion. There opened from it a multitude of pretty little apartments, hidden by silken hangings, all of which were devoted to the purposes of holding refreshments, and some of those apartments had French windows that led to a lawn. It was by one of these that Lavinia had, for a brief space, escaped to meet her lover in the little pavilion—it was by one of these that a tall distinguished-looking man entered some half hour afterwards. That man was Claude Duval. The din and crash of music came upon Claude's ear, and a suffocating sense of being in an atmosphere full of perfumes came across him. He paused a moment to look at himself in a long mirror that was in the little room.

He then advanced to the table in the centre of the room, which was profusely laid out with refreshments, and filling for himself a goblet of wine that held not far short of half a pint, he drank it off, saying as he did so—

"To my own success."

Then with that air of great confidence which a close observer like Claude Duval had seen was one of the distinguishing marks of good breeding, he strolled gently towards the ball-room, where, among three hundred gents he thought that surely he should be sufficiently secure from observation. A gentleman was advancing from the ball-room to the refreshment-room as he, Claude, was so gently walking on, and they both slightly bowed like two well-bred strangers as they passed each other.

"That will do," said Claude, "that will do," and he passed on.

In another moment he was in the full blaze of the grand saloon, and then he found that the moment of his entrance was rather inopportune as regarded escaping observation, for some rather fatiguing dance had just finished, and most of the company were seated, while a very few only lounged about, and the band, which was stationed judiciously out of sight somewhere, played an exquisite air from "Acis." Claude, without betraying the slightest confusion, made his way gently to a seat, while several whispered remarks of—"Do you know who that is?" passed from mouth to mouth. There was not much room upon the seat, but a puffy, bloated-looking man, with an awfully sinister-looking squint, handed a lady to it, and with a profound bow, seated her.

"As your ladyship was remarking," he said, "such an air as that is a recompense for the fatigue of these new quadrilles, which have slightly incommoded your ladyship."

"Yes, Sir James, yes."

"Ah—hem!—ah! Your ladyship, I think, remarked——"

"That I had not seen Lavinia for half-an-hour. Ah, there she is. Pray, Sir James, go to her and secure her hand for the next dance, before any one else less unexceptionable than yourself should forestall you. Do not take any excuse. Use my name."

"Yes—yes; a-hem! Yes, my lady—I—will."

Sir James Raffles, for it was he, hurried off, leaving her ladyship, the mercenary mother of Lavinia, by the side of Claude Duval, who did not wait long before he said—

"It must be a great gratification to you, madam, to see so many eyes doing homage to your daughter's beauty and accomplishments."

"Sir?"

Claude, with all the coolness in the world, repeated his remark verbatim, and then her ladyship saw that whoever was the handsome stranger by her side, he was not to be put down. She gave something between a toss and a bridle of her head, as she said—

"I presume I have the pleasure of talking to the Earl of Harkeret?"

"I wish you had," thought Claude. "No," he replied, "no, your ladyship is mistaken. But among so many guests, it is not to be wondered at if there are some whose names escape your ladyship's recollection. I am unhappily among he number."

"Would it be impertinent for me now, sir, to request that you would inform me to whom I have the honour of speaking?"

"Not at all. But keep it secret—but I am——"

Now, Claude up to this moment had really not quite made up his mind to say who he was, but in the buzz of conversation that met his ears when he entered the ball-room, he had heard the name of Sir Kenelon Microme—an odd name, and one that, from its oddness, fixed itself in his memory. Accordingly, without a moment's thought, he mechanically concluded his sentence, by repeating the name of—

"Sir Kenelon Microme."

"Sir?" said her ladyship, giving a slight start.

"Yes," added Claude, gravely, and putting on a peculiarly mysterious look, "I am he!"

"Really, sir, you—you, perhaps think it a good jest, to assume the name of a distinguished ancestor of this family before the name was changed to what it is now, but permit me to say, that I, in my dull capacity, cannot see the jest."

"Nor I, madam."

"Then why, sir—why, I say——"

"I—am—he!"

Her ladyship's colour changed in spite of her courage, and she half rose from her seat.

"Sit!" said Claude.

Down she sat again, and then summoning all her courage to her aid, she said—

“Sir, this is rather too absurd. Now that you have had your jest, permit it to end.”

“Have you no portrait of me?”

“Yes—no—what am I saying? How very ridiculous. You are taking advantage of an accidental likeness you certainly bear to the portrait of Sir Kenelon in the long gallery.”

“That’s lucky,” thought Claude. “I am accidentally like the portrait, or her ladyship’s own imagination has found out the semblance. “No, madam, I am taking no advantage. It was necessary that I should pay you a visit.”

“Necessary?”

“Yes. Look at my fairest descendant.”

He glanced towards Lavinia, and the conscious-stricken mother shuddered, but her ladyship was what is called a strong-minded woman, and consequently she made an effort to rally from the shock that Claude had given to her.

“Hark you, sir!” she said. “If you have anything to say, or any communication to make concerning my daughter, the Lady Lavinia, perhaps you will have no objection to say it in the presence of my son, the major, and his lordship?”

“None in the least,” said Claude.

“You—you have no objection?”

“None whatever. I can tell them, then, of the pecuniary agreement between you and Sir James Raffles—who, by-the-by, if you were to succeed in forcing Lavinia into a union with him, would pay you a moiety of the first £1200, but not one penny piece of the annuity.”

“God Almighty!” ejaculated her ladyship.

“Hush, woman! Hush!” said Claude. “How dare you use that name? The mother who would sell her child to a worse than Egyptian bondage for the means of gratifying her evil passions and depraved taste, has nothing to do with God Almighty. Repeat not that name again. There is danger in its sound to you and such as you.”

The woman trembled like an aspen leaf. Then with a shriek she fainted. The whole saloon was in confusion in a moment. The music left off at a grand crash, and the guests one and all flocked round her ladyship, eagerly inquiring of Claude what was the matter with her, as though he by sitting next to her must necessarily know all about it.

“Only the heat of the room,” said Claude, “I suppose.”

“Heat of the room—oh, stuff!” said a lanky thin young man. “Mother is used to all this sort of thing in many London seasons. It can’t be that.”

“Humph!” thought Claude, “the major, I suppose; I shall get introduced to the whole family by degrees. What a booby he looks. Well, well, I have given the old woman a fright, and of one thing I am quite sure, that is, that she will not mention it to any one.”

This was indeed a safe proposition. Some of the guests suggested one thing and some another, for the recovery of the lady, but she herself cut the matter short by suddenly opening her eyes and exclaiming—

“Where is he?—where is he?”

“Who?—who?” cried everybody.

Her eyes fell upon Claude, and she shuddered, and turned away her head, as she muttered in a faint voice—

“Take me away from him—take me away from him.”

“Oh, is it the sight of this—” person, the lanky major was about to say, but a glance at Claude’s face induced him to think it was safer to say “gentleman that occasions your inconvenience? I have not the honour of knowing who he is.”

“Your mother has that honour. Madam, will you be so good as to tell

your son that I am here by your command, for, in fact, you summoned me as a very old friend of the family."

"Yes, yes," gasped the terrified lady of the mansion; "yes, that is so. My dear, don't touch him, and don't speak to him."

Claude gave a significant smile, and then glided away among the guests. He looked at his watch and saw that it was nearly half-past eleven. Her ladyship, when relieved from the embarrassment of Claude's immediate presence, recovered herself sufficiently to feel heartily vexed that she had made a scene, but the long booby-major remained by her, and was so persevering in his inquiries, that she said, at length, to him, in a cautious under tone—

"You are a fool, and always were one; don't trouble me with your impertinent questions."

At this moment the band struck up a lively waltz, and Claude upon glancing around him, saw Sir James Raffles busily persuading the Lady Lavinia to dance with him. Gliding near to them, Claude heard him say—

"I have it in command from her ladyship, to request from her that you would dance with me."

"I am engaged," said the Lady Lavinia, in a tone of distress.

"Humph! May I be permitted to ask to whom?"

"To me," said Claude, stepping forward. "That and any other question I shall be very happy to answer you, sir."

"Oh!"

"Yes, yes, to you; engaged to you," said the Lady Lavinia, who felt exceedingly grateful to the strange gentleman, as she called Claude to herself, for coming in so promptly to rescue her from the hateful persecutions of Sir James Raffles.

They took their places in the dance, and as it would be some few minutes before they would be required to move off, Claude said—

"I much fear that the knight was rude to you."

"Oh, no—no; no more than his nature, and certain licence accorded to him by—by——"

"Your mother—warrants one to expect, you would say."

Lady Lavinia looked at him curiously.

"Fear nothing," said Claude; "I am a friend—not a lover in disguise, as many professing friends in your case might likely be—I am one who wishes you all the happiness with Charles that this world can afford you."

"Ah! you know Charles Herbert; you are a friend of his?"

"I get information by degrees," thought Claude, "that is the name of the lover."

Then, he replied, "I am a friend of his, although he knows it not, and knows me not. But see, we are waited for."

It was their turn to dance, but as they neither of them took, at that time, any interest in the fascinating amusement, they soon got through their part of the performance, and were again free to talk the matter over, which they had commenced so interestingly.

"You say you are a friend of Mr. Herbert's, but that he does not know you?" remarked Lavinia. "Have you any special reasons for secrecy?"

"None very special."

"Then tell me who you are, sir—I know you not."

"My name is Microme."

"Microme? That is a familiar enough name in this house; the family name was once the same, and our great ancestor, Sir Kenelon Microme, was the founder of the fortunes of the house."

"Ay!"

The mysterious and marked manner in which Claude pronounced this "ay," had an effect upon the Lady Lavinia, and wonderfully aroused her curiosity, as well as in some manner alarming her fears. Her face assumed an expression of great anxiety, and she said—

"Sir, you will pardon me if some sad experience has made me suspicious? I know I have enemies in this house, and that those enemies are prompted by one whose feelings ought to rally around me for my protection, and for the assurance of my happiness. Oh! there is Mr. Herbert."

Claude glanced in the direction to which the eyes of the Lady Lavinia's were directed, and there, sure enough, he saw the young man whom he had before seen in the summer-house, gazing upon them both with a look of fixed and intense curiosity.

"Will you take me to a seat?" said the Lady Lavinia.

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"I do—I do!"

They could easily leave a dance in which forty couple were engaged, and Claude conducted her to the nearest seat, and had scarcely seated her, when a door, not very far off, opened, and a servant announced Sir Henry and Lady Ross.

"The sheriff of the county," said some one at hand.

"The devil!" muttered Claude, "that is an old acquaintance, whose company just now I could very well have dispensed with."

## CHAPTER XCVI.

### MYSTIFICATION.

YES, it was the sheriff in whose carriage Claude Duval had escaped from the officers who had been so hotly in pursuit of him. The sheriff, who upon his honour had promised to keep the whole affair secret, and who had since given information that had set the dragoons upon his heels. The fat, puffy, irascible sheriff who, since the adventure of the carriage, would almost have walked five miles to see Claude hanged. It was lucky that this official personage did not turn his eyes in the direction where Claude was with the Lady Lavinia, or an uncomfortable recognition might have taken place. As it was, he and Lady Ross advanced to where the lady of the house was sitting, who graciously rose to receive them.

"Ah, my dear Lady Ross, you are late!"

"Yes, but when I tell you——"

"Another time will do for that," said the sheriff.

"Remain here," whispered Claude to Lady Lavinia; "I wish to say something important to you, and will return to say it in a few minutes."

She slightly inclined her head in indication of assent. Nothing but a bold stroke, now, thought Claude, can save me from the recognition of the sheriff, and that bold stroke must come off at once. He made his way behind the chair of the lady of the house, and whispered to her—

"Introduce me to Sir Henry Ross, the sheriff of the county. I was sheriff."

"Gracious heaven, you here again."

"Ay, and again—and again."

"But what shall I call you? I dare not mention your real name, if you really are—but, no—no, this is either all a dream or I am going mad."

"It is neither, madam. Call me by what name you will, so that you introduce me to the sheriff as an old friend of your family, who has for a long time been, to your knowledge, here in the family mansion."

"Yes—yes, you, no doubt, have—and yet this must be some juggle, my reason revolts at what my imagination prompts me to believe."

"As you please. Woe—woe—woe upon this house if my commands are not obeyed now. Against the parent shall the hand of the child be lifted. The good name and the honour of those whom you love shall pass away like a vapour."

"Oh, mercy—mercy!"



"Will you obey me?"

"I will—I will. Only tell me that which you would have me to do. I fear you, and yet each moment I feel much inclined to defy you; but you have my secret, and therefore you are dangerous."

"I am dangerous. Introduce me."

"Yes—yes. Sir Henry—Sir Henry Ross! Will you allow me to have the pleasure of introducing you to an old friend of mine—indeed, a very old friend of the family?"

"I shall appreciate the honour, my lady."

Claude advanced and bowed; the sheriff did the same, although he much wondered that the lady did not mention the name of the old friend of the family. Lady Ross likewise executed a half bow, and then they both looked at the introduced.

"God bless me!" cried the sheriff.

The sheriff's lady uttered a faint lady-like scream.

The lady of the mansion looked perfectly bewildered, and the idea that she saw everybody else going mad began to make great inroads upon her credulity. She looked at Claude, and then at the sheriff, and then at Lady Ross, and then at Claude again, like a person in a dream, which, while it has locked up their perceptions, has not deprived them of motion. She passed her hand over her eyes, and then said—

"What is the meaning of all this?"

"Ay," said Claude. "What is the meaning of all this?"

"Why—hem!" said the sheriff, "the gentleman's face is so remarkably like the face of—I suppose another person that I—and I perceive Lady Ross is in the same mind—should under any other circumstances than the present have unhesitatingly said he was—"

"What do you mean, Sir Henry?" cried Lady Ross. "I never saw the gentleman in all my life, or anything like him."

"Why, my lady, you screamed."

"And enough to make a saint scream it is, when such an elephant as you are treads on one's toes."

"Sir," said Claude, "I certainly do not know you, and this lady will tell you that I am an old friend of her family, and reside permanently in this mansion, although I seldom make my appearance to visitors. To-night it is family matters of much consequence that call me. Is it twelve yet?"

"He is quite right," gasped the lady, "he is quite true."

"Then I have to apologise," said the sheriff—adding to himself, "I am by no means satisfied yet, and I'll keep a sharp look-out, for if this be not Claude Duval or his shadow, I am not sheriff of Hants, but somebody else's nameless old friend."

Claude deemed pretty well what was passing in the mind of the sheriff, and he resolved to take his measures accordingly. Walking away to the seat occupied by the Lady Lavinia, he found that the young lover, Charles Herbert, was near the back of her chair, from whence, without being seen by her mother, he could with tolerable ease converse with her. When Claude came up, Mr. Herbert looked rather suspiciously at him, but Claude at once spoke, saying—

"Mr. Herbert, I know your secret. Go, as you intended, to your aunt's in London, with this lady, and you will find that an unknown friend as so far acted upon Lady Lavinia's mother's mind that but little, if any, difficulty will stand in the way of a complete and immediate reconciliation with the family."

"Who are you, sir?" said Herbert; "you profess friendship to me, and, by what you have said just now, you have at all events convinced me that you have the power of being an enemy. Pardon me if I am, in my too overwhelming anxiety concerning the success of to-night's proceedings, perhaps too mistrustful."

"Rely upon me—all will be well."

"Do you decline, then, mentioning who you are?"

"My name is Microme, as I have taken occasion to inform this young lady. For

further information concerning me, I refer you to some confidential moment with your noble mother-in-law that will be. She knows me, and, what is better, she fears me."

"Allow me to tell you," said Charles Herbert, in a low tone, "that Sir Henry Ross, the sheriff of Hants, has just now glided up near you, and is listening to you."

"I thank you. This is for him." Slightly raising his voice, Claude then added, "I shall be in the little pavilion in the park at half-past twelve. Is he there still, sir?"

"No, he has tripped away."

"Good. If you can complete your preparations, be off at twelve, while the coast is clear, and when you find the lady's mother in a strangely altered mood, remember me."

Claude instantly left them, and again made his way to the lady of the house, to whom he said—"Madam, I may not often show myself to the light, either of day or of night; but while I am here I have made a determination to confide to you some important family revelations. Do you desire to hear them?"

"Oh, yes—yes. But this place is not——"

"Exactly suited for such a confidential communion, you would say, and you are right. You know the pavilion in the park?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

"Meet me there at a quarter past twelve."

"Alone?"

"No, I would rather you brought your son with you—much rather, as what I have to say will concern both of you greatly, and tend much to his fortune and your future peace, while I shall avoid the utterance of one word in his presence which you would wish to remain unsaid."

"I—I thank you. You force me to believe you are what you say you are, by the simplicity of your pretensions; henceforward the barrier that I had erected in my mind against all superstition is broken down, and I dare doubt nothing."

A fit of trembling came over her, which she had some trouble in repressing, and Claude saw Sir James Raffles coming towards them. He advanced to meet him, and when sufficiently near, he said—

"May I have a word with you, sir?"

"Certainly—certainly."

"Then, Sir James, if you have any desire to know who it is that the Lady Lavinia loves, you will secrete yourself in the pavilion in the park at ten minutes past twelve, not sooner or later."

"Indeed! Confusion! Damn——"

"Hush! hush! I may not hear such words, Sir James. In my time they were not used."

"Your time! why you are younger than I, and what do you call your time?"

"1604."

Claude was close to one of the curtains that hid a refreshment room from the great saloon, as he mentioned this date, and he dashed past it, and out by the window, rapidly closing it again behind him, before Sir James had recovered from his astonishment at hearing a young-looking man say his time was some two hundred years ago nearly. Rallying his faculties, then, he entered the refreshment room, but he found it completely vacant. Claude had succeeded in effecting a tolerably good ghost-like escape from the saloon of Winchfield Hall. The cool night air was particularly pleasant to him after the confined atmosphere of the ball-room, and Claude stood still for a few moments to inhale it with pleasure. The rain had quite ceased, and now and then the moon was peeping out from amid masses of rugged-looking clouds that floated over the pure silvery disc.

"This is a change for the better, indeed," said Claude. "I wonder where Jack is?"

"Here!" said a voice, and Jack came from a dark corner. "I am here, Claude."

"And how, in the name of good fortune, came you here?"

"Why, I thought as this was the window you went in at, it was the most likely one for you to come out at."

"Upon my word, Jack, I did not know, when I came out of it, that it was the same by which I had effected an entrance."



A BUSY SCENE AT THE SUMMER HOUSE.

"It is ; but that is of minor import, and I have news for you, Claude. The sheriff is here. Thank the fates you have avoided him, as your presence here sufficiently testifies."

"Never trust to appearances, Jack ; I have not avoided him."

"You have not?"

"No, Jack. You know what I always do when I am in doubt about the

extent of any danger;—I go and look at it, so I got the good and rather credulous lady of the house to introduce me to him as an old family friend, and the thing passed off, at all events, quite as well as could be expected. But I must tell you all that at some other opportunity. At present, all we really have to do is to be off."

"Any swag?"

"Why, Jack, I thought a little cash might be useful, so I certainly, amid the mazes of the dance, accidentally possessed myself of a couple of pocket-books. But come on to the pavilion; I would fain be off as soon as possible."

They both walked rapidly across the park towards the summer-house, and just as they reached it they saw a slight female figure dart to the few steps that led to its principal apartment.

"Are we discovered?"

"No. That is a friend who will not betray us from inclination, even if she were able, which she is not, from information to do so. Just get out the horses, and I will join you in a moment."

Claude advanced to the door of the pavilion. He was met by Charles Herbert, who said—

"Hold, whoever you are! Stir another step, and you are a dead man!"

"It is I," said Claude, in the peculiar soft melancholy tone in which he had carried on all his conversation while in the grand saloon of Winchfield Hall—"it is I. Leave at once, or your enemies will be upon your track. Are you all prepared?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Then fly; I will remain here and stop all pursuit, if it should commence before you are fairly off. Go! go!"

"How can I thank you?"

"By carrying away at once my fair young descendant from an abode of selfishness and vice. Take her away while you can do so, and then in the hours of your happiness remember me."

"I shall not forget you."

Charles Herbert darted into the summer-house, and in a few minutes returned with the Lady Lavinia, around whom he had wrapped an ample cloak. She saw Claude, and uttered the words—"God bless you!" he bowed, and then they hurried on, and were soon lost to view. Claude took his way back to Jack, whom he found with both the horses ready for the road, and impatiently awaiting him, much wondering who the parties were with whom he heard him talking.

"Jack," said Claude, "take the horses down to the wall. I will be with you in a quarter of an hour; but there is some sport to come off here that I would not miss for a trifle, I can assure you."

"I will fasten the horses securely up," said Jack, "and come back to you."

"Very well—do. I shall be glad of your company, Jack, and will wait for you upon this spot."

Jack hurried off with the horses; but as he took the very same route that the fugitives took, they, hearing the sound of horses' feet, thought, to be sure, that they were pursued, and rushed into the carriage like two maniacs, ordering the post-boy to drive as though the very devil were at his heels, while Jack made, until he reached the wall, the most superhuman exertions to reach them, in order to assure them that there was no danger. Thus, not unfrequently in this world do people fly about from friend to foe, fancying they are accomplishing wonders, when such is far from being the fact. Jack soon got back to Claude again.

"Are they off?" said Duval.

"Yes, and in such an infernal hurry that I am inclined to believe they took me for an enemy."

"Not a doubt of it. It's perhaps as well that they should go fast for the first few miles; and as they will soon find that they are not pursued, they will relax their speed."

"Now, Claude, what are we to do?"

"Hush! hush! They come."

"Who—who?"

"Some people who, if I mistake not, will, in the darkness, afford us some sport by their mutual mistakes and misapprehensions. Come close to this window, in which I have made an opening, we can both see through, and if there is not some good fun shortly, Jack, I shall think my name is not Claude Duval."

## CHAPTER XCVII.

### FAMILY TROUBLES.

WE see that, in the midst of all his troubles and anxieties, the old spirit of fun and mischief that was so prominent in his youth, stuck to Claude Duval, and he would not have missed the scene that was about to ensue in the summer-house upon any account. The first person who arrived upon the scene of action was Sir James Raffles, and he came tripping along with amazing caution, muffled in an opera cloak. Gently he tried the door of the pavilion, and finding it yield to his hand, he entered the little building.

"Nobody here?" he muttered. "This is capital; I am a little too soon for them, and so I have a good opportunity of hiding. I ought from being here often to know the place, and if I do not greatly mistake their dimensions, the draperies at one of the windows are quite ample enough to conceal me."

In the semi-darkness of the place it was not an easy thing to find the hiding-place that Sir James sought, but after a few minutes' tumbling about he did so, and Jack and Claude heard him say—

"All's right."

Scarcely had the words passed his lips, when voices were heard upon the steps and Claude could hear the lady of the mansion speaking to the great booby of a major, her son.

"Come along," she said. "What are you afraid of?"

"By Gad!" he said, "I wish I knew."

"You were always chicken-hearted," added his mother. "I don't know what possessed you to go into the army and be promoted, because your father held two rotten boroughs, the votes of which he gave to a liberal Minister, who wished to rob the people."

"How uncommon severe, mama. You know I went into the army because there was a general peace, which all the world says will last; but do you really wish to make me believe that this mysterious man is—a—a——"

"Hush—he has persuaded me that he is not of this world."

"How extraordinary—I don't feel well."

"What's the matter with you now, booby? Oh! that I, of all mothers, should have a coward for a son! Come on."

"I'm a-coming."

"A nice pair, Claude," whispered Jack, "are they not?"

"They are, indeed, but listen to them, that will be the best, for I can just imagine the bewilderment of Sir James Raffles. But you are rather in the dark about it all, Jack, and when I see it all over, and we are trotting on the road, you shall have the whole particulars. Ah!—do you hear nothing?"

"The tramp of feet."

"Yes; well, now Jack, what do you suppose that trampling of feet means really?"

"I cannot guess."

"Why it is the arrival upon the scene of action of the sheriff with a party he, no doubt, thinks sufficiently strong to take me prisoner. Hush! keep as close to

the ivy as you possibly can and they will not see us, for they do not here expect to see us. Confound them, what do they stop so close to us for?"

The sheriff, with six able-bodied men, had taken a circuitous route to reach the pavilion, where he fully expected to light upon the man who he fully believed to be the identical Claude Duval who had been in his carriage, notwithstanding the lady's assertions of his being the old friend of the family. This idea had been strengthened by finding that the lady did actually make her way from the saloons at twelve o'clock, and then he had resolved upon the capture of Claude in the pavilion, for that it was him whom she meant to meet he never doubted, after what he thought he had so cunningly overheard, but which Claude had uttered for his special misleading.

"Halt!" said the sheriff, in a whisper.

His men immediately came to a stand.

"Now, attend to me, my men. The prisoner you are to take is in the summer-house there, along with a lady. It don't matter a bit to you who he is; I will give you five pounds a piece for the job, but I warn you he is a bold, brave, strong man."

"We'll have him, master," said one.

"Your best plan," said the sheriff, who thought he was very cunning in not letting the men know that it was the celebrated Claude Duval they were after—"your best plan will be to make a rush in and knock him down at once, and then tie him securely hand and foot."

"Yes, master."

"But be careful that no injury comes to a lady who is in the pavilion. As for me, I—I—will stay here while you go and do it, and when you have got him quite secure, you can call to me, you know. You are six to one, so that you'll run no risk, only it is as well always to make these things quite sure while you are about them; now be off with you at once. You know the entrance well."

The men crept round to the door of the summer-house, and the moment they were gone, Claude felt that the sheriff's presence so near him and Jack was decidedly dangerous, so he crept up to him, and suddenly grappling him by the throat, said—

"One word, or the faintest struggle, and you are a dead man."

The sheriff uttered a groan.

"Traitor!—dishonourable rascal!" added Claude, "so you betrayed me, after all!"

"Mercy—you are——"

"Claude Duval! Do you not tremble at the name of the man who spared you when he might have done otherwise—who neither robbed you nor inflicted upon you the slightest injury, but whom you basely took the first opportunity of betraying. Was that well done, Sir Sheriff?"

"No."

"Can you say no?"

"Yes I can, for I am sorry for it, and throw myself upon your generosity. I was planning only just now some means to save you, and put you fairly upon the road again."

"Really!"

"Yes, I hardly expect you to believe me, but such is the fact; and I hope you have too much honour and generosity to commit a useless murder."

"It is well for you that I have too much humanity. Equity condemns you—Jack have you a rope?"

"Yes."

"Just tie the sheriff hand and foot, as he recommended a few moments ago that another person should be tied. We will consider of his punishment when the fuss is over."

While this was going on with great rapidity on the outside of the pavilion, the lady and her son were waiting for the arrival of the pretended Sir Kenelon Microme, and Sir James Raffles were waiting with no small wonder and impatience

for an end of the whole affair. The six men of the sheriff were creeping on, fully determined to carry out the instructions they had received from him, and to knock down their man at once, whenever they could get a good opportunity of so doing, upon making a rush into the pavilion. Notwithstanding the sheriff had tried to make light of the matter, they were fully impressed with the idea that they were upon a dangerous expedition. The fact that he had employed six of them, and the other fact, that he so carefully kept out of the way himself, quite impressed their minds. The consequence was, that their imaginations were rather unsettled by the time they arrived upon the steps of the little pavilion, which they ascended in a body. They were armed with sticks, and then, suddenly pushing open the door, they made one wild sort of rush into the place.

"Murder!" cried the major; and then as the men just saw a somebody in the dimmish moonlight, down they knocked him.

"Help! help!" cried Sir James Raffles, making a rush from his hiding-place to the front, and endeavoured to leave the pavilion, throwing down her ladyship, who rolled from top to bottom of the steps on to the gravelled walk.

"Another of 'em!" cried one of the sheriff's men, and then down went Sir James.

While the men were busy tying their prisoners, her ladyship began to cry aloud for help. Claude hearing her, ran round the pavilion, and caught her arm, saying, in quite another tone of voice to that which he had used when talking to her in the saloon—

"Another word, madam, and it is your last. This way."

Upon the impulse of the moment, he dragged her round the building to the spot where Jack had charge of the sheriff.

"Another bit of twine, Jack!" said Claude.

"Yes, here it is."

"Just tie up the old woman, then."

"If you are thieves," said her ladyship, "take my watch, and let me go. I have some rings likewise."

"Oh, murder!" said the sheriff; "is that you, my lady?"

"Who's that?"

"Silence!" said Claude, as Jack finished tying the arms of her ladyship—"silence! or it may be much the worse for both of you. I am in a joking, not a murdering mood just now; take care that you change it not. Jack, what large bush is that yonder?"

"Laurel, I think."

"Then we will accommodate her ladyship with that. Hark you, madam, one Sir Kenelon Microme has been here, and he says you are a bad mother. An hour's reflection will do you good, and if before the full expiration of that time you call out for any assistance, there will be some one at hand who will effectually stop your cries for the future. Now, Jack, once—twice—thrice, and away she goes!"

It was not at all gallant, nor was it all romantic. We don't say it was, but Jack took the lady by the heels, and Claude took the lady by the shoulders, and so between them both, they comfortably hoisted her into the centre of the laurel bush, and there left her.

"Now, Jack," said Claude, "I can see for myself what that other hedge is. It is blackthorn, and will just do for the sheriff."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" said the sheriff. "Really I—oh, good gracious!"

Away he went with a crash into the centre of the blackthorn bush, and at that moment one of the six men came running round the pavilion, crying out—

"We have 'em, we have 'em. Two of 'em, Sir Henry. We have 'em."

"Keep 'em, then," said Claude, as with one straightforward blow he sent the man insensible to the ground. Now, Jack, I am ready if you are."

"Quite."

They started off at once from the pavilion, and made their way to where Jack had tethered the horses to the branch of a tree close to the little door in the park

paling, which had been so convenient alike to the young lovers and to our two adventurers. They mounted at once, and without casting one glance behind them at the lordly halls of Winchfield House, they put their horses to speed, and rapidly again took the southern road. They rode five miles before Jack said—

“Remember, Claude, that I as yet know little or nothing of your first proceedings in the hall. I hovered about merely, and like young Norval,

‘Marked the road you took.’

But what gave rise to all that ultimately happened—and which, I confess, was entertaining enough—I really, as you are aware, know nothing at all.”

“True, Jack. But you shall know all if you will lend me your ears for ten minutes, and as we have done a few miles rather sharply, we may give our cattle a little rest by indulging them with a walk, especially as this is a little bit of rising ground.”

While they ascended a hill of considerable length, but not very steep, for they were getting upon those fine sloping plateaux that form so prominent a feature in the Hampshire scenery, Claude related to Jack all that is already well known to the reader.

“The adventure will make a noise round the country,” said Jack, “and it will be some amusement to us yet to see what complexion the local papers put upon it.”

“It will, if we live to read any more papers, Jack. But I ought not to make such a speech, for I have promised not to despond, and that is a symptom of the blues with a vengeance.”

“I am surprised to hear you, Claude.”

“I sometimes surprise myself, Jack. But we will talk of something else. I sincerely hope those red coats are safe in their barracks at Winchester.”

“The dragoons?”

“Yes. They, at all events, must be considerably a-head of us by this time. Let me see—two hours at the hall—why they are, at their easy going pace, fifteen miles off, I should say, Jack.”

“Quite. Depend upon it you have nothing to apprehend from them, Claude. And now that we have got so far upon our journey, and had such hair-breadth escapes, I begin to have the best and most sanguine hopes of a successful termination to it.”

“Do you really, Jack?”

“In good honest truth I do, Claude.”

“It would make Cicely happy to hear you say so. Ah! what must be the state of their feelings while I am upon this perilous journey? My anxieties can be nothing, compared to theirs. I think I see them now—the sister and the wife. But I must get rid of this train of thought. It is too much for me. Come on, Jack. A sharp trot again, upon this fine road, will put me to rights once more. Confound it! I ought never to begin sermonising.”

Off they both set again, at a sharp trot that made the trees pass them as though they were part and parcel of a hunt, of a novel character. It is not very easy to keep up a conversation at a rapid pace, but Claude and Jack managed, still, as they went on, to talk of their prospects and feelings, and ever and anon, Jack took a careful and prolonged view around him, for the purpose of judging as nearly as possible where they were. At length they spoke aloud.

“Claude,” said Jack, “we are only twelve miles from the old city of Winchester.”

“A pleasant place, I suppose, Jack?”

“No.”

“Indeed! I have heard quite the contrary.”

“Yes, and so has everybody else. Winchester has a long straggling up and down high street, like the back bone of some extraordinary animal, and from that, to the right and to the left, are to be found little lanes and miserable streets, in-



habited by an old set. The palace and the cathedral are features, but the former is now a barrack, and the latter is in a damp churchyard that always looks as though it were reeking with the rank, pestiferous odours from many graves. No, Claude; don't set your affections upon Winchester."

## CHAPTER XXX.

## WINCHESTER.

SOMETHING seemed to be hanging heavily upon the mind of Claude Duval, and he was uncommonly taciturn—so much so, that Jack, with a feeling of apprehension, said to him—

"Are you ill, Claude?"

"Yes."

"Ah, this fatigue, then, has at last been too much for your iron frame."

"No, Jack. I have, I think, an iron frame, to speak metaphorically, but I have not, as I would fain have, an iron mind."

"Indeed!"

"No, Jack. I begin now to feel and to fancy that the shadow of some horrible calamity is upon my soul. I shudder at the idea of something terrible occurring that will plant in my heart a barbed arrow, which the efforts of a life will fail to extricate. I don't know what it is, but, Jack, each moment, now, a more deadly and heavier weight seems to come upon my spirits."

"All of which, Claude, in plain language, means that you have got the blues."

"I suppose it does."

"It's tolerably clear, now, I am beginning to have real hopes of a successful issue to this strange and most eventful ride from London to Southampton. When we reach Winchester, we are only some twelve or thirteen miles from our destination, recollect, and as we have baffled our foes so far, why may we not baffle them further?"

"There is no reason, Jack, why we should not in the world, only I think we shall not, that's all; but we have, all through my having the blues as you remark, hit upon a most ungracious theme of discourse. Let us change it."

"With all my heart. Do you see a light in the distance, Claude?"

"I do; it is the window of some road-side house by its size and steadiness, is it not?"

"Yes, I knew we should come upon an inn soon, although I could not tell exactly where; but without a doubt that is it. I wonder at what place our next depot of obstructors, in the shape of police-officers, have taken up their abode."

"We shall come upon them soon enough, you may depend. Don't there seem a great bustle at the door of that place, if it be an inn?"

"Yes, I can't imagine what it is all about. Wait a bit, Claude, and I will ride on and see. A single horseman will be less suspected than two."

"Stop, here comes a cart. The driver will tell us who is at the inn, if it be one. Don't you hear him whistling as he comes?"

In a few moments a man trudging by the side of a cart came up to them, and Claude said—

"Is there an inn hereabouts?"

"Yes. Why, that is one right afore."

"Is it full?"

"Why, yes, the sodgers fill it up a bit."

"Soldiers?"

"Why, yes, there's never such a lot of 'em, and horses too. They be rare chaps for old ale, they be."

"Thank you—thank you."

The man and the cart passed on, leaving Jack and Claude to consult upon what they had best do now that they were made aware of the fact that the dragoons, whom they had before escaped so narrowly, were at the inn by the road-side, which if they went straight on, they must necessarily pass at the risk of arousing a sufficient amount of suspicion to warrant their detection, and detection would be fatal.

"What's to be done?" said Jack.

"Push on across the meadows," said Claude, "behind the inn. If we now strike off the main road to the left here, and make a circuit of about half a mile, we shall do very well, and no doubt get past. Of course, to meet those dragoons face to face would be a hazardous thing after what they have been told of my being on the road, but otherwise they are much less to be dreaded than the police, who make a business of trying to take us."

There was but a low insignificant hedge dividing the road from the meadows upon its left, and Claude soon jumped his horse over it, Jack following him. They alighted safely enough in a ploughed field, and then taking care to keep the lights of the inn to their right hand, they struck across the country in as short a time as they possibly could. They quite forgot the carter who had just passed them, and answered Claude's inquiries. The curiosity of this man, who was not quite such a fool as he looked, was aroused, and he went on very lazily, looking behind him every now and then until he plainly saw Claude and Jack take to the fields. The tramp of horses' feet coming from a northern direction stopped this man from taking any very immediate measures consequent upon this discovery, and then, before he could very well make up his mind what to do, three horsemen rode up to him.

"Have you come far down the road?" said one.

"No."

"Have you seen two men on horseback? One dressed like a groom?"

"Yes, I have, and they have only just now cut across the meadows yonder. That is the hedge that they went over, after asking of I who was at the 'Stag,' yonder."

"And who is there?"

"Why, the sodgers, if you must know."

"All right; come on," cried one of the horsemen, "we shall have them now. Come on; if we can get the aid of a couple of the dragoons, which the commanding officer cannot refuse me, I will undertake to lodge Claude Duval in gaol in less than six hours."

"You will do it, Sir John," said another, "if any one will; and we will follow you, wherever you may please to lead us, sir; we only hope that if we catch him the reward will be properly divided."

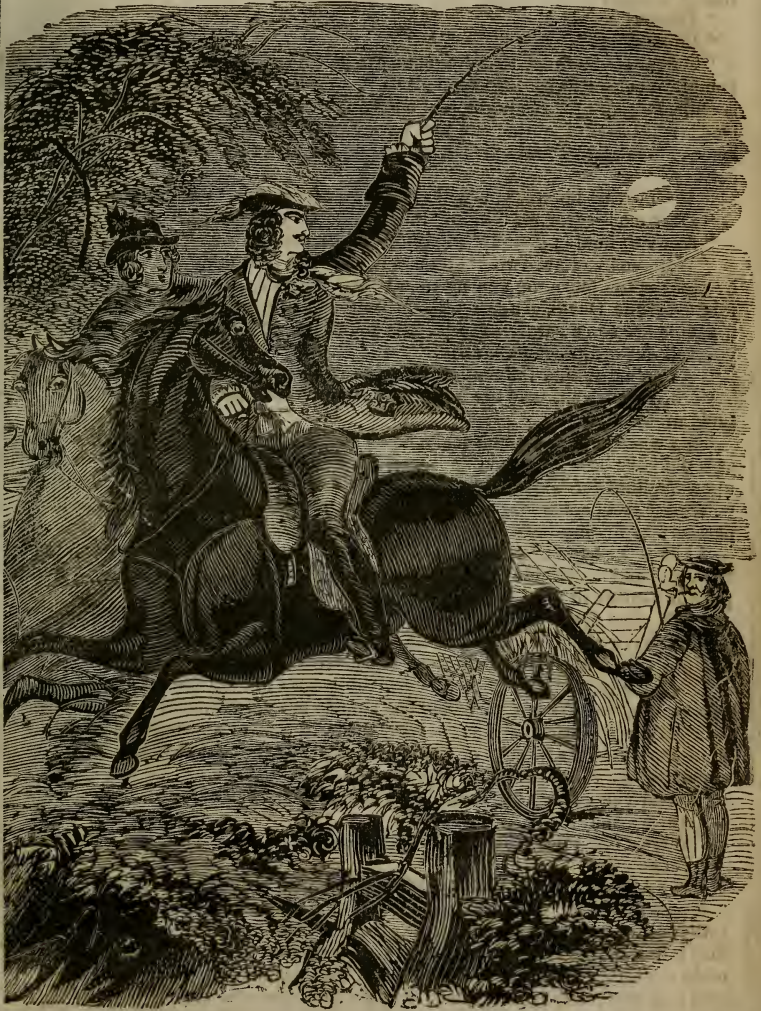
"Oh, as to that," said Sir John, who was what is called an active magistrate of the county, "I want none of it, and it seems to me that you and the two dragoons ought to share it among you. All I want is to take this fellow, who has puzzled the London police, and made everybody think him something so wonderful. D—n him! he'll find it a difficult matter to puzzle a practised fox-hunter; and I can safely say that I have more brushes hanging in my hall than any one in the county."

What strange things serve for human nature to boast of! This man was elated with the idea that in the hall of his house he had an unusual number of foxes' tails. If he had lived in the South Sea Islands, instead of Hampshire, the Missionary Society would have collected no end of money from evangelical old women, to send a missionary to him upon the strength of that one anecdote of the foxes' tails. But what will the reader think when we inform him that "this fox-tail gentleman" was—do not start: such things are quite common in wonderful England—the rector of the parish!

What did he think most of? Being at the death of a creature much more respectable than himself, or of the precepts of Him who taught that—

"He prayeth best who loveth best  
Man and bird and beast."

But all this by the way, only we certainly do delight in a fling at reverent hypocrisy. Claude and Jack had no idea of their danger, and went on slowly and cautiously through the meadows, making a half circuit round the inn, and



CLAUDE AND JACK ELUDE THEIR PURSUERS BY A CROSS COUNTRY CUT.

intending to get upon the high road again as soon so possible. The three horsemen, including the fox-hunting parson, reached in a few minutes the door of the "Stag," and his reverence dismounting at once, walked in and asked for the commanding officer of the party. He was shown into a room where that personage was discussing a tolerably late supper, previous to retiring for the night.

"Sir," said the parson, "the notorious Claude Duval is upon the road."

"Confound Claude Duval!" said the officer, "I have heard of nothing but Claude Duval since leaving London."

"But you know, sir, it is a great object to take him."

"I don't know any such thing. It's no object to me whatever."

"Sir, I am a magistrate, and what I ask of you is that you will spare me a couple of dragoons to assist in the capture of the notorious criminal I have mentioned to you?"

"Impossible, sir!"

"Impossible?"

"Quite. If you fancy that dragoons can go highwayman-hunting day and night you are much mistaken. They can't do it, sir—the horses won't do it. Every one is stalled up now for the night, so I tell you it can't possibly be done. Why, good God! what sort of notion can you have of a dragoon, to suppose that, with his heavy horse and accoutrements, he can do what would be heavy work for light cavalry!"

"If I provide horses, you will allow two of the men to accompany me?"

"Dear me!—dear me! How long would they be gone?"

"Not two hours; I know where to pitch upon my man."

"Well, you can get two volunteers if you can; but mind, we must be *en route* by eight in the morning, and by then I shall expect to see them back again. Confound Claude Duval, I never was so pestered about such a fellow in all my life; if people are so cowardly as to let him rob them, why the devil, sir, need you put yourself out of the way about it?"

"As an active and influential magistrate of this county, sir; I——"

"Oh, well—well, take the men, but certainly not the cattle. Good night, sir—good night, sir."

This was about as unequivocal a mode of telling a man to go about his business as could have been hit upon; and indeed the Rev. magistrate was anxious to be off upon his hunt for Claude Duval, so he left the room, and hurried down stairs to where the troopers were taking a supper of bread and cheese and strong ale, preparatory to finding temporary accommodation for the night.

"I have the leave of your officer," said the parson, "to ask two of you to come with me, and assist me in the capture of Claude Duval. It will be a hundred pounds a-piece to you—who will come?"

"I!" cried every one in chorus.

"Settle it among yourselves while I go and see about a couple of horses for you, as your officer objects to your own being used."

While the parson was gone, the soldiers settled among themselves by lots who were to go, and the two to whom the chance fell got themselves ready, and took their pistols and cartouche boxes with them, in case of a struggle, although, from an utter want of knowledge of Claude Duval, they thought it would be one of the easiest things in the world to capture him.

"Mind you catch him, Bob," said one of their comrades.

"Ah, we shall do it."

"There's one thing you'll do," said another.

"What's that?"

"Why, if you don't catch the highwayman, you know, you may catch a Tartar!"

A general laugh at this not over brilliant sally made those who were going rather bitter, but, as the parson now made his appearance to say that all was ready, they followed him in silence. He had procured a couple of sturdy hacks, well used to the country, and fully up to the weight of the troopers, who were both rather heavy men; so that, take it altogether, that party of five was rather a formidable one, and more likely to be seriously mischievous to Claude than any that had been yet sent against him. "What the eye sees not, the heart rues not," saith the proverb, and certainly Claude and Jack went on with no heart-ache at the proceedings that were taking place against them. The parson made a sort of speech to his party before starting from the inn door.

"My men," he said, "this Claude Duval, whom we are going after, is no

common robber. He is strong, active, and bold, so that there is positive danger in the enterprise. You will not find me shrink from being foremost in that danger, and all I have to say to you is, keep together, and don't do anything without my orders. He has a companion with him, but it is only himself that we must look sharp to. Now, come on."

The soldiers listened to this address with all the coolness in the world, but the two members of the police looked a little fidgety about it. There was no such thing, however, as their backing out of the transaction, so off they all went down the road, fully expecting to be in for a very tolerable row. The parson had no doubt but that Duval would, after making a sufficient detour to avoid the "Stag," take to the road again, and it was upon the road that he proposed attacking him, and certainly he had very long odds indeed in his favour upon the occasion. He calculated, too, upon Claude's horse, and that of his companion, being by that time knocked up, but, as we happen to know, this was an erroneous idea, for the cattle had had a good rest. Leaving, then, the reverend fox and man hunter to pursue his vocation, we return to Claude and Jack, who never at any period of their journey from London thought themselves so safe as they did now, when, in reality, they were environed by the greatest dangers.

"Heavy riding! this, Jack," said Claude.

"It is, indeed."

"Where are we now, Jack? Do you think we are past the inn now? If we are, we may as well turn round and get into the high road again."

"I think we may turn round, Claude. Suppose we do so—Oh, all's right. We are on the high road again. How is this? What a sudden turn we must have made. How can this be?"

"Is it the high road?"

"Stop—no, Claude. It is a cross road. I thought, surely, such a circuit could not have been made so suddenly; but if we push on we shall do well now, for this is, like most of the roads in Hampshire, a good one. I think, as near as I can calculate, that we are a mile down the road."

"And so, Jack, we bid adieu to the dragoons, for which I am not at all sorry."

"Nor I, Claude. Somehow or another, we can manage to outwit the police, but dragoons, with all their stupidity, have a rough and ready mode of operation that won't suit us."

"Not at all. Where are we?"

"I know now. Look at that group of old firs. There is an avenue close to them, that leads to the oldest inn in the country. Now, I should seriously advise, Claude, that we go there until the dragoons have passed on, for it is far better for them to be before us than behind us, and we are not particularly pinched for time."

"Well, Jack, be it so. Our cattle have had a good ten or twelve miles round, and a bait will not hurt them a bit. Let us go to yon inn at once, Jack. Is it a nice place?"

"I only dimly recollect it," said Jack. "What is the time, Claude? Can you see your watch?"

"Yes, Jack; it is half-past three."

"And the rain coming on again. The sooner, Claude, we are housed the better."

## CHAPTER XCIX.

### THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLERS.

WE must leave Claude and Jack for a while, in order to introduce to the reader some characters in this veritable history, which he will probably think as mysterious as any that the pages of romance, instinct of those of reality, can present him with. About three hours before Claude and Jack reached the clump of fir trees,

close to which was the avenue which Jack said led to the old inn, there came three horsemen from Winchester, and halted about that spot. One of these horsemen was a tall stout man. The other two were slim-looking youths, amply protected from the weather by travelling cloaks and caps, the lappets of which met under their chins. The horses they rode were fresh, active looking animals, and when they halted, the taller of the three said—

“Tell me truly, do you think it policy to go any further on the road?”

“God help me, I do not know,” said one of the younger men.

“What do you think?” said the tall one again, turning to the other.

“It is scarcely to be advised,” was the reply; “we run the risk of those whom we wish to meet taking some cross road.”

“Most certainly we do. Come, what do you say to that?” This was to the other.

“I say again, God help me, for I am nearly distracted by a thousand apprehensions, and—and—and——”

“And what? Speak!”

“I am very—very ill.”

“Gracious Heaven! why did you not say so before? I feared this enterprise would be too much for you, Julian; but now, all other considerations must be given up to the one of providing for you some place of rest.”

“Yes,” said he who was addressed as Julian, “rest is all I want. A few hours’ repose will restore me again. Heaven knows I thought I could have held out against this, and much more than this, but, dear friends, I have much overrated my strength.”

“As I feared—as I feared,” said his elder companion. “And here we are, I don’t know really how far off any house of entertainment. Charles, what shall we do?”

“Hark! some one is coming this way. Ask if there is an inn hereabouts. Julian will soon recover with rest, and then we will get back to Winchester. Remember, dear Julian, that no one but yourself and I, and our dear friend here, are suffering anxiety upon your account just now, since this enterprise is a secret kept with uncommon strictness to ourselves.”

“Yes, Charles, yes.”

A man came on past the clump of firs, and the elder of the three travellers called to him, saying—

“Is there any inn or public-house hereabouts?”

“Oh yes, sir; only just down the avenue, you will find the ‘Vine,’ as good an old-fashioned place as the country can boast of, though I say it; and Jem Bowley, the landlord, is as good and liberal a fellow as any in Hants, though I say that too.”

“What should hinder you saying, my friend, if the inn be good, and the landlord liberal? You have a right to give both the fair character that is their due.”

“Why, sir, to tell the truth, you see, I—I—am Jem Bowley.”

“Oh, indeed! that alters the matter rather. Perhaps you will show us the way, for one of my young friends here is not very well, and we are rather desirous of a shelter for the remainder of the night. We have just taken a little canter from Winchester.”

“You’ll easily find the way, gentlemen. It’s straight on, I shall be after you in a jiffy. I am only going to set some—some—ahem!—eel lines.”

“Or snares?”

“Lor’, sir, don’t think me capable of such a thing. You see, sir, the Itchen sends one of its little streams into the valley, and it’s famous for silver eels—that’s all, I assure you, sir—as sure as my name’s Jem Bowley.”

“Is not this an odd time to set eel lines?”

“Not near so odd, sir, as to canter from Winchester with a young lad who is not well, though I say it; but no offence, sir. There’s always somebody up all night at the ‘Vine,’ for you see it’s an old post-house, and has been for a hundred

years and more, and though we are off the road a little, we don't know a minute when some one may come up calling, 'Horses! horses!' But you go on, gentlemen, I'll be after you in a crack."

The three horsemen proceeded down the avenue, and the elder said, tenderly—  
"How are you now, Julian?"

"Better, better; it is only fatigue. I begin to think this expedition was a little ill-advised, and yet, if I had not undertaken it, anxiety would have killed me."

"I'm afraid it would."

"I am sure of it, Charles. How well you keep up."

"Yes," said the other youth, "I feel as though I could go through anything now, but yet, probably, should find a rest quite as beneficial to me as to you."

"No doubt," said the tall man, "no doubt. Ah, there are the lights of the inn. What an immense old straggling pile of building it looks, to be sure."

"It does, indeed," said Charles.

"Do you see it, Julian?"

"Oh yes, yes, my dear friends, do not suppose me to be very bad. I feel convinced that I shall soon, very soon recover. Do all those windows belong to one building?"

"Yes, so it appears. Now leave all to me, and I will wait below while you two go to a chamber and rest yourselves for two or three hours. Indeed, I don't myself see why you should not regularly turn in until the morning. It will be the very best thing for both of you."

"But will you promise," said Julian, "that if you hear any news you will at once awaken us, should we be sleeping, and let us know it?"

"Oh! yes, yes."

"Upon that condition then, Charles, we will retire, shall we, if we can find suitable accommodation. What say you, dear friend?"

"I am only anxious to consult your convenience, Julian."

"How well," said the tall stranger, in a lower tone, "you both keep up your assumed names. I have not heard either of you trip in pronouncing them for a moment."

"Why should we?"

"Nay, such a matter is more troublesome than it appears; but I'm convinced, that our determination and agreement to keep up this incognito, even in our converse with each other, is a wise thing. It not only accustoms us fully to it, but puts an end to the possibility of any listener betraying us."

"It does; it does. But here we are at the inn door. Recollect that, cousin Black; shall we alight at once?"

"Yes, Julian; yes. Alight, both of you, and follow me into the house as carelessly as possible, and I will ask for a private room, and a bottle of wine. You can order cigars, Charles."

"Yes, yes. I will."

The sound of the horses' feet by this time brought out the ostler of the "Vine," and the party having rapidly dismounted, he took charge of the animals, saying—

"Shall I put them up, gentlemen?"

"Yes," said the tall stranger; "is any one up in the inn to let us have a private room?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Two of the women folk take it by turns to sit up night and day alternate, you see, gentlemen; so you see one of 'em is always forward-like, you understand, gentlemen. You'll find her in the bar if you'll walk in. Master's up, and about somewheres, too, I think—ahem—"

It was quite clear there was some mystery about the landlord's proceedings, which the ostler knew perfectly well, and was keeping down the utterance by a cough or two, but the three strangers had plenty of mysteries and anxieties of their own to occupy their attention, without troubling their minds at all about those belonging to other people. In the bar, half dozing over a good fire, was a

young buxom-looking wench, who started up at the approach of the travellers, and said—

“Beds or horses?”

“Beds,” said Mr. Black; “beds, if you please, or rather one room will do for these two young gentlemen, and I will sit up by a fire if you can let me have one in a private room.”

“Yes, certainly, sir. This way—the fires are all laid, and I can set light to one in a moment.”

“We shall want a bottle of your best port.”

“And cigars,” said Charles.

“Yes, gentlemen, if you please. This way, it’s only on the first flight. Rather a damp night, sir.”

“Very.”

The girl led them to a comfortable sitting-room, adjoining to which was a large double-bedded chamber, which she offered them the option of having, and which they immediately accepted, so the fire in each room was set light to, and a cheerful blaze soon irradiated both apartments. The two young men busied themselves in looking on the panels upon the walls, until the girl left the room for the wine and cigars, and the tall stranger said—

“Let me advise you both now to go and lie down at once, I will bring you a couple of glasses of wine each, and then no doubt you will have some comfortable sleep.”

“And you?” said Charles.

“Oh, never mind me, I will just nod over the fire in this easy chair, and keep watch and ward over you two, and let me implore you both to hope and expect the best.”

“We will—we will,” said Julian.

“Hush! here is the girl. Go into the bedroom, both of you at once, it will be better. Leave me alone to make any necessary remarks, for she seems rather talkative.”

Both Julian and Charles went into the adjoining bedroom, when Charles commenced whistling some careless tune, while the girl placed the wine and cigars upon the table, remarking, as she did so—

“I have brought some biscuits, though they were not ordered.”

“Which is very thoughtful of you,” said Mr. Black; “but it is nothing more than one might fully have expected from such a pretty girl.”

“Sir—sir.”

“Indeed it’s a fact; but I suppose you have been told that by every gentleman with an eye in his head?”

“Dear me—no, sir,” said the girl, quite delighted. “What a funny gentleman you are, to be sure.”

She left the room, impressed with a high opinion, at all events, of the taste of the traveller, which, somehow or another, was in remarkable coincidence with her own. When she was gone, he called to his young friends—

“Julian! Julian!—Charles!”

“Yes, cousin Black—yes.”

“Come for your wine; she has gone. Don’t you hear the wind howling down the chimneys? Upon my word I think you are both of you well housed. Come, forget your sorrows and anxieties for a while, and endeavour not only to hope and expect the best, but to believe in it as well. Don’t you know the old piece of philosophy, that by insisting upon believing in what we wish, if even what we do not wish ultimately happens, we have already cheated it of half its disagreeables.”

“Yes, yes; but—”

“Come, come, we will have no exceptions; drink.”

They drank one glass of wine each, and then Julian took from his breast a small pair of pistols, saying—

“Shall I leave these here, cousin Black?”



"No, Julian; keep your arms always with you; and you, Charles, likewise, for I see that your hand is upon your pistols. Look yourselves to the priming before you lie down, and ram down the charge again, which, as I told you, is apt to loosen. Now good night to you both, and remember that I am here, and that you both rest in the most perfect security."

"Yes, yes. God bless you."

They would only take one glass each of the wine, and then, taking one of the candles which had been left upon the table, they retired into the bedroom, and closed the door of communication between it and the sitting apartment in which was their cousin Black. He drew an easy chair close to the fire, and then, after partaking of a couple of glasses of wine and lighting a cigar, he gave himself up to thought, and remained gazing in the fire, which sparkled and crackled gloriously before his eyes. God knows what thoughts passed through that man's mind then, but that some of them were most agonizingly painful might be imagined by the deep-drawn sighs that occasionally came from his lips. Throwing down his cigar, he abruptly rose, and was about to pace the room, but, suddenly recollecting himself, he sat down noiselessly again, saying—

"No, no, I shall disturb them, and they really want repose."

He then sat and listened, becoming keenly and nervously sensible of the minutest noises, a condition of mind which all who have experienced it will acknowledge to be of the most uncomfortable character; but there were many circumstances conspiring to produce it in this melancholy looking, and yet strikingly handsome stranger, who thus most mysteriously played the part of guardian and sentinel to the two slumbering youths in the adjoining chamber.

"Alas! alas!" he said, "how strange is my destiny, and how strange is the destiny of those whom I love best upon earth. Who, to have looked upon me, and known my position, one short year since, would believe it possible that I am situated as I am now!—Well, well, we must do as Providence wishes we should, and I believe that there may be much happiness yet. Life is like a children's game at see-saw—when we are most down we look for a change which shall raise us, perchance, higher than we have ever soared."

He was silent for a few moments, and then he said—

"Hope—Hope! yes,

' Hope smiles, and waves her golden hair.'

I will not despond, no—no—no! I will meet, as becomes a man, the fiend despair, and, despite its grisly looks, I will engage with the monster hand to hand. But despair always flies from a fair stand-up fight! Ah, what noise is that?—More visitors here at such an hour?—That is strange—yet—no—why should it be—any one might say the same of us!"

He still listened more intently. Then suddenly reseating himself in the chair from which he had abruptly risen, he said—

"Why should I interest myself about what cannot concern me? Some chance travellers have come here, that is all. It is true that we are not what we seem; but it is not guilt that has lent to us disguise. Oh, no—no!"

He heard a confused sound of voices outside the inn, among which he recognised the otter's as having a peculiar twang with it, and then footsteps ascended the stairs.

"This way, sir," said the girl, "this way—not that door, those rooms are occupied."

Another door he heard opened upon the same landing, and some new guest, who trod heavily upon the floor, was ushered into a private room in the "Vine," by the same young woman who had done the honours to the mysterious strangers.

## CHAPTER C.

## MORE ARRIVALS.

THE house was soon again wrapped in the most profound repose, and the tall stranger by the fire, as he continued gazing at the embers, felt a drowsy influence stealing over him, which he in vain combated with. It was useless for him to start and change his position. Nature would exert her supremacy—sleep he must, and after maintaining a kind of contest for a time with the drowsy feeling, he fairly dropped off into a slumber haunted by painful images. No doubt the restrained position in which he sat in the miscalled *cas* chair, undeniably tended to produce uneasy dreams, but judging from the starting and moaning, combined with the utterance of various inarticulate words that characterised his slumbers, it was evident that they were not of a refreshing character. How long he slept he knew not, but he was suddenly aroused by a loud voice, calling—“House! house! house! Is any one up here?” The stranger started to his feet—

“What is that?” he said, “what is that?”

It would seem that at the same moment the two mysterious young men in the adjoining chamber, were startled from their repose, for he who was named Julian opened the door of communication that was between the two rooms, and looking in, said—

“Is there anything amiss—what has happened?”

“Nothing, nothing, Julian—you are so fearful. Remember that we are off the high road, and that it is not at all likely that we should here encounter whom we seek. Go to rest again, Julian—you may yet, for all we know to the contrary, require all our strength and all our courage to meet some emergency.”

“Yes, yes. Oh, I have had fearful dreams; and during a short hour of repose I have lived an age of agony.”

“Calm yourself—calm yourself.”

“Speak to the roaring sea to calm itself,” said Julian, tottering into the room, and half falling into a chair. “It were as easy as to tell my heart to still its tumults. Hush! hush!”

“What is it?”

“They are speaking. Let us hear. Hush!”

“Betsy!” said a voice. It was that of the landlord. “Betsy, who is in the inn besides a gentleman and two youths, that I sent on? Here’s some soldiers and police, and heaven knows what besides, asking if we have got Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman, in the place.”

“Mercy! mercy!” cried Julian. “Heaven have mercy!”

The reply of the girl from the house came indistinctly upon their ears, but before either of them had time to make a remark, the door of the room was opened, and a man entered, saying as he did so—

“If there be no one here who wants blood upon his soul, allow me to hide for ten minutes in these rooms. You will not find me ungrateful.”

“Claude!” shrieked Julian, springing to his feet.

“Claude!” cried the tall stranger. “Good God!”

Claude Duval, for it was indeed he, looked astonished for a moment. He fixed his eyes upon the tall stranger, and exclaimed—

“Markham Brereton! is this, indeed, you?”

Before Markham—for Markham it really was—could reply to him, Julian sprang forward, and flinging his arms round Claude’s neck, cried—

“Ah, do you not know your own Cicely?”

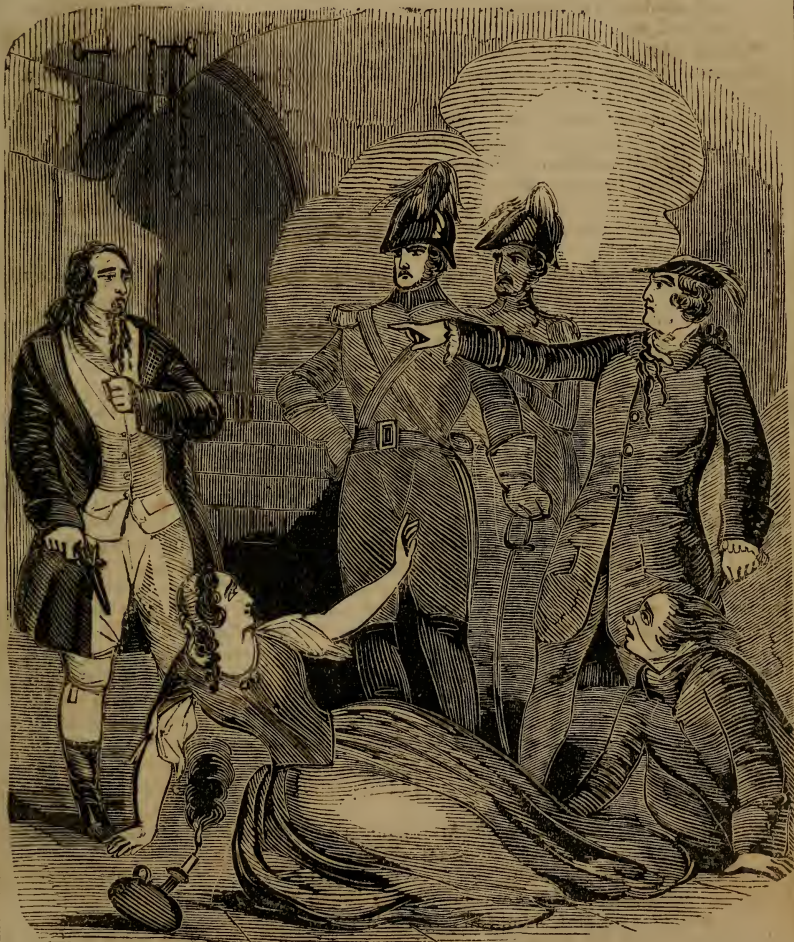
“Good God! is this possible? How—what—why—Tell me, am I asleep or awake?”

“All is easily explained,” said Markham Brereton. “The anxieties of Cicely and May would, I do believe, have gone far to drive them distracted, had I not

accompanied them upon the road with the hope of meeting you, and the chance of assisting you. We went right on to Winchester, and having thoroughly ascertained that you had not reached so far, we]came back upon the London road, when, overcome by fatigue, I brought them here for a few hours' rest."

"Then, where is May?"

"Sleeping in the next chamber."



A SKIRMISH AT THE "VINE INN."

"I see it all. Cheer up, my Cicely, cheer up. Nay, do not weep thus. Are you not with me? Come, come, this convulsion of tears will make you ill. Do you not hear my voice?"

"Claude, Claude, they will kill you."

"Remember your enemies if you forget your friends," said Markham. "I will go and listen at the stairhead."

"Thanks," said Claude. "I hope to deceive them yet. Jack has, no doubt, taken care of himself somewhere below, and I have opened the window of my room and hung a sheet out of it, one end of which I have tied to the bed-post to induce the idea that I have escaped by such means, so that if I can get a temporary asylum here, all will be well."

"Yes, Claude, yes," said Cicely, "all shall be well. Oh, yes, yes."

"You had better awake May."

"I will—I will."

"Hush! hush! Do not speak so loud," said Markham Brereton, returning. "Do not speak so loud, whatever you do. They are in the house now, and a long consultation is taking place below."

"What force is there?" said Claude.

"That I cannot ascertain, but there are soldiers."

Cicely at this moment returned with May, who threw her arms round her brother's neck, and burst into tears as she exclaimed—

"Oh, Claude, they shall not kill you! They shall kill me! They may have a life, but it must not, shall not be yours! Cicely, Cicely, he shall be saved—must be saved!"

"You will destroy all," said Claude, "by this vehemence. You will destroy all."

"Hush! oh, hush!" said Markham Brereton. Hush, they come. Go into the next room, all of you, and leave me to do what I can. Haste! haste! I can hear footsteps even now upon the stairs. There is not a moment to be lost. Go, Claude, go.—Go at once, and do not let a whisper betray you."

Claude, Cicely, and May at once went into the chamber, and Markham Brereton again placed himself in the chair before the fire, and restored the appearance of undisturbed quiet to the place. He gazed at the fire like a man half-sleeping—but, oh, what a world of painful thoughts was busy about his heart at that time, when he looked so calm and quiescent. Who would judge those, who, in this world look so calm and still, what torrents of hidden passions may still be at the bottom of their hearts. A life of ordinary anxieties could not make up the sum of five minutes of such mental apprehensions for those he loved, as now filled the soul of Markham Brereton. The lagging minutes seemed lengthened into hours, and if an hour had really elapsed, such an extent of agony must have left its traces for ever upon his brow. On—on came the footstep, and there was a tap at the door of the room. Markham Brereton made no answer. Tap! tap! it came again. Still he was silent. The door was slowly and cautiously opened, and a crowd of persons appeared upon the threshold, some of whom bore lights, while arms glistened in the hands of the foremost of the group. Markham pretended to be in a sound sleep. The magistrate who was so very anxious for the capture of Claude Duval, when he saw that there was no immediate perceptible danger, walked into the room, and laid his hand upon Brereton's shoulder.

"Sir? sir?" he said, "sir?"

"Eh? What is it?" cried Markham, rising suddenly. "What is the matter?"

"We beg pardon for intruding upon you, sir, as these are your private rooms, but we are in search of the notorious Claude Duval."

"Of who?" said Markham, rubbing his eyes.

"Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman. By mere accident, after failing to meet him as we expected upon the road, we have ascertained that he came here with a companion."

"Well, sir, are you satisfied that I am not the party whom you seek?"

"Quite so, sir, only I mention so much to account for this intrusion. We intend to search every nook and cranny of the old inn, if it should take us twelve hours to do so, for although there is a semblance of his escape, we are satisfied he is still concealed somewhere upon the premises. We trust, therefore, that you will excuse this intrusion, particularly as your companions are, as I understand, young gentlemen."

"Yes, but they are asleep, and I should, having the care of them, be loath to have them awakened. I have been here some hours, and the rooms were most decidedly vacant when we took possession."

"Nevertheless, sir, you will excuse me for saying that I shall not feel satisfied unless I search the place well, and as a magistrate of the county, you will conclude that I have sufficient authority to do so. I am quite sure, sir, from your appearance, that you would rather assist, than obstruct the authorities in the discharge of an arduous and, after all, thankless duty."

"Certainly, certainly," replied Markham Brereton; "if you must search the place, I should regret indeed to place any difficulty in the way."

He spoke these words very loudly; for although he could hardly doubt but that all that passed was overheard by Claude, Cicely, and May, yet he wished to be quite certain that they should be made aware of what was proposed.

"Murder! murder! help!" cried a voice from the passage of the inn at this moment. "Here he is! here he is!"

Bang went a pistol shot.

"The devil he is!" said the parson, as he rushed towards the staircase. "Come on, all of you. No—not all. One of you stay here and keep a good look-out, I have my suspicions."

One of the officers staid above in the corridor, while the others all followed the reverend gentleman down the stairs, whence the noise had proceeded. They found the maid, Betsy, lying in a fainting fit in the Hall, while an officer, who had been left below, was standing with his recently discharged pistol in his hand looking rather confused, and spitting blood from his mouth, which appeared to be somewhat damaged."

"What's the matter—what's the matter?"

"I hardly know," said the officer. But somebody, deucedly like a gentleman's servant, came up to the door and wanted to come in, and when I said no, he gave me a tap on the mouth that I think has loosened all my teeth; I fired after him, and the girl called 'Murder!' and then got up a faint."

"Which way did he go?"

"Through the house somewhere—I missed him."

"Then two or three of you must keep watch here, for that man is no other than the confederate of him we seek, and whom I declare to you all is Claude Duval, the famous robber."

Some of those whom the parson had with him looked rather pale, but they had gone too far to back out of the enterprise now, and they could only devoutly wish that they had never undertaken it. To the two dragoons the information was welcome enough, inasmuch as it promised them better sport than they had anticipated.

"He fights, don't he?" said one.

"So I have heard," said the other.

"Come up again," said the magistrate. "Come up again, I have my suspicions, and no one can escape below, for the place is well guarded. Come on! come on."

He had his foot upon the first stair, when a shriek was heard from above, and over the balustrade down came the officer who had been left there on guard.

"Below there!" said a deep-toned voice, and then all was still. The man lay insensible in the passage; for the height from which he had fallen was really something very considerable, and probably, before being pitched over, he had received some injuries. The party below looked panic-stricken for a time, and even the parson magistrate looked rather flushed in the face for a moment, and then rather pale. The dragoons began to feel interested in the affair, since it was growing a little serious, but they waited as calmly for orders as though nothing was the matter. The civil force evidently hung back.

"Come on," cried the parson, summoning all the resolution he could. "Come on—I feel quite confident that those we seek are above stairs somewhere, but whether that gentleman whom I spoke to is with us or against us I can't exactly

take upon myself to say. Come on—come on! We will not be deterred by a little danger. Now for it."

"Hold!" said a voice from above.

"Surrender!" shouted the parson. "Surrender, and save your lives. We are in force here, and we are determined to vindicate the law. You are summoned in the king's name, whoever you are, to come down and give yourself up. We only allow you two minutes, and at the expiration of that time, if anything happens, the consequences are upon your own head."

"Let's push on at once," said one of the dragoons.

"No—no," said the parson, "let's hear what the rascal has to say."

"If you are in force, sufficient to do so," said the voice from above, "come and take me. I swear that I will serve every man of you as I have just served your comrade."

"Come—come, submit to the laws."

There was a death-like stillness of some few moments' duration, and then a strange dragging sort of noise was heard above, which for a few moments puzzled those who listened to it, but at length one of the officers said—

"Oh, they are barricading themselves up with the furniture."

A pistol shot at this moment sounded sharply, as from the back of the house, and one of the dragoons immediately said—

"There it is; only two men were left under that window at the back, and no doubt one of them has gone to the devil with a bullet in his brains, and your men will escape that way."

"Oh, no, no," said the parson. "You two keep guard here, and I and my civilians will run round."

The two soldiers guarded the staircase while the parson magistrate went with his men to the back of the house, where he had posted two officers at the only window from which the yard could be reached. What had taken place there, deserves a word, for by it we shall learn some news of Sixteen-string Jack, who hitherto has not made a very conspicuous figure in this most fearfully complicated affray."

## CHAPTER XCIX.

### A CATASTROPHE.

THE fact was, that Jack was in the lower part of the inn, keeping a sort of watch and ward over Claude's safety, when the magistrate and his party arrived. From that moment, Jack's grand object was to combine his strength with Claude's; and as getting up the staircase, guarded as it was, was out of the question, he had made the rush into the stable yard at the beck, which we have mentioned, followed by a pistol shot from one of the officers. Jack was not at all aware that the magistrate had had the prudence to plant a couple of men there, and he came upon them quite at unawares. His presence of mind, and that alone could save him, did not forsake him in this awkward and most critical juncture.

"Is all right?" he said. "Have you seen anything?"

"No—no.—Who sent you?"

"My master, the magistrate, to be sure."

"Oh, very well. Go and say to him that for some reason or another they have just hung a sheet out o' window."

"A sheet?"

"Yes, don't you see it hanging there. You may depend it's to make believe that he has made his escape that way, and if we had not been here to see, any one might very well have believed it, but no one has passed us, so he must be hiding alone still."

"Then he's booked, but the best plan would be for us to climb in by the sheet while the others push on up the stairs. Don't you see how easy it would be to lay hold of it by clambering into that alder, the first?"

"Yes; and what sort of reception do you think you'd get from Claude Duval, when you got up?"

"He could only show fight. Come, get up."

"I tell you what it is, Master Groom. If you are so mighty fond of hazarding other folk's lives, perhaps you don't mind running a little risk with your own?"

"Not I."

"Then just go up by the alder tree and the sheet yourself. Ha! ha! The devil! You don't mean to say you really will?"

"Indeed I do."

"Then you are a clever fellow—I wish you luck."

Jack, whose only object was to effect a coalition with Claude, was quite delighted at this opportunity of doing so, and soon reached in safety the room which Claude had so recently occupied. He passed timidly through, calling gently upon Claude as he did so; and then, upon emerging into the corridor, the officer who had been placed there pounced upon him, saying—

"You are my prisoner!"

"Indeed!—for what?"

"Never you mind about that."

"Yes, but I do," said Jack; and feeling the importance of getting rid of this man, he called to his aid all his ancient skill and much of his ancient strength, and succeeded after a brief struggle in tumbling him over the balustrade of the staircase:

Claude and Markham Brereton heard the tumult, and just peeped out to see its conclusion.

"Jack, Jack," said Claude.

"Yes. Oh, yes. Thank God I have found you!"

"Hush! speak in whispers. Are they in much force below?"

"Nothing to speak of, except the two dragoons."

"Humph!—what part does the innkeeper and his family take?"

"I hardly know, but it's against us, I think. Good God, Mr. Brereton, how came you here?"

"Never mind, Jack. Cicely and May are here likewise, and we are all armed, and resolved to make a good fight of it. What shall we do now?"

"I tell you what it is," said Jack, "there's no means of getting here conveniently but by the one window in which I came, and up these stairs. No one will have the courage to attempt the window, and all we have to do is to defend the stairs. Is there any tolerably heavy and at the same time portable article in the room?"

"Yes, an old cheffionier."

"Then let's pull it out to the top of the staircase. It will be as good as two more men to us, for we can use it as a barricade as long as we like, and send it down upon our foes when we see occasion."

It was the moving along of the heavy cheffionier to the head of the stairs that had made the strange noise heard below by the officers. The parson had run round to the yard to see what had happened there, for Claude had slipped into his bed-room, and fired a pistol at the two sentinels, to alarm them. When the magistrate reached the yard, one of the officers said—

"Oh, sir. Your groom is, we fear, murdered. He would climb in at the window, though we said all we could to prevent him from hazarding his life in such a way. Somebody has just now fired at us, and no doubt he is killed."

"My groom!—what groom?"

"Your groom, sir, that you sent to know how we were going on; a tall man in brown livery."

"Why, that's no groom of mine, but a confederate of Duval's. Could anything be so stupid. Dear me, what mischief you have done. Why the fellow was fired

after as he went through the passage, and if you had caught him, one half of the affair would have been over."

The two officers looked uncommonly blank.

"Well," added the parson, who did not, by any means wish to dispirit his force, "it can't be helped now. I think it is highly probable they may yet make an effort to escape this way, so two of you are not enough."

"Oh dear, no, sir."

"Four will be, surely; and especially as you need not be at all nice about using your pistols, for remember this highwayman is to be taken alive or dead."

"Yes, sir."

Four officers, with loaded pistols in their hands, were accordingly left, while the parson went back to the staircase-foot with the remainder of his men, and there held a brief consultation, in which the dragoons were allowed to take part. The advice of the soldiers was to go right on up the staircase, fighting and scrambling over every obstacle, and take their man, of which they did not entertain the smallest doubt, and as they offered to lead the van, the officers loudly applauded the plan.

"There is only one thing that puzzles me," said the parson, "and that is the conduct of the gentleman and the two youths who occupy rooms adjoining, or rather across the corridor, from Claude Duval's; they are remarkably quiet, and it is from fear or collusion. I begin to have some suspicion that, after all, they may be friends of Duval's, and if so, there are five against us above."

"I don't see what difference that makes," said one of the dragoons. "We have got it to do, and we may as well do it, so come on. Here we are wasting no end of time, and making the enemy believe we are afraid of him."

While this consultation is taking place below, we may as well take a brief glance at what was passing above. When the large cheffonier was moved to the head of the stairs, the position of Claude and his party was entirely so far improved, and with Cicely clinging to him, and looking with fearful earnestness in his face, while May sat almost fainting upon a chair near the door of the chamber, and Jack and Markham Brereton looked, with their pistols in their hands, like men resolved to conquer or die, the group presented a very picturesque appearance.

"Escape! escape! escape!" was all that Cicely could say.

"Hush! hush! It is not possible."

"Oh, yes, Claude; the front of the house may not be guarded."

"Ah," said Brereton, "that may be a good thought, although a random one. I will go and reconnoitre that part of the premises at once."

Now the sitting-room and bed-room to which Markham Brereton and the two supposed youths, Julian and his young companion, had been shown, were both in front of the inn, while Claude's chamber being across the corridor, had a window, as we are aware, looking into the back yard. But, somehow, people don't so readily think of getting out at a front window as a back one, and the parson, although upon first entering the house he had placed a sentinel at the front door, had been careless of keeping him there, and the consequence was, that the front of the inn was unguarded. Still, it was not an easy descent, for except a projecting piece of half-worn iron, from which the sign was suspended, there was little or nothing to hold by. Nevertheless Brereton, as he looked, began to think that Claude might escape that way, along with Jack; and as for him and Cicely and May, they had done nothing, and the officers could have no hold upon them, and no right to detain them, even if by any accident they should discover who they were. He returned and whispered anxiously to Claude.

"Try the front window, while we keep the police in check."

"But Cicely and May?"

"You can leave them to me, can you not?"

"Yes; and yet——"

"And yet, now that you have joined company with them, you are loth to leave them."

"I am; besides, how could we get our horses? That is to my mind a fatal



objection to the plan. To attempt to go further with any regard to safety upon foot, would be sheer madness, and yet, if we could but get out of this scrape, it would be a glorious thing."

"What's that?"

A few grains of gravel had been flung from without by some one against the window panes, and upon Claude looking as carefully out as a little miserable oil lamp, close to the sign, enabled him to do, he saw a man making signs, to signify that he should open the window and get out. This man had something in his hands, which Claude could not make out. Fortunately the window was an old-fashioned lattice one, and opened like a door, so that there was no chance of it executing a scream when opened, as windows that slide up and down by the aid of ropes and pulleys not unfrequently have a knack of doing. Claude had it open in a minute.

"Hist!" said a voice.

"Who are you?"

"The landlord. Get out of the way; there you are! Mind now, you had that with you, and threw it out—not I threw it in—make the best of it. Your horses are in charge of a boy at the milestone, about three hundred yards down the road."

"A thousand thanks."

"A thousand fiddlesticks; I know what's what. Don't swallow above one half that you hear of anybody, and never suppose that I can be very friendly with a preserve-keeping parson, who has had me twice in the Winchester gaol for poaching."

"Oh, that's it?"

Yes, to be sure. Get out and be off as soon as you can. They will be up the stairs directly."

"I know—I know."

Without closing the window, Claude properly secured the end of a stout rope-ladder, that the landlord had cast up to him, so that there was an easy enough mode of descent to an active man. He at once, in whispers, told them all what chances there were, and Brereton said nothing."

"Go, Claude. Go, for God's sake, at once. You and Jack go, and leave us here."

"If I thought you were safe——"

"What on earth can harm us, Claude, except your delay now?—each moment is precious. Go, go at once, I implore you. Cicely, join your entreaties to mine, and you too, May. You must all see that the only chance for Claude is instant flight, by the means now so mercifully presented to him. Oh, go at once."

"Yes, Claude," said Cicely, "my brother speaks truly. Go, and we shall be safe. We will all meet to-morrow, at sunset, in Winchester."

"Where?"

"By the entrance to the cathedral. God bless you, Claude, and as you love me, go at once."

"Oh, yes—yes," said May; "go at once. Do go at once, Claude, and take your friend with you. Remember that we shall be safe. Oh, yes—yes. Go—go at once."

"I will."

"Remember, at the gate of Winchester Cathedral, to-morrow evening, at sunset."

"Yes, yes. Come, Jack."

"I am ready—I am ready."

Markham Brereton held up his hand as a warning to them all, and then he stepped lightly on towards the corridor. Claude could not leave at a precise moment of danger, and he followed Markham closely. They both paused close to the cheffonnier, and then they heard the magistrate say, in a voice that was intended to be assuming, but which shook, in spite of all his resolution that it should not shake—

## GENTLEMAN JACK.

"Forward!—forward! Remember that your reward will be ample; and that, after all, all that you have to go against is a highwayman, who will soon surrender before determined men."

The dragoons began marching up the stairs as if nothing particular was the matter, and they were followed closely by the officers; while, last of all, instead of first, as he had all along pretended to be, came the parson. It was a critical point that.

"Claude!" said Jack.

"Yes, Jack."

"Are your pistols ready?"

"Quite."

"Then we will not and cannot allow ourselves to be taken in this way. The blood of those who would take our lives be upon their own heads. I will fight to the last, and I now feel justified."

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## CHAPTER XCV.

### THE FIGHT.

TRAMP—tramp—tramp—came the dragoons. Claude felt a touch upon his arm, and turning he saw Cicely looking ghastly pale, but with a pistol fairly clutched in her right hand.

"Back, Cicely, back."

"No, Claude; where you are there am I."

From the open room door, streaming from the candle that was upon the table, there came a faint sort of misty light into the corridor.

"Surrender, or we fire!" cried one of the dragoons, as they both by a turn in the stairs came in sight of the large cheffionier that was placed upon the top-most step, just tottering, so that a slight push might send it down upon the heads of the invaders.

"Retire," said Claude, "or we fire."

"Good! Blaze away," said the soldier.

Bang, bang, went the holster pistols, and crash went the bullets into the cheffionier. It was quite evident that under cover of this fire, the soldiers and police expected to take the place and party by storm, but they were woefully mistaken. They made the rush. "Fire!" said Claude, and four pistol shots went against them, while, before the echo of the discharge was over, Claude gave the cheffionier the necessary impulse, and over it went, sweeping all before it, until it lodged in an awkward angle of the stairs, so firmly wedged in, that it seemed as though nothing but hewing it to pieces would ever dislodge it.

"Speak," said Claude; "are any of us hurt?"

"No—no;" was the prompt rejoinder, and Claude drew a long breath of exquisite gratification. But affairs were very different below.

A bullet had struck one of the dragoons in the face, and turning clean over upon his heels he had fallen headlong down the stairs to the passage below. One of the policemen was hit in the shoulder, and went down clutching the balustrades, and yelling out that he was killed until, he fell upon the soldier. The cheffionier swept the others before it like chaff before the wind, and they had some difficulty to escape broken limbs. The parson was upset in the scuffle, and sent rolling into the passage.

"Hit, by God!" said the dragoon.

"Help—help! Murder! Oh—oh!" roared the wounded officer. "Fetch all the doctors. Oh—oh!"

"Come on, again!" cried the other dragoon, "follow me, and no flinching. Keep the game going. Come on!—what do you give it up? Do you mean to

say that you are beat already? Well, have it your own way. It don't much matter to me. If it's over, it's over. Landlord! a glass of something hot and a pipe. How do you find yourself, Bill?"

"Going."

"You don't mean that?"



"I—I—do."

The dying soldier's face changed. The hue of death crept over it, and a glazy film came over his eyes. He grasped at imaginary atoms floating in the air, and then with a guttural groan he surrendered up his spirit to Him in whose hands it might be refashioned into an angel or a demon. There was a death-like

stillness for a few moments, and the parson having slowly struggled to his feet, looked wofully chagrined as he surveyed the wreck of his little party. The wounded police-officer was still vociferous in his complaints, which so disgusted the surviving dragoon, that he gave him a not very gentle pat upon the head with the barrel of his pistol, saying—

“Be quiet, will you? There’s a better man than you killed. It’s like your infernal impudence to make a fuss about yourself. I never saw anybody so ugly in all my life.”

“Oh, murder!”

“Will you be quiet?”

“Oh, yes—yes. Dear me! Is a man to be killed, and nobody pity him because he ain’t quite an Adonis?”

“My horse!” cried the parson. “Where’s my horse, landlord? I’ll—I’ll go and get more assistance. I’ll—I’ll scour the country. This affair will make a noise. Murder has been done! I—I—don’t know what to say exactly. Good God! here they come again.”

The balustrade against which in part the longer cheffionier had wedged itself, suddenly gave way, and that article of furniture which had done Claude such good service, suddenly came down the remaining stairs into the passage like an avalanche of mahogany. The alarm of the parson and of the remainder of the officers was so great that they, one and all, made a rush into the bar-parlour as a little snug room close to them was called, and the dragoon had only just time to drag the dead body of his fallen comrade by the heels out of the way of the descending mass of wood work. A moment’s reflection, of course, was sufficient to convince them of what had really caused this second descent of the cheffionier, and the dragoon again tried to stimulate them to the fight by calling out to them in a loud voice—

“I will lead, if you will follow me. The staircase is clear now, and one rush will do the business. Are you going to have it talked of all over England, that you had not the courage to push on the moment you found your enemy was serious. Why, what the deuce did you expect in the affair, but a few pistol shots?”

“Recollect the reward,” said the parson. “Recollect the reward, my men. You don’t have such a chance every day. Follow that brave soldier, whose conduct I will take care to represent in the proper quarter, and I will stay here and take care that nobody attacks you unexpectedly in the rear.”

The fox-hunter’s courage had completely evaporated. Affairs had got much too serious for him.

“Stay where you like,” said the soldier. “Cowards in action only confuse brave men. Are you coming, any of you?”

Stimulated by a hope of sharing amply in the reward, and hoping that the principal part of the opposition was over, the remaining officers determined, especially as the dragoon would go first, to make yet another attempt upon the staircase, and yet another effort for the capture of the man upon whose head such a price was set. They accordingly advanced, and one said—

“Yes, we will support you. Push on.”

“All’s right—look to your pistols.”

They did so, and then the dragoon, with a coolness that they all envied, and which was sufficiently admirable after what had already happened, advanced to the stairs and commenced the ascent as quickly as he could.

“Come on,” he cried. “Come on! If I fall, don’t stop, but scramble over me. That’s the way to do it.”

There was quite a remarkable stillness up the stairs. No sight or sound whatever of opposition met them, and the dragoon actually set his foot upon the top-most stair without seeing any one.

“Lights—lights!” he cried. “Here may be some ambuscade. Bring some lights from below.”

The door of the sitting room that had been appointed for the use of Markham

Brereton and the two females was suddenly opened in the face of the dragoon, who stepped back a pace, saying—

“Surrender, or I fire!”

“What on earth is all this about?” said Brereton, looking like a man in the greatest surprise, while he held the candle above his head and surveyed the soldier.

“Who are you?”

“Who am I? Why, No 28.”

“And can you tell me what has been the cause of all this disturbance? Here has been a man coming in here and threatening to blow my brains out if I stirred, and so, having a respect for my brains, as they are the only ones at my disposal, I have not stirred! Have you caught him?”

“No—no!” cried the officers in chorus, for they had by this time arrived, and had crowded round the door of the room.

“Has he got away, then?”

“We don’t know. Perhaps he’s hiding somewhere, but as we suspect you have assisted him, we will take you into custody at once. We will have somebody if we die for it.”

“Come—come!” cried the parson, who had been listening upon the stairs, and upon finding that there was no opposition, had ascended. “Come—come!—What is all this about? I have no doubt that you are a confederate of Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman, and I arrest you accordingly.”

“You are able to do so, I dare say,” said Brereton, “but I warn you that I am a gentleman, and not likely to put up with any injustice with impunity; I shall bring an action for false imprisonment against any one who shall presume to detain me a moment, I warn you.”

“If you were not aiding and abetting the criminal, why did you not lend assistance to the authorities?”

“I was not called upon. Besides, no man is required to do so at the certain loss of his life. The two youths I have with me are in very delicate health indeed, and I particularly request that you will not make any noise.”

“Search all the rooms narrowly,” said the parson. “Search all the rooms. They cannot have escaped. Our men at the back would have given an alarm if they had attempted it that way, and we ourselves never lost sight of the staircase.”

It was remarked by the officer that the magistrate kept as close to the dragoon as though he had never been so fond of anybody as of him in all his life. No doubt he thought that where there was the greatest strength there was the greatest safety, for he had still an uncomfortable suspicion that Claude Duval might bounce out upon him suddenly when least expected, and execute summary vengeance upon him. Indeed, it was quite a matter of mystery to know where Claude Duval could have got to. Certainly all opposition seemed to be at an end, and the spirits of the officers rose proportionately, while the dragoon began to get thoroughly disgusted at the turn affairs had taken, for if there was to be no more fighting, of course his avocation was gone, and the police-officers could manage very well without him.

“Manage it among yourselves,” he said, “I’m off.”

“Oh, no—no—no,” cried the parson, catching him fast by two little ridiculous skirts that hung from his jacket behind. “No—no. Don’t you think of going, my good fellow. I’ll take good care that it is made well worth your while to stay. You remain where you are, and keep close to me.”

“What for?”

“Oh, we don’t know yet, exactly, what may happen. You help us to search for the fellow before you think of going, and then we will all go together, you know. Besides, the conduct of this person (alluding to Brereton) is anything but satisfying, so we must still be upon our guard. Do stay.”

“Well, well.”

“That’s right. Now, my men, let us search the place well, and not leave a

nook or cranny unexplored, and, first of all, I will take the liberty of having a look in this inner chamber."

"I assure you," said Brereton, "upon my word and honour, that there is no one there but the two youths who are travelling in my company, but, of course, as you have authority to search, it will be quite in vain for me to protest against it, so walk in at once."

"May I ask your name, sir?" said the parson.

"Oh, yes. Smith."

"Humph! A very common name, that."

"Very."

"And the two young gentlemen? Pray, sir, what may their names be?"

"Smith."

"How remarkable. You will permit me to say, sir, that a man of the name of Smith is, in my opinion, always likely to be taken up on suspicion of anything, and I should plead his name as a justification. That I should, sir. Come on, Mr. Dragoon. We will soon unearth our fox, if he be hidden anywhere near at hand, and who knows but we may be yet in at the death, after such a hard race as we have had of it. Ha! ha! I think we have all showed pluck."

"Have we?" muttered the soldier. "Pluck with the legs, more than with the hands, I think, for I never saw such fellows as you all are for running out of danger in all my life, not I."

"A-hem!" said the parson, as he pretended not to hear this remark at all, and, followed by the officers, with the exception of two left in the corridor for fear Claude should rush out of some hiding place and escape down the stairs, and keeping just half a pace behind the dragoon, he entered the inner chamber.

There were two beds there, and upon each lay a seeming youth. It did not take above a minute or two to thoroughly satisfy the magistrate and officers that no one was there concealed, and then, with a bitter feeling of disappointment, the parson said to Cicely—

"What is your name?"

"Smith."

"And yours?" to May.

"Smith."

"Confound you all. I don't believe a word that any of you say, and I'll take you all into custody. If I don't, may I never follow a pack of hounds again to get the brush in a good field. May I fall in a ditch, if I don't."

"But, sir," whispered one of the officers, "if they are friends of Claude Duval's, and he has really made his escape in some unaccountable way, the best plan will be to follow them, when they leave here, secretly, and they may, without meaning to do so, lead us to him. Whereas, you see, sir, if you take them into custody, we at once lose all clue whatever; don't you see, sir?"

"Well, there is something in that. Let it be so. But first we will complete the search of the rooms, for I really cannot make up my mind to the idea that he has got away, and if we catch him hiding, we shall still go to Winchester in triumph with our prisoner."

Their search was carried on with spirit, but it was totally ineffective. No Claude Duval, nor any indications of his presence were discovered, and the chagrin of the party was manifest in the countenance of each individual member of it.

"So," said the dragoon, "my comrade has been killed for nothing."

"I cannot understand it," said the magistrate. "The six men in the yard declare that no one has attempted to escape by the window where the sheet hangs out, and we know that no one has gone down stairs."

"Hark, ye, sir," whispered the necromancers of an officer who had recommended the system of espionage upon the family of Smiths. "Hark you, sir. There are front windows."

"Front windows?"

"Yes, to Mr. Smith's two rooms, and he may have helped our man out of the inn that way."

"It must be so."

"I have no doubt of it; so you see, sir, it's more necessary than ever that we should watch these people."

"It is—it is. You shall arrange it, and you may depend upon my duly representing your sagacity in the proper quarter. Let us go down stairs and consult about the precise steps to take in the matter. I see that it is of no use attempting to do anything here."

They now affected to feel quite satisfied with the search they had made, and in the course of five minutes more Markham Brereton was left to the undisturbed possession of his room. He waited until he was quite sure that no one of the officers lingered. At last he thought he was quite sure of that, and then he went into the adjoining room.

"All is well," he said. "All is well, Julian."

"Hush!"

"What is it?"

"There is a man in the corridor, just behind that door that opens upon it. We have distinctly heard him. It is a spy upon our discourse. Are we suspected, Markham? Speak low."

## CHAPTER XCVI.

### THE OLD CATHEDRAL.

MARKHAM BRERETON listened attentively.

"Are you certain of what you say?" he whispered.

"I am—I am. No doubt they suspect our connexion with Claude, and have set a man to watch us, in which case it will be next to impossible for us to keep an appointment with him. Alas! there are yet many difficulties in the way of a successful issue of these affairs. What will become of us all?"

"Do not despair. Let me think a moment."

Markham remained silent for a short time, and was evidently in deep thought. Then, beckoning Cicely and May to the window which was quite out of earshot of the door, he said—

"It is quite clear that unless we wish to be apprehended, we must keep up the idea that we are not connected with Claude in any way."

"How can we do that?"

"By conversing upon indifferent subjects. You must take your one from me, and when I make a remark which is intended for the listening officer, you must reply to it in proper style. As yet, recollect, it can be nothing but suspicion on the part of the police that we are in any way connected with Claude."

"Then, are we to give up all hope of gaining him?"

"By no means. But, for Heaven's sake, Cicely, be of good cheer, and join me cheerfully in doing the best I can to ward off evil consequences both from him and from us."

There was a something in these words that sounded almost like reproof, and they silenced Cicely at once, so far as any complaints went, so that Markham was at liberty to say whatever he thought would be necessary for the purpose of hoodwinking the officer. Raising his voice slightly, he commenced as though he were continuing a conversation.

"Yes, the most remarkable thing is, as you say, that we should be robbed once, and then come in all likelihood to the very inn where the thieves put up."

"It is so," said Cicely, taking her cue from Markham. "Is it worth while, think you, to make known our loss to the officers of justice who are here?"

"Hardly; and to tell you the truth, I am almost inclined to your first opinion, to the effect, that these men here are only pretended officers of justice."

"That was what I thought."

"It may be so. At all events, his lordship will be glad to see you both safe and, after all, what is the loss of a few trinkets to you or to him?"

"Nothing—nothing!"

"When you are at your family seat, and once more surrounded by your illustrious relations, you will only laugh at these adventures upon the road."

"They will amuse the duke," said Cicely. "Don't you remember once the duchess came into the library with a newspaper in which there was something about this very Claude Duval? I have a lively recollection of the circumstance, but at this distance of time I have no idea of what it was all about."

"Some of his daring exploits!"

"Doubtless."

The officer outside the door had all this while his finger against his nose, and was looking as mysterious and as cunning as an owl in an ivy bush.

"Ha! ha!" he said, "so—so these are young noblemen, after all. Who knows but I may make as much by being civil to them as by the reverse, or by looking after Claude Duval. The duke? Humph! What duke, I wonder? Upon my life, it was a good thing I came here to listen, for if I have missed the scent I expected, I have lighted upon another which may do just as well."

"I am vexed at the idea of our cousin being made prime minister," said May, "as we shall not have him at the hall now."

"You cannot expect him," said Markham, "until parliament is prorogued; then, doubtless, you will see him. I hope when you do so, your ladyship will not forget the little favour I asked of you for my young friend, the count."

"Surely not, Sir James."

"Ha! ha!" said the officer, "who but me—I'll stick to this lot—won't I. Bother Claude Duval! I wonder if the party below is off; I want this affair all to myself, that I do."

Full of the idea, that if he were left alone he should be able to introduce himself to people of consequence, the officer darted down stairs, and met the magistrate in the hall.

"It's no go, sir," he said; "they have been talking quite confidentially, and I am satisfied that they really know nothing of Claude Duval, and have no sort of communication with him."

"Indeed?"

"Oh yes, sir, you may trust to me for that. It's of no use remaining here except upon one chance—that Claude Duval may be hiding in the vicinity of this place, and even in that event one man only left here, to dog his footsteps until assistance can be got to apprehend him, is fully sufficient."

"Oh, yes—yes."

"I will stay if you like, sir; and provided I get any information, I can send a man on horseback, you know, sir, posthaste to you to let you know, and you can adopt such measures as your well-known foresight will enable you to do."

"Well—well. A-hem!—of course, if you do get any news, it is very well known that there is no magistrate in the county can make better use of it than I."

"We all know that, sir."

The magistrate felt himself amazingly flattered, and, after pretending to think for a few moments, he said—

"Very well. Remember, then, that you stay here on my account just now, and by my orders, and I will be answerable, of course, for any reasonable expenses."

"And as these birds have flown, there can be no use in my staying here in an infernal uncomfortable inn, where nothing is as it ought to be, and damp beds, I dare say. Moreover, the death of this soldier is sure to make a noise, and I must go to put that matter in the proper light; so, landlord, my horse; I'll be off—and as for you, my man (to the soldier), you had better come with me, and I will place you all right with your officer, you may depend."

In the course of the next ten minutes the inn was quite clear of police, with the



exception of the officer who was resolved to pay great attention to the young scions of the personage whom he fully believed to be travelling *incog*, and for the present staying at the inn.

"Of course," he said to himself, "they didn't wish it to be found out who they were, and that fully accounts for many little suspicious circumstances in their conduct. Hang me, if I did not think there was a kind of a—a—something—a sort of a superior look about them. However, if I don't do the civil to them, and make something by it, it will be odd to me. Relations of the prime minister's, and sons of a duke. I rather think this a chance of a nice little bit of patronage."

The officer winked at vacancy, and tapped his nose a great many times, all of which was intended to imply how clever a fellow he thought himself, and what an opinion he had of his own capacity of seeing further into a millstone than his neighbours. Our friends above stairs waited rather anxiously for the result of the scheme they had put in practice for turning the tables upon the spy. When they saw the magistrate and the party of police depart, they really thought they were left alone at the inn, and Cicely and May were for ordering the horses and being off at once, but Markham Brereton overruled that, saying—

"Do not be hasty. This, after all, may be a mere blind. Let us have patience. That quality alone has gained the day many times in the face of great danger."

"The dawn is coming," said Cicely.

"Yes," replied May. "Another day has come upon us. This window, which looks to the east, is already beginning to feel the effects of the sun. Oh, Markham, if me and Claude do really succeed in escaping all these perils, what abundant food for conversation we shall have by, I hope, a happy fireside, in time to come, and in another land."

"We shall indeed," sobbed Cicely. "But I fear——"

"Banish fears," said Markham, "and welcome hope in its place. Fear is a craven, but bright-eyed hope ever whispers to us of promised pleasure, and if it creates not the happiness of the future, it at all events lends the radiance of its beauty to the present."

"It does—it does."

"Let me advise you now both to lie down again for another hour, and rest yourselves, for this night can scarcely be said to have been one of repose to you; and when the day has fairly set in, we will take a morning meal, and then start, according to how we shall find the situation of affairs."

"And must we," said Cicely, "think you, break the appointment with Claude?"

"I hope not. But it is far better to do that, than, by keeping it, to bring his foes upon him. If we break it, depend upon it no one will sooner than Claude divine the true reason of our doing so, and he will act accordingly."

"Yes—yes, you are right, Markham. Oh, forgive me, that, with my many fears, I am such a great charge and trouble to you."

"Forgive me, Cicely, if, in the impatience of the moment, and amid the many anxieties that oppress me, I have by chance spoken a harsh word to you, or a kind one in a harsh tone. I did not mean anything, dear Cicely."

"I know it, I know it, brother."

"There now," said May, "one would think you had both quarrelled, to hear you speaking in such a strain. Come, Cicely, we cannot do better than take Markham's advice, and secure some repose while we can get it. Heaven only knows what fatigues we may yet have to endure. Come, come, I am sure you have not slept one clear hour since Claude has been gone."

"Indeed I have not."

Cicely was led into the adjoining apartment by May, and Markham Brereton once again sat down to wait the coming of those events, each one of which was so important both in itself and in its results to those in whose happiness he felt so deeply interested. He had not sat long there, when a soft insinuating sort of

tap came at the door of the room. Markham listened intently, but made no answer. Tap! came some one's knuckles against the panels again after the lapse of a few moments, and then Markham Brereton thought his wisest plan would be to make no mystery, but, as a matter of course, if any one tapped at his door to say "come in." When he did so the door was opened in a gingerly sort of manner, and the officer's foxy-looking face appeared at it with a disagreeable leer, which he fully intended should be at once fascinating, pleasant, humble, and full of satisfaction and proffers of service. Markham at once guessed, by the look of this man's face, that he had swallowed the bait that had been laid out for him concerning the nobility of Cicely and May, and his own claim to social distinction likewise.

"What is it?" said Markham Brereton.

"Beg pardon, sir, for intrusion, I assure you; most sincerely beg pardon. Hope, sir, you have rested pretty well, and the young gentlemen too."

"Who are you?"

"Why, sir, begging your pardon, I am an officer of police, and you see, sir, as Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman, may be still somewhere in the neighbourhood, I thought, seeing that you were a real gentleman, I ought to stay, to see that nothing amiss happened to you and the two young gentlemen, you see, sir."

"You are very good."

"Oh dear, sir, don't mention that. I assure you that I shall feel only too well pleased to be of service to you. But Claude Duval is a very desperate fellow, and I assure you, sir, from my own personal experience, it is something very far from a joke to cope with him. However, this I will say, that if there is any man in England of whom he has a wholesome sort of dread, it is of me."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir. I would not say so, I assure you, but upon the very best grounds."

By this time the officer had insinuated himself fairly into the room, and the foxy sort of smile with which he spoke continued upon his face, making him a special object of disgust to Markham Brereton, whose natural straightforward and manly disposition was always shocked at anything approaching to cringing or meanness.

"Why sir," added the officer, "you see Claude Duval was nearly taken by me once, and therefore, after such a hair-breadth escape, he naturally enough don't want to meet me again."

"That may very easily be believed, but as our stay here will certainly not extend beyond another hour, I don't see exactly how you can be of much service to us."

"That, sir," replied the officer, "briskly brings me to the point, and if you have no objection, I will do myself the honour of accompanying you on the road, and I pledge myself that you shall be in no sort of danger from an attack on the part of Claude Duval."

"But we may be going out of your way."

"Oh, any way will do for me, as long as I have the pleasure of feeling that I am obliging real gentlemen, and making myself useful in a proper quarter."

Markham Brereton would gladly have been without the company of the officers, but he was afraid, if he entirely declined it, he might be giving rise to fresh suspicion, and undoing all that he had done in the way of convincing that cunning individual of his own and his young companions' rank in life, so he merely said—

"I am not alone, and although in trifling matters connected with our journey I consider I may act just as I please, I wish, as regards your proposal to accompany us as a protection on the road, to speak to the two young gentlemen who are with me."

"Quite right, sir—quite right."

"This safety is to me an object of paramount importance; however, as regards myself, I am, of course, pleased at any proposal that in any way tends to assure me of it. Just wait here for a few moments."

“Certainly, sir—certainly.—A-hem! Won’t I keep my ears open,” muttered the officer to himself.

When Brereton got into the next room, purposely leaving the door just ajar, he placed himself in quite a painful posture of listening, and he had the pleasure of hearing Brereton say—



THE MEETING IN THE CATHEDRAL.

“This s a police-officer, my lords, who proposes to accompany you. What shall I say to him? Would it be at all agreeable to you?—he is in the next room.”

Cicely and May at once understood that they were to reply for the officer’s hearing, not from Markham Brereton’s, and the former took upon her to add to the state of mystification in which that amazingly artful individual already was.

## CHAPTER XCVII.

WINCHESTER IN THE OLDEN TIME.

"It's certainly as you, Sir James, and the Marquis think proper," she said.

"Oh, don't consult me," said May, "I'm agreeable to anything. Only, as there are three of us, we are surely safe enough from any attack from a mere high-wayman?"

"Yes," said Cicely, "and you don't know, Sir James, how we can fight, if necessary; I can hit anything I please with my pistols, I assure you."

"Well, but you know," said Brereton, "if any accident were to happen to either of you, the Duke would be frantic; so, although I think with you, that we are strong enough to protect ourselves, I should like for us to be strong enough to present such an appearance as would prevent an attack, so I vote for letting the officer go with us."

"Do you mean it?" whispered Cicely.

Markham nodded.

"Very well then, Sir James," said Cicely, aloud, "very well. Of course we bow to your decision in this matter, and if you think proper to let the officer come with us, you can take his name, and the Duke or my uncle can, in any way they may think proper, reward him; they can give him money—I think I have some forty or fifty guineas in my purse, and the Marquis as much."

"Oh, all that will be right enough," said Markham; "then I will tell him to see that all is ready for our departure as soon as possible, for I suppose we have all had enough of the wretched accommodations of this place. I have, for one."

"And I," said Cicely. "We are both of us, I assure you, Sir James, quite ready for the saddle again, so get ready for us, and we will be off. These adventures will do for us to talk about another time, and we shall, no doubt, have many a good laugh at the recollection of them."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the officer to himself; "upon my word, I have dropped in with a good thing here, and no mistake, and I shall pocket, I dare say, a cool hundred in cash, besides being recommended to the prime minister and a duke. Well, luck's all entirely. Now, who would have supposed any such thing could have turned up from my coming to hunt Claude Duval? All I wish now, or care about, is, that they may not be going in the same direction as he is, for upon my word, I'd as soon meet the devil himself upon the road."

The officer heard Markham Brereton returning, so he pretended to be not at all listening, but merely looking at the fire and some memoranda which he hastily pulled out of his pocket. At the entrance of Brereton he affected to give a sort of start, as though he were disturbed in a reverie, and then bowing, he said—

"I beg your pardon, sir—I was thinking of some affairs in London."

"You must, at times, have much upon your mind."

"Oh yes, sir, a great deal; but I hope, sir, the young gentlemen are quite agreeable to my escorting you and them?"

"Why, very likely they thought themselves strong enough to resist any high-waymen, but I don't want them to run the chances of a conflict, even should we prove victorious; so I have overruled their objections, and I can only say that your reward for accompanying us shall be fully equal to your deserts."

"Oh, don't mention that, sir."

"Oh yes, but it is proper to mention it."

"I hope you, sir, and the young gentlemen, don't for a moment imagine that I offer to guard you for what I can get?"

"No, no. But yet you will find that we shall not be ungrateful. But there is time enough to talk about all that by-and-by. Will you be so good as to see that all is ready for our departure, for we wish to go on at once. Our horses are somewhere below."

"Certainly, sir," said the officer, with alacrity; "I hope, sir, that you and the young gentlemen will do me the honour of leaving all troublesome little matters connected with your journey to me; I will take care that everything shall be arranged to your satisfaction."

"Take this, then," said Brereton, handing him a five-pound note. "Take this, and pay what expenses we have incurred here."

This effectually completed the conquest of the officer's heart, and he bowed almost to the ground as he took the note, and then he bustled out of the room, quite delighted with the manner in which he managed affairs, so as to make himself a sort of gentleman in waiting to a marquis, a lord, and probably a baronet. It was quite wonderful to see the airs that the officer gave himself in the lower part of the inn. He considered that he was in such authority, that it was competent upon him to say or do just what he pleased; and if we remark, that exactly in proportion as he was cringing and humble above to Markham Brereton, he was insolent and swaggering below, we shall probably convey a tolerably good idea of his conduct. The horses were got out with all possible expedition. The bill was paid, and the change at once pocketed, with a determination that it should be forgotten, and then he proceeded up-stairs to tell his new patron that all was ready. On the road he assumed again the foxy smile, so that by the time he got to the door of Markham's room, he was again the very humble dependant. He tapped gently.

"Come in."

In came the foxy face and the foxy smile.

"Oh, it is you?"

"Yes, if you please, sir. The horses are all ready, and waiting, sir, at the door, and the breakfast is spread, if you please, in the parlour below."

The officer, in his over civility, had the unfortunate knack of putting in the "If you please!" to foregone conclusions, like the footman, who was asked by his mistress if the rain had ceased, and replied—"Yes, ma'am, if you please."

"Very well," said Markham Brereton, "we shall be down directly."

The officer bowed himself out again, and then Markham proceeded to the next room, and held a brief conversation with his two fair companions, at which it was finally agreed that they should take the Winchester road, and at the first convenient confluence of circumstances get rid of the officer, but if he perversely would stick to them, they meant to keep their engagement with Claude, and leave him to deal with the troublesome escort.

"Now, let me advise you both to take a good breakfast," said Markham, "for you don't know what troublesome adventures we may fall in with to-day."

"We will do our best," said May.

"Yes," added Cicely. "We will indeed, Markham, and we will not have so many sad complaints for you as usual."

"No more of that, Cicely, if you love me."

They descended the stairs together, and upon the entrance into the parlour of the inn, the officer made so low a bow, that the top of his head almost touched the sanded floor, and then he put himself into such a state of bustle and perspiration, by flying in and out with hot coffee and fresh buttered toast, &c., that it was quite a shocking thing to see him, and the people of the inn really thought that the man had actually taken leave of his senses for ever. Notwithstanding their promises to Markham, neither Cicely nor May could make much of a breakfast, which was by the officer attributed to the costly and delicate manner in which they had been brought up, for nothing now, but the stern and stubborn truth fully demonstrated to him, would have sufficed to knock out of his head the conviction that he was making himself serviceable to some scions of the highest nobility. It was really laughable to see him, and the inn parlour might at that time have been not inaptly likened to the stage of some theatre, upon the boards of which some entertaining farce was enacting, and no comic actor could have made more of his part than did this thoroughly deluded officer. It was a rich and racy treat to see him. When the breakfast was finished the party rose,

and in the course of another five minutes they were upon the road. It was then that the officer ventured to insinuate the question of which direction the noble party would like to take.

"We are going to Winchester," replied Markham, bluntly.

"Oh!"

The officer's countenance changed, for he knew that if upon any road there was a chance of them meeting with Claude Duval it was upon that, and he was quite willing to take all the profit of playing the part of escort to the two noble gentlemen without any of the danger. If they had gone any other way his heart would have been quite light and gay, but to go on the very road that Claude Duval was taking, was to really run the chance of having to do what he promised, namely, fight him. However, he found that he was "in for it," to use his own expression, and all he could do was to put a bold face upon the matter, and do the best he could. He hoped that even Claude Duval would not attack a party of four; so after a time he recovered his equanimity, and it was quite amusing to see how, with an air of determination, he would ride on before, and pretend to look about him, to see if any highwayman was in ambush, and then when the road was all clear, wave his hand for them to proceed. In this way then, just as though they were going through an enemy's country, they proceeded, and now we shall here, in order to go some distance onwards, take up company with Claude Duval and his friend Jack, who were jogging on together. They had, of course, by this time got a considerable distance on the road from the inn, but as yet they felt they were anything but clear from the dangers of the road. Even between them and Winchester, there were to be expected many dangers, for the officers, who all down the road from London, had been hitherto disappointed in getting a clutch of their prey, were, no doubt, concentrating their force in the neighbourhood of Winchester, and thence to Southampton. As they proceeded their anxieties naturally increased.

"Jack," said Claude, "we have troubles both ways now. We have our best and dearest anxieties behind us with Cicely and May, while before us we know there are those who are armed against our lives, and who, for the glitter of gold, would not scruple to murder us."

"Yes," replied Jack, "and that they dignify by the name of justice."

"They do, indeed. Well, I should be comparatively easy if I were quite sure Cicely and May had escaped the suspicions of having any connivance in our escape, but I'm afraid that the next news I hear of them will be, that they, with the gallant Markham Brereton, are in custody for doing so much to enable me to fly from crime to peace."

"Do not fancy that, Claude."

"Alas! Jack, I'm sorry to say, there is too good a reason to fancy it; but I am not one to meet sorrow half way, at all events, so I will look forward, and hope for the best, if I do not in my heart think it."

As they thus jogged on in conversation, they arrived at a narrow lane, close to which was a finger-post directing them down it, and an announcement that that was "The nearest way to Winchester."

"The nearest way is our way," said Claude. "Come on, Jack."

Down the lane they went immediately, but they had not proceeded many paces on, when a loud voice cried—

"Stand!"

"What for?" said Claude, as he drew one of his pistols, and glanced in the direction of the sound.

Just over a garden paling he saw five men on horseback, and one immediately cried—

"That's him! Fire away, my lads! Fire! fire!"

Bang! went three pistols just as Jack and Claude stooped to let the bullets fly over them.

"All's right," said Claude. "Fire and turn about."

He fired, and down dropped one of the men ; Jack did the same, and with a like result.

"Now for it. It's your turn," cried Claude to the third man, but he hastily rolled off his horse, and fled into a cottage that was close at hand. "Off and away!" cried Claude.

Jack fully understood him, and clapping spurs to their horses, off they went at great speed—a speed which they did not relax until they had obtained a good two miles between them and the garden in which the three men had indirectly lain in ambush, not for the purpose of making the smallest attempt at capture, but simply to shoot them down as though they had been wild animals, going about seeking whom they might devour. They saw a boy now before them driving a cow, and Claude pulled up.

"My lad," he said, "how far are we from Winchester?"

"Winton *beant* *this'n* way."

"Not this way?"

"Lor, no. *This'n* leads to Andover."

"Don't try to deceive me, you young rascal ; I saw a finger-post at the corner of this lane, and it said on it—'The nearest way to Winchester,' and since then we have come on as straight as a line. I have a good mind to lay my horsewhip about you.

"*That'n*," said the boy, "wouldn't make *this'n* the way to Winton."

Claude was pleased at this piece of argumentation, and he laughed as he said—

"How do you make it out, then, we are wrong, my lad?"

"Why, cos three fellows only *stuck'n* it up this mornin'—I seed *un* a doin' of it, and *arter* they *gitten* into old Jones's garden, I seed *un* a doin' of it, and I *hurd un* say—'When they *secs* *this'n* it will lead 'em on.'

"Jack, you hear that?"

"Yes, and understand it too, Claude. We have escaped a most perilous ambuscade. I can see by the position of the sun that we are not going to Winchester direct, or Winton as the people about here call it, but I have been expecting a turn in the lane that would have taken us right. They have paid dearly for the attempt though, Claude."

"They have. I don't think that either of the three will be inclined again to assist in the removal of a finger-post from its proper situation.—What are we to do, Jack?"

"Go on until we find a turn to the left. Andover is to our right now, of course, and after all, who knows but, by encountering this lesser danger, we may have escaped a much greater, which was on the high road waiting for us."

"It may be so. Here, my lad, here is a crown for you."

The boy eagerly clutched at the proffered coin and looked astonished at the amount of it. It was probably more than he had ever had in all his life, and he was so utterly confounded and dazzled at it that he was unable to speak, and so by riding on at once Claude avoided the thanks which most likely when he did recover himself he would have attempted to utter.

"More time lost, Jack," said Claude.

"Yes, Claude, but remember that from the first moment of our leaving London we have practised an amount of patience that few in our situation would have dreamt of. With the knowledge that a price was set upon your head, and that society at large, through the medium of its most degrading passion, was attempted to be aroused against you, you might have had a natural feeling of revenge ; but such has not been the case. No one has fallen by our hands, but in sacred self-defence."

"You are right, Jack, and in another land, if we should have the good fortune to get to one, nothing will be more pleasant or consolatory to us than such a conviction. I would not have it otherwise for the value of ten thousand worlds. Cicely, Jack, has implanted in my nature some of her gentler and better feelings.

## CHAPTER XCVI.

## CHILD'S HILL FARM.

AFTER this they rode on in silence for some time; it was a silence on the part of Claude, which Jack would not interrupt, for he saw that feeling was busy at his heart, and that he was plunged in one of those reveries common to him of late. While this state of abstraction on the part of Claude lasted, Jack took good care to look busily out for a turning that would again lead them into the direct road to Winchester, and at about a mile further on he found what he sought. It became necessary now to arouse Claude.

"This way—to the left," cried Jack.

Claude started as though suddenly awakened from sleep.

"Ah Jack," he said, "so I was, as usual, dreaming. My thoughts were far enough away at that moment."

"So I guessed, but it was absolutely necessary for me to recall you from the land of dreams. This turning will, I make no doubt, take us back again into the direct road; and now, Claude, I can tell you, from the character of the country, that we cannot be very far from the old city of Winchester, and it is time we should think upon what we are to do until nightfall."

"True, Jack. It would be rather unwise for us to ride into the city as though we owned it. We might be recognised, and the good citizens in that event might make too much fuss about us, which is always disagreeable; so, like other great personages, we will take refuge somewhere until the shades of evening allow us to proceed. Where shall we go to, Jack?—you know the neighbourhood well."

"I do. There is a hill overlooking Winchester, called Child's Hill, and upon that hill is a farm-house which some months ago was empty. A murder had taken place in one of the rooms, and superstition had peopled the place with gloomy fancies—if we can get there Claude, we might remain concealed until night."

"But shall we not starve, Jack?"

"Certainly not, unless our appetites are over nice, for I have brought with me some bread from the inn, and a bottle of wine."

"Corn in Egypt, Jack! You are indeed a most provident provider. What should I have done without your foresight. Indeed, Jack, one way and another, you have preserved me during this period of extraordinary adventure. How far are we from this house you mention?"

"About four miles, Claude. But who shall say what a world of danger lies between us and Child's Hill; I would that we were there. Claude!—stop! stop!"

"What is it, Jack?"

"Look before you. Ah, they stop to consult."

Claude did look before, and to his consternation he saw six horsemen about a quarter of a mile on the road before him. We say consternation, for Claude, notwithstanding his courage and resolution, did feel an amount of consternation upon this occasion, and which the reader will easily be able to appreciate if he will place himself, in imagination, in Claude's position.

"Officers—Jack," he said.

"There cannot be a doubt of it. Fly, Claude."

"No—no—yet a moment—we have time. The thought of flight is distasteful to me. Stop, Jack, are you sure that they are foes? and if they are, it is only six to two."

"Are you mad, Claude? Is the thought of death or capture, in a wounded and mangled condition, worse to you than the thought of flight?—if so, fly! We have the start of a quarter of a mile. I tell you, Claude, that such a start is everything. On!—on!—on!"

Claude yielded to the impulse that Jack gave his mind.

"The devil take the hindmost!" he cried, with his habitual gravity, turning



his horse's head northward again, and off he went. Jack was close upon his heels, and so quick was the determination to fly, and the flight itself, that they gained nearly half as much distance again upon the six men; who, however, when they did move from the state of surprise into which they were thrown, gave chase with all their might and main. Both Claude and Jack took one glance behind them, and saw the pursuers coming on, and then turning their whole attention to the management of their horses, they fled like the wind along the lane which they had had the misfortune to traverse by mistake, in consequence of the direction-post being set upon the corner of it, by the three men who had made the attack upon them. A mile was passed over in an inconceivably short space of time, and then the first object that presented itself to Claude, who was a little in advance, was the boy to whom he had given the five shillings, and who had informed him of the fact of the finger-post being placed maliciously where it was. Claude pulled up so suddenly, that he brought his horse nearly upon his haunches, as he cried to the boy—

“Do you know me?”

“Oh, yes. You are Claude Duval, the famous highwayman,—don't I [wish] I was. A fellow as said you had nigh shot him, told me.”

“There are six men behind me. Can you hide me and my friend? If you cannot, they will take my life, you may depend.”

“What? They are coming as I hear, a pelting along as if old Nick was behind 'em.”

“Yes—yes—they are my enemies.”

“Come on—come on, don't say *nothin* now. Come on through this'n gap in fence, loike—don't e say *nothin*. *This'n way*.”

“Oh, Claude, Claude,” whispered Jack energetically, “Do you trust to this mere boy?”

“Yes. Remember my reason, Jack. There's much gained by trusting. Come on—come on, don't hesitate. We are now like virtuous women, Jack. If we hesitate we are lost. Come on.”

They both hastily dismounted, and followed the boy through a gap in the hedge. It led to a kind of broken up meadow, in which there was a quantity of litter.

“Now for it,” said the boy as he approached Claude's horse, “lift up his hind leg, master.”

“His hind leg?”

“Yes. There he goes. That is done very well.”

Claude had lifted up the hind leg of his horse, and the boy immediately lifted the fore foot on the same side, when over went the horse among the litter without doing himself the least injury.

“Hold him down,” cried the boy, “by his head; he can't get up without his head.”

Claude understood him in a moment, and throwing himself on the ground he held his horse's head down. The same operation was performed with Jack's horse, and he likewise laid hold of his horse's head, while the boy commenced covering them both with litter, chiefly composed of straw, for a large stack was in the ground. Then he passed out through the gap in the hedge into the lane again, and taking a knife from his pocket, he began peeling the bark from a thick piece of alder. In another moment the six horsemen had turned the winding portion of the lane, and they came thundering on. They had lost sight of Claude and Jack, and seeing the boy they drew up, and one cried in an imperious voice—

“Have you seen two horsemen pass?”

“Two horsemen pass!”

“Ye fool.”

“What? A tall fellow and a little one, and the tall fellow with a grey coat on, and a horse with a switch tail and a spot on his nose?”

“Yes—yes.”

“Then I ain't.”

"Tooral, looral, looral, loo, while the pack I carried,  
Brown Bet she says to me will you—  
Tooral, looral, looral, loo, be to me mar-ri-ed."

"Now, you rascal," cried the officer, "if you don't tell me at once if you have or have not seen any one pass here, I'll break every bone in your skin."

"I seed two, a big un and a little un."

"Really, Mr. Jenkinson" said another of the party, "while you are talking to this boy, who seems next, door to an idiot, our prey may escape us; I beg you will come on. There is no turning from the lane now until you get fairly into the high road."

Without another word, off they all set at a gallop; and when the sound of the horses' feet had died away somewhat, Claude called to the boy, saying—

"Is all safe now, my friend. Can we come out?"

"Bide a bit—bide a bit, and they'll be back again this'n way."

The boy continued cutting the alder and singing to himself—

"As Sally was trudging along the highway,  
A great squire he met she, and to she did say,  
Will you my lady love, sweet Sal-ly, be?  
Don't you wish you may catch me? says she,

Says she,

Don't you wish you may catch me?—says she.

Oh, Sal—ly, I'll buy you a new *goulden* coach,  
Ear bobs and bracelets, *gould* rings, and a broach,  
If you will con—sent my light o' love to be.

Don't you wish you may catch me? says she,

Says she,

Den't you wish you may catch me? says she.

"And wery right of she it war too—a-hem! a-hem! They're a coming."

Tooral, looral, looral, loo!"

Up came the six horsemen again, and he who was named Jenkinson, at once dismounted from his steed, and approaching the boy with a horrible forced smile upon his face, that would not have deceived a cow—

"Well, my lad, so you are here, enjoying yourself I see the best way you can."

"Likely enough," said the boy.

"Perhaps you don't earn much. Now, what would you say to a guinea?"

"*Nothin*—I wouldn't be *sich* a gaby as to say *anythin* to a guinea, as couldn't say *nothin* to I *agin*."

"Upon my word, you are a sharp lad; I suppose, for a couple of guineas you will tell us which way the two horsemen went who came up here just before we arrived. They did not go on. We know that, mind; so now, my lad, here's two golden guineas if you tell us where they really went."

"What? Ain't all guineas *goulden*?"

"Yes, of course. Ha! ha!—upon my word, you ought to go to London. I say, Smith, could not you get this lad a situation of a £100 a year in London?"

"Oh, yes," said another of the officers. "Quite easy, I'll get it for him. Only let him tell us what he can, and he shall have it. Would you like a situation of a £100 a year, my boy?"

"How much is it a week?"

"About £2."

"And how many shillings?"

"Forty exactly."

"Ah, then, I couldn't do it. I gets a shilling a week here for minding the cows, and it's as much as I can do from *marning* to night, so you see if I was to *yarn* forty times as much I should break down, dang it if I shouldn't."

"But don't you know, my lad, in London people are paid more in proportion as they do little."

"Dang it, what a place that'n must be. Why, I'd swing on a gate all day and eat apples, dang it if I wouldn't."

"Well, well, you shall have what you like, and do what you like. Only tell us which way the men have gone."

"Lor, what a pity."



CICELY SHOT BY THE MILITARY IN THE CATHEDRAL.

"What's a pity?"

"Why, ain't it a pity as I don't know, cos if I did, do you think I'd be sich a gaby as not to tell, and I should think not."

"This fellow," said the officer who had just questioned the boy, to the others, "is either as cunning as we are, or he is the greatest fool I ever came near. Which do you think?"

The officer looked puzzled, while the boy continued cutting the bark off the piece of alder tree. After a brief, but rather crest-fallen consultation together, they agreed to go back again towards Winchester as quickly as they could, and there make a report of the fact, that the parties they wished to capture were in the immediate neighbourhood, and that by keeping a good look-out they might be taken. With this resolve, after casting sundry sour and menacing looks upon the boy, off they went at a hard trot. This time they were gone in earnest, and the boy knew it. He only waited until the sound of the horses' feet became rather faint, and then he climbed up into the alder tree from which he had cut the piece that had made him seem to have an occupation.

"One—two—three—four—five—six!" he counted, as he saw the horsemen ride away. "They are all gone. I shouldn't have wondered now a bit if them chaps had left one of their lot behind to watch what I was about. Lor, they ain't half awake—*that'n* as spoke to me war a *reglar gaby* he war."

The boy descended from the tree, and then he called out—

"All's right, they *is* gone at last—all's right.

Claude at once sprung to his feet, and so did Jack. The two horses, finding themselves no longer held down, rose likewise and gave themselves a good shake.

"Are they out of sight?" said Jack.

"Yes," said the boy, "and out of hearing too. Lor bless you, they *is* a poor lot. Now, mind, they *is* gone on the road to Winchester—I heard one say so."

"My boy," said Claude, "we are indebted to you for our lives. We, no doubt, should have killed some of them; but six to two are long odds when fire-arms are in the case, and very likely this lane would have been the stage upon which the last scene of my career would have been enacted. What can I do to recompense you?"

"*Nothin.*"

"Nay, but I have an ardent desire to do something."

"You can't do nothin. I ain't got no friends and no relations, and I gets wollopped for a shilling a week, so you can't do nothin, you see."

Claude took out a pocket-book and wrote down the name and address of the boy, after which he said—

"Now, if in a month's time I was to send for you to come to me over the sea, and send you money enough to come with, would you do so?"

"Yes."

"Then good bye, you will hear from me again."

## CHAPTER XCIX.

### THE HAUNTED FARM-HOUSE.

CLAUDE and Jack immediately mounted, and, without waiting for another word from the boy, they both rode off down the lane, to find again the turning that led to Winchester. After they had proceeded a short distance, Jack spoke—

"Now, Claude," he said, "our object should be as soon as possible to get shelter until nightfall, for here upon these roads, in broad daylight, we run the greatest possible risk of capture."

"What can we do, Jack?"

"We must get into some house."

"Yes; but some house is a very indefinite sort of expression indeed. What house will open to receive us? Can we not reach the old farm-house you spoke of?"

"Upon Child's Hill?"

"Yes."

"I think not, Claude, I think not. It is very close to the city: but if we attempt it, we must make a considerable detour, and then there is just a chance, and that is all. To the left we must seek out some road that will take us past the city towards two places called Arlesford and Tichborne. We might then possibly come in by a road that would lead us to the top of Child's Hill, and possibly, by dismounting and leading our horses, the trees might hide us from observation."

"Can we do better, Jack?—that is the question."

"I fear that the only other alternative will be to hide in the fields, or get into some copse or thick preserve until nightfall. Which do you prefer, Claude?"

"Decidedly the attempt to reach the farm-house, Jack. There is great risk in hiding in preserves—they are rather too zealously looked after in this country to afford secure places of shelter, except upon some momentary emergency. I will not go against your judgment, but my own feeling prompts me to seek rather, by a circuitous route, the shelter of the abandoned farm-house you mention."

"Be it so then, Claude. Come on. I will find out the way to it as well as I possibly can. Don't talk of taking my judgment, when you know that I prefer yours, so come on."

Jack was especially anxious now first of all to get into the high road, and then to get out of it again on the left, so that he might know then that at every step they were leaving the principal danger behind them, instead of, perhaps, facing it; for although Claude had made up his mind not to deviate from his direct route, except upon the most urgent necessity so to do, he had found so many perils besetting him, that it would have been the height of absurdity to keep to such a resolve. Of late, therefore, he had said nothing at all about it. In the course of ten minutes they were again upon the turning that led them into the high road, and then, full of nervous apprehensions for Claude, much more than for himself, Jack began to creep on a little in advance, to look for some turning that would take them from it again. To any one at all acquainted with the locality of Winchester and its surrounding roads, Jack's policy will be apparent. He wished to leave the city upon his right hand, and so to get upon the high ground to the south-east of it, without entering it. This could only be done by finding some cross roads, but, of course, there were many such, and in a country so intersected by routes as England is, there can be no difficulty, provided any one knows the direction in which his destination lies, in readily reaching it. Presently a beautiful shady lane opened to the left, and Jack paused at it, saying—

"This will do, Claude. The sun will guide us now, and I think that a couple of miles, if we can successfully make them in this direction, will take us quite past the city and its suburbs."

"And to the hill you mention?"

"Yes, Claude. Come on at once. I shall be in a world of fidgets until we are housed now. Besides, the horses will soon require rest."

"They will, Jack. A couple of hours' repose now would do them no hurt. It is especially harassing to them, the variety of paces to which by circumstances we are compelled to put them, and if we have the good fortune to meet with our friends according to appointment at the cathedral, I should like that we all made but one risk of it to Southampton, and in that case we may find our perils at an end."

"I sincerely hope so, Claude."

As they went down this lane, they could not help being much struck by its many natural beauties, and it was quite evident from the character of its roadway, that it was not much frequented. The most magnificent trees arose majestically on each side, and here and there were some rare specimens of exotics, which had been carelessly probably planted in the hedge row, and done better there, than

with all the fuss and attention of a professed gardener. As yet they could see no termination to the lane and each step they took down it seemed to improve Jack's spirits.

"I begin to have good hope, Claude," he said, "that all will be well now. This lane, as you will see by the position of the sun, goes directly in the direction we wish, and if it but continue another mile, we shall be able to think of bearing to the right again, and looking for the high ground."

"I have hopes too now, Jack," said Claude, "and after galloping so far, and through so many serious perils, it would be a hard thing for us to break down and fall into the hands of our foes. I wish to Heaven, Cicely and May had not started from their security in London. Their appearance upon the road has seriously complicated my anxieties."

To this Jack only made some common-place kind of answer, and then they increased their speed a little, and the other mile of which Jack had spoken as a distance which when once traversed in safety, would enable them to think of turning again, was gone over without encountering a single soul, a fact which was fully attributable to the unfrequented character of the lane, and partly to its being the time of day when the country people were engaged at their various employments. The lane soon began to expand a little, and finally they emerged from it upon a broad road. Jack at once recognised it, and told Claude that, by continuing upon it to the right, they should soon wind round the farm, and get upon the high road. No one appeared in the way, and on they went until the road began perceptibly to ascend; and Jack, who was some paces in advance, suddenly paused, and said—

"Behold Winchester!"

He pointed between two trees as he spoke, and upon Claude reaching the spot he saw that the whole city and the surrounding country to a considerable extent was spread out before him like a panorama. The scene, as viewed from that height, was a very fine one, for

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view!"

Jack pointed out to Claude the old grey cathedral, shapeless and massive, looking like some monster hulk stranded, by some freak of fortune, in a churchyard. The numerous chimneys of the convent, and the long expanse of the old palatial residence, were objects worthy of attention, but Claude was as well pleased with the little streamlet, that gave a motive power to several water wheels, and wound through a portion of the city, as anything else in the place.

"And this," he said, "is the far famed Winchester!"

"It is," said Jack; "the much vaunted, puffed old city, that disappoints every visitor. The celebrated old cross is upon the door-step almost of a huckster's shop, and the cathedral, although truly magnificent within, is in one of the worst situations of the city—namely, a damp churchyard, and without, looks more like Noah's Ark than anything else that can suggest itself to the imagination."

"And where are we now, Jack?"

"We are upon Child's Hill, from which by far the best view of the city can be obtained, and from which it looks the best. People should stand here for half an hour, and then go away with the idea of Winchester which here they have received, without descending to particulars. Or if they want to see more, they should make one nigh visit to the cathedral."

"Which I will do, but not to see it, Jack. It will be to look into the eyes of those who are dearer to me than all the cathedrals or all the cities in the world. But where is the farm that is to be our place of refuge? Is it not time that we sought it?"

"Yes. It is close at hand. I only wish that it may be found still vacant. Let us now dismount, Claude, and the trees and bushes will then suffice to hide the horses; or if they are seen they will not be thought anything of, not being mounted, for at a distance no one will suppose them to be anything else but some that are being used for agricultural purposes."

They both dismounted and led their horses for some distance when, among the

trees, Jack pointed out to Claude the old thatched roof and twisted chimneys of the farm-house which they were seeking, and a few minutes more brought them to a stone wall, over the top of which unpruned shoots of the peach, the apricot, and the vine were straggling. There was a door in this wall, which Jack tried. It was fast, but finding a stone of sufficient size to accomplish his purpose, he forced it open, and they both entered a neglected garden with their horses. What a wilderness this garden now presented to the eye, in comparison doubtless with what it had once been. Everything had gone to rot and waste, and rampant weeds had, like tall bullies, waved up their heads in the place of fine flowers, which shrank and withered in such evil company. Wall-trees had fallen and trailed their lengths upon the ground, and the hedge-sparrows and the chaffinch had boldly built their nests in choice flowering shrubs.

"This is desolation!" said Claude.

"It is, indeed; but yet, to our eyes, it should be grateful, inasmuch as it affords us evidence of the continued non-occupation of the place."

"It does; but do you not, Jack, find something that appeals to all your most melancholy feelings in a neglected garden? I always do."

"To some extent, Claude, but here we may safely turn our horses loose. I have secured the door again pretty well, and they can come to no harm while we take refuge in the house itself. We can easily station ourselves at some window which commands a view of the surrounding roads, so that we shall see if any one approaches us."

They took good care to secure the garden door effectually, and then taking the bits from the horses' mouths and tying up the stirrups, they left them to amuse themselves in the garden at pleasure, and made their own way into the farm-house, by opening one of the windows that was within a few feet only of the ground. There was a damp and musty smell of decay in that deserted house, that struck with a chilling influence upon their spirits. But when they had opened some of the shutters a much more cheerful effect was produced, and the place wore quite a different aspect from what it had only a few short minutes previously. They found a top room which had a commanding aspect from its window, and there stationing themselves, sufficiently removed from the actual glass as not to be seen, they gazed upon Winchester, and the many roads coming into it in all directions. They had not been long thus situated, when they heard a drum beaten rapidly, and with the regular movement of a military signal. Claude started; but Jack said immediately—

"Oh, that is nothing, Claude. The barracks are not so far off, but that we may hear the military signals. Ah! There is a trumpet too. I was aware that a regiment of cavalry was here."

A trumpet was blown sonorously, and the drum ceased.

"Jack, I cannot help my thoughts, and they seem to tell me that these sounds have some reference to us. You may depend, now, that the greatest possible exertion will be made to apprehend us, and that, after the desperate encounters that have taken place, and the deaths that have occurred, the military force will be alone considered capable of coping with us. I suspect that news of the death of the trooper has reached the barracks."

"It may be so, Claude, and yet we must not alarm ourselves. Our place of retreat is not known, and we can, from our vantage ground here, listen to and look upon any preparations that may be made against us."

"I hope we can."

"I'm sure of it, Claude—Come, now, allow me to show you what a capital caterer I am, and let us taste the wine which I succeeded in procuring from the public-house."

Jack produced his provisions, but it was quite clear, notwithstanding he strove to shake off the feeling, that his mind was ill at ease. Every now and then the tap, tap of the drum, or the brazen sound of the trumpet, would make him start. Suddenly, then, he dropped the bread he was eating, and changed colour.

"What is it?" cried Claude.

"Hush! Yet no. No one can hear us. Look from the window to the right there. What do you see?"

"A troop of dragoons."

"And—and——"

"Coming this way. Ah! they halt. They place a couple of sentinels at the corner of yon road. On they go. Now they leave two more men. I see what the game is, Jack. They are determined to trace me by some means, and so they are lining every road with troopers. We shall have a more difficult task to perform to leave this place, Jack, than we had to get to it, but we are not beaten yet."

Claude's spirits generally rose with the urgency of his danger, and now that he fully understood the means that were being adopted for his capture, he was better satisfied than before. Jack, as the reader has, no doubt, well perceived by this time, was of rather a different disposition, and for a few moments now his heart sunk within him at the urgency of the circumstances that surrounded him and Claude. He could not speak.

"Courage," said Claude. "Courage, Jack."

Jack sighed.

"What! are you going now to show the white feather yourself, because you chance to see a few colours waving in the wind? Nonsense, Jack, nonsense. We shall yet only achieve the greater triumph by triumphing over the greater obstacles. Come—come! you must not desert me now, Jack, because things look bad."

"Desert you, Claude? I desert you?"

"Certainly not. I only said that to rouse up your old spirit a little. Now you look something like yourself. Why, man, they can but kill us; and death, you know, is a sort of genteel independence with all your wants gratified. Place a fellow in his six feet of earth, and he is the only freeholder whose title no one will carp at."

"I am all right again, Claude."

"I rejoice to hear it."

"What do you propose doing, then, as things have taken such a turn?"

"Waiting until night. I have the highest opinion of the courage of these soldiers, but I have far from the highest opinion of their cunning, and I think we shall find a means, not of fighting and defeating them, but of hoodwinking them."

"Yes—yes!"

"Don't you remember the old saying, Jack, 'that if you can't play the lion, you must play the fox.' That, then, is precisely our situation, and while they play the lion, we will take upon ourselves to come out in the character of sly Reynard, and for me, I am resolved to spare no pains in the enacting of it."

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## CHAPTER C.

### THE COMING NIGHT.

By attentively watching the progress of the soldiers, they could see that at every turning and available spot for accurate observation, sentinels were duly placed, so that admitting Claude and Jack not to be in the city, they must, if unknowingly they had approached it, have fallen into the hands of some of the troopers. They likewise saw two persons on horseback in plain clothes visit the sentinels, and say something to each, and they made no doubt that these were magistrates, who were giving the soldiers as good a description as they could of the parties they were to use their best endeavours to apprehend. When all this



was done, and the troopers were so placed that their officers considered, and justly too, that not a stray cat could pass into Winchester without their acquiescence, Jack looked at Claude as though he would have said—

“What now can we hope to do?”

Claude smiled.

“Well,” said Jack, “I am right glad indeed that you take things so easy.”

“The fox!—The fox! Jack.”

“You still hope to be able to play that character then?”

“Hope? I intend to play it. I have made up my mind to do so. I tell you what it is, Jack, if I did not know that Cicely and May would keep their appointment at the entrance of the cathedral this evening, we would, as soon as the sun had fairly set, start for Southampton by this route and so get past the city; but what I propose to do, is, to make such changes in our apparel and costume as we have the means of doing while the daylight lasts, and then, leaving our horses here, meet our dear friends at the cathedral gate.”

“And then?”

“Why then, Jack, we can, if favoured by circumstances, all get here together, and plan our future progress; but at all events, you and I, no doubt, will be able to return and pick up our steeds again. One thing is quite evident, and that is, that our retreat here is not even suspected.”

“That is tolerably clear, Claude.”

“Well, then, can you see any rational objection to my plan, Jack? If you can, let me know it at once, and I have no sort of objection to changing it.”

“No, Claude, it must just be as you say. Let it just be so, and we will do our very best, as you propose, to play the fox, since such is all that is left to us. Thank Heaven the day is so far advanced that we shall not have much delay now to engender in our minds that worst of all feelings, suspense.”

“True. The sun is already hurrying down the western sky.”

While Jack and Claude are thus waiting anxiously for sunset, we can afford time to take a glance at the progress of Markham Brereton and his two fair companions, and the officer who so officiously had thrust his company upon them. As they proceeded without meeting with anything in the shape of an obstruction on the road, the courage of the officer, which had been a little damped by finding the direction in which they were going, revived, and he began to talk rather large of what he would do if any knight of the road should have the impudence to show himself in a menacing attitude.

“I think,” remarked Brereton, “that you said you had already had something like an encounter with Claude Duval?”

“Oh yes, sir. Certainly I had the honour of mentioning as much.”

“How was it? If it be not giving you too much trouble, I should like much to hear, and I am sure my young friends here will feel likewise interested in the recital.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said the officer, with quite a smile upon his face, “I shall have great pleasure in telling you all about it, and why it is Claude Duval is so afraid of me.”

“Afraid of you?” said Cicely.

“Markham Brereton gave her a look to admonish her not to be imprudent, and she at once checked her ardour in defence of Claude, and added—

“Of course, any one in his profession may well be afraid of an officer of the police, whose official province he knows it is to apprehend him.”

“Yes, sir; but what I mean is, that Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman, has special cause to dread me, as you shall hear—a-hem! Late one night a gentleman was robbed upon Ealing Common of a considerable sum, and he came and laid his complaint before the police; of course, all we could do was to say that we could not help it. But next night another person was robbed, and the next night another.”

“And by Duval?”

“Yes, so they all said. Well, when I heard of three robberies then in succes-

sion, I began to think it was too bad, and ought to be put a stop to. I spoke to the magistrates upon the subject, and they shook their heads very gravely and said—'Certainly it ought to be put a stop to, but if we send a force upon the common, away goes Claude Duval; for some of the country people are sure to give him notice of it, and anything short of a good force is no use.' Upon this I at once said—'Gentlemen, I'll go alone, and I won't say that I shall bring in Claude Duval, but I do say that I will try it.'

"That was courageous."

"Well, gentlemen, it was no more than I felt I ought to do under the circumstances; so at night-fall, in the midst of a drizzling shower of rain, off I set to Ealing Common, dressed very genteelly in black, more like some rich banker or City merchant going home to his country house, after being late at business in the City, than anything else."

"That was to make yourself attractive, I suppose, to the attack of the highwayman," said Brereton.

"Exactly so, sir. What I wanted was for him to attack me, as you say, for what else would take me to Ealing Common?"

"Precisely, Pray go on."

"Well, gentlemen, when I got to the middle of the common I began to wonder where the highwayman was; and after parading to and fro for some time on my horse, I went towards a clump of trees in the distance, and there I waited. Not a very agreeable state of things, you may guess."

"Certainly not."

"Well, gentlemen, in about half an hour I heard the tramp of a horse's feet, and out I sallied, picking my way over the common as though I were only intent upon reaching home. In the course of a few minutes, trot came somebody after me, and, of course, I sincerely hoped it was Claude Duval, for you see, gentlemen, I by no means wanted to have my trouble for nothing; I went to catch a thief, and I wanted to bring one home with me."

"You are a truly valorous man."

"Oh, you may say that, gentlemen. Well, I did not slacken my pace at all, for I thought that if he really meant to come after me, he could easily overtake me, and sure enough he did. At a long swingeing gallop, he came alongside me, and said—"

"May I have the pleasure of knowing who you are?"

"No," said I.

"Indeed!" said he—"you are upon the road. Have you never travelled this way before?"

"Yes," said I.

"Then, perhaps, you have heard of one Claude Duval?"

"Well, gentlemen, at this question, I stopped."

"I have," said I, "heard of Claude Duval, and I want to see him."

"That," said he, "is easily accomplished; you may look at me—your money or your life!"

"That was coming to the point," said Brereton.

"It was," said the officer, "but as it happened, it was just what I wished: I turned upon him in a moment, and in a voice that rather made him start a little, said—'There is a third alternative, and that is to take you into custody, and lodge you in jail.' With that, I made a grasp at him, and a portion of his collar came away in my hand. He fired a pistol at me, and grazed my cheek, and then he tried to escape, but I pelted after him, and caught him by the back of the neck."

"I'll give you £1000," he cried, "to let me go."

"No," said I, "not for the jewels in the Tower."

"And so you caught him?"

"Wait a bit, sir; I thought I had him, but it turned out that I only had hold of his cravat, and he cleanly untying it in front, off it came suddenly. The shock threw me from my horse, when, as you may readily suppose, before I could mount, particularly as the horse got restive, as horses will do when they have seen a struggle

going on, he had got a start of me that it was out of the question for me to think of following him."

"And so ended your adventure."

"Yes, gentlemen. But Claude Duval, they say, has often told his companions, with an oath, that there was only one man in England that he would rather not meet, and that was Jenkins. I am Jenkins, gentlemen."



CLAUDE AND JACK HAVE ANOTHER HAIR-BREADTH ESCAPE.

"Oh, that is your name."

"Yes, gentlemen, an old English name is Jenkins—a very old English name indeed, I can assure you."

"Well," said Brereton, "I once met Claude Duval, but I had not such an adventure with him as you have had. I candidly confess that he robbed me, after overcoming all the resistance I was fool enough to offer to him, for I had not

really sufficient to lose to make it worth while risking my life for the protection of it."

"Ah, but, sir, the principle of the thing—I think of that; that's what I go upon. If we only had a small matter of eighteenpence, you know, in one's pocket, one would not like exactly to have it taken from one by main force—that's my view of the question, sir."

"Well, no doubt you are right, but after all I do not regret my adventure with Claude Duval, for it enabled me to take such a good look at him that I shall never forget him while I live, I should know him again anywhere."

"And so should I, sir.—So should I."

Brereton gave at this moment a sudden start, and exclaimed—

"Good God! There he is!"

"Murder!—murder! fire!" cried Jenkins. "Help!—help. Let me go. Murder!—murder. Oh, gentlemen, don't say I spoke of him. Oh good gracious, let me go!"

As he uttered these words, off he set in the direction from whence they had come at a tearing pace, and he had gone half a mile before he found out that he was not pursued, and by the laughter that came upon his ears he began to suspect he had been hoaxed. Rage and mortification filled his mind by turns, and he paused to ask himself if he should now abandon the noble party that had played him such a trick, or still remain with the hopes of getting something from their generosity, if not from any over estimate of his services. Cupidity got the better of shame, and he rode back. Markham and his fair friends were really in hopes they had got rid of him, and that shame would keep him away, but in this supposition they certainly, as it appeared, reckoned without their host, for back he came. When he got within speaking distance he forced a laugh as he said—

"Well, gentlemen, don't you confess now that I did that well?"

"What, well?"

"Why, the pretending I was frightened, and scampering away in the manner I did."

"So well," said Brereton, that you entirely imposed upon us, and we really considered you were frightened at the prospect of an encounter with Claude Duval."

"Ha! ha! that is good. Oh dear, no, gentlemen, I always had a turn for joking, so, when I saw you had a mind for a little jest, of course I followed it up by pretending to be dreadfully alarmed. I hope the young gentlemen were not put out of their way by this little frolic."

"Not at all," said Cicely.

"Certainly not," said May. "We were too much amused at your consternation to think of anything else."

"Ah now, gentlemen, that is really too bad, when you know it was all a joke."

"For my part," said Markham Brereton, "I don't yet see where the jest lies, for through an aperture in the hedge as we passed I saw a pair of eyes, which, if they did not really belong to Claude Duval, must have belonged to the devil himself, who for the occasion had thought proper to take his likeness."

"You—you—don't—really mean that, sir?"

"Indeed I do."

"But you laughed?"

"Yes, to see how you scampered off I did laugh, and I think I should have done so if a pistol bullet had whizzed past my head. I have been in the army, and it is no part of my disposition to know what fear is."

"The deuce," muttered the officer to himself. "This is some general now, I should not wonder. But if he really saw Claude Duval, and he is dogging our steps—I only wish I was at home."

The thought of the danger that he might be running had such an effect upon the mind of the officer that he turned ghastly pale, and kept glancing around him so suspiciously, that both Cicely and May, if their minds had been sufficiently free and

unembarrassed to admit of frivolity, would have been highly amused at him. As it was, melancholy thoughts of Claude, and what might be his position, would intrude themselves to

“Spoil youth's frolic soul ;”

and it would indeed have been something wonderful that could have coaxed more than a passing smile from either of them at that juncture.

“Mr. Jenkins,” said Markham Brereton gravely, “I cannot conceal from you my impression that Claude Duval is even now positively engaged in watching our party.”

“You—you—really don't—think that?”

“Indeed I do.”

“Then I—I can only say that whatever your own notions may be, gentlemen, I don't exactly advise you to turn and run, although, perhaps, that would be the safest course to pursue.”

“Oh, no—no,” cried May and Cicely.

“Certainly not,” added Markham Brereton. “That is not what we are inclined to do. But, Mr. Jenkins, I make no secret to you of the fact that the safety of these two youths is of more moment to me than my own life, so I propose that you and I ride on a little in advance, and if Claude Duval really meditates an attack, let it be made upon us, and during the struggle they will be able to escape, and if we are both killed we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that they are safe.”

The officer's nose was a little quite a bluish tinge.

“Satisfaction!” he gasped. “After you are dead?”

“Yes, certainly. You are not an infidel, are you, Mr. Jenkins?”

“Oh, no—no—and yet somehow, do you know, I think, sir, we had better all keep together. Don't you think we look much more imposing all together?”

“It may be so.”

Markham Brereton saw that the fears of the officer would, after all, not be sufficient to induce him to part company with them. The fact is, that rather too much had been done to induce him to think them great personages, and it had had the effect of inducing him to think, likewise, that some very considerable advantages were to be gained by staying by them. After a few moments more he even summoned up courage to say—

“Let us look to our pistols, for if Claude Duval does attack us our only chance will be by all firing at him at once, and so, perhaps, managing to hit him among us. Is your priming all right, sir? A miss-fire in the moment of danger is like throwing away your life at once. Only let us all fire together. That will do, it.”

## CHAPTER CI.

### THE SENTINELS.

CICELY was so indignant at this proposal for the death of Claude, that it was not without some difficulty she could manage to control her feelings. One glance at May, let the latter see what Cicely thought upon the occasion, but May placed her finger upon her lips and shook her head admonishingly. Markham Brereton, in order not to awaken any suspicion, did examine the priming of his pistols, a bullet from one of which was much more likely, in case of any conflict, to go through the head of Mr. Jenkins than of Claude Duval. They were now so rapidly approaching Winchester, that Brereton began to look seriously along the road for Claude and Jack, or some news of them. He thought, and justly enough too that if they had been taken or killed by the officers, some account of it would be brought along the road, and so, while he heard no news, he considered that he heard good news. The presence of the officer was a great bar to the free intercourse of Brere-

on and the fair fugitives, but if he, Markham, had known the real state of things at Winchester, he would not have been so eager to dispense with the company of Mr. Jenkins, who really, as will presently be seen, became an useful ally. At about one mile from the city they heard the clatter of horses' feet, and presently a turn in the road disclosed two dragoons coming on at a trot. The soldiers did not pause until they reached the party, and then one cried—

"Our duty is to speak to all strangers on the road. Who are you?"

"What?" exclaimed Markham Brereton. "Is Winchester under martial law?"

"No, sir, but we are turned out to apprehend two men—Claude Duval, the highwayman, and another. We have a sufficiently good description of them to know that you are not them, but our duty is to report all persons who pass our post."

"Allow me," said Mr. Jenkins, taking out a little brass staff from his pocket. "You see that I am a police officer—I am in search of this very Claude Duval; so that, without further trouble, you may allow me and these gentlemen to pass. My name is Jenkins."

"That will do, I suppose," said one of the troopers to the other.

"Oh, yes—yes. Pass on."

"Have you any good ground," asked Brereton, "for supposing that Duval is coming upon this road?"

"We know nothing about it, sir," replied one of the soldiers, "all we are aware of is, that sentinels command all the roads into the city, and that we have orders to apprehend two men of a certain description if they cross our post, and to question all comers."

"Then, he has not reached Winchester yet," said Jenkins. "I wish you may catch him, that's all. I never did know a fellow give so much trouble in all my life."

"Nor I," said Brereton. "Come on."

They passed the two troopers, who, after going a few paces further, turned again and followed them to the city, not with a design of following them, but simply because, having been to the end of their post, they naturally turned, and their pace happened to be much the same as the pace of Markham Brereton and his party. In this manner, then, Cicely and May came into view of the old city of Winchester in the course of ten minutes, and had passed the guards that had been stationed for the purpose of interrupting Claude. Mr. Jenkins began to get curious about their destination.

"A-hem!" he said. "Well, we have baffled Claude Duval. You see what it is to show an imposing front. No doubt he saw me, and hesitated to attack us."

"No doubt."

"A-hem! I suppose you are at home now?"

"At home? Oh, dear, no."

"May I, then, make so very bold as to ask how far, gentlemen, you think of going upon this route?"

"Oh, yes. Do you know the New Forest?"

"In Hampshire—just across the Southampton water? I have heard of it often enough, but I don't know it. It's some distance, that, from here."

"Yes, but there we are going."

"Humph!"

"Do you know a place, there, called Brocklehurst? If you do, you will know that a certain Duke has an estate close by, which we may go and just have a look at. However, we shall sleep to-night in Winchester, for I must not fatigue these two youths by too much travelling, for their time is their own, and my time belongs to them."

"Yes, sir, that I can understand."

"Exactly."

"Then you will put up for the night at Winchester?"

"Yes, and at the best hotel. Will you make enquiry for it? And I hope you

will have the goodness to say, merely, that four gentlemen travelling wish for accommodation."

"I understand, sir," said Jenkins. "Lord bless you, sir, if you were actually to tell me who and what you and the two young gentlemen are, the secret would be as safe with me as though it had never been mentioned."

"For my own part, Mr. Jenkins," said Brereton, who began to think that, after all, the officer's presence would have the effect of covering them from suspicion or questioning. "For my own part, I should have no sort of objection to being perfectly frank with you, but there is a certain great personage who might not approve of my being so—you understand?"

"I do, sir."

"The time, however, Mr. Jenkins, will assuredly come, and that not at a distant date, when your eyes will be open to something that you now have no suspicion of."

"Think you so," said Jenkins; but he added to himself, "I know more than you think for—I know that you are a Sir James somebody, and the two gentlemen are the sons of some duke, and the nephews of the prime minister. Match me for cunning. Catch a weasel asleep."

What a conjurer in a small way this Jenkins was, to be sure. And so, upon a much more amicable and seemingly confidential footing than before, they all trotted into the City of Winchester, and passing down the narrow lane in which stands the jail on the right hand, and the convent on the left, they emerged into the long straggling High Street. The spacious frontage of the Crown Hotel was very inviting, so they made up their minds to make it their resting-place, until events should let them see what was the next wisest course to pursue in the present painful posture of their affairs. The officer bustled about, and saved them all trouble, and by dint of winks and inuendos he impressed the people of the inn with so high an idea of the importance of the guests, that the whole establishment was in an uproar to serve them with the very best of everything. It was a great relief to both Cicely and May to obtain rest and refreshment, and a greater relief still to be able to talk to each other, and to Markham, without the interference of the officer, who did not dream of intruding himself into their sitting room.

"Here, then," said Brereton, "we wait until nightfall, when, with or without the officer, we will make an attempt to keep our appointment with Claude."

"Oh, yes—yes," said Cicely.

"And in the meantime," said May, "cannot some information be got. Surely the military preparations that have been made, will warrant any amount of curiosity concerning Claude. Will you not put some questions to the people here, Mr. Brereton?"

"I will, the first time I can see the landlord. Probably, as I have ordered dinner, he will make his appearance, and then I will question him. There can be no possible danger in doing so, and at all events our minds will not be left upon the rack of suspense."

All this conversation was carried on in such a tone as to defy listening, even if any one had been practising a system of espionage upon them, which was not the case, but still caution, under their peculiar circumstances, could not be said to be thrown away, and the least act or word that might have a tendency to open the eyes of the officer to the manner in which he was being duped, would be highly dangerous both to them and to Claude and Jack. As Brereton had anticipated, the landlord made his appearance, for with a low bow he placed the first dish upon the table. The waiters of the establishment followed with the rest of the dishes.

"Pray, gentlemen, what wines," said the landlord, "would you prefer?"

"Hock, Sauterne, and—and——. We will think of what else."

The landlord bowed and *exit*. He soon returned with the wine, and then Markham Brereton said to him carelessly—

"I perceive that the city is restored to its usual quiet now, by the arrest of Claude Duval."

"Arrest of him, sir? Lord bless you, gentlemen, they have not got him yet, I can tell you, and perhaps they won't—he's a slippery customer, sir. Why the officers here are laying all sorts of extraordinary wagers about whether he'll be taken or not."

"Indeed! We made sure, by the military preparations, that by this time he must have been captured."

"Not a bit of it, sir—I should soon hear of it if that was the case."

"It's a sad thing to see that it is necessary to make so many preparations for the destruction of one man?"

"Very sad, gentlemen—very sad, indeed. Is there anything else I can bring you, gentlemen? We have everything in the house at a moment's notice, gentlemen."

"Thank you; we shall do very well at present. Of course you will let the man below have what he likes at our charge. He is an officer of police whom we picked up upon the road."

The landlord bowed again and again, and made his *exit* from the room. A couple of waiters attended at table, and Brereton did not think it was politic to forbid them, notwithstanding their presence was so serious a check to the conversation of the party. They did not hurry the duty over, but they got rid of it as quickly as they could, without showing any undue haste, and when all was cleared and they were alone again, they one and all looked from the window to notice if the day was waning. If some good and beneficent genius could but have whispered to them that Claude and Jack were in perfect present safety, and only awaiting for the sunset, they would have felt a sensation of satisfaction to which they were indeed strangers.

"The night is coming," said Cicely.

"Yes," remarked May. "Let us hope that all will be well."

"We ought not to feel any anxiety about this meeting by the cathedral," said Markham Brereton, "for if Claude be not there, we may still conclude that he is in safety, but has found out that there is danger in keeping the appointment, while, if he really keeps it, we shall know that all is well."

"Yes, Markham," sighed Cicely. "Reason tells me to be tranquil, but feeling beats an alarm, and will not be appeased. Hark, what is that?"

A trumpet sounded, and there was a trampling of horses' feet in the street below the window at which they sat; upon looking out, they saw a troop of horse soldiers trotting down the high road. They were going to relieve the guards that were placed at the various entrances to the city. This fact was speedily ascertained beyond the shadow of a doubt, and it had one comforting assurance—namely, that if Claude had been captured, there, of course, would be no necessity for relieving the guard. This was so strictly true, that neither Cicely nor May could, in their utmost imaginative terror, make anything else of it. The return of the troop was a thorough confirmation of the fact, and then for a time all was stillness again. The officer, after the dinner, tapped at the door of the room, and when he came in, Markham Brereton thought it was a good opportunity to broach the subject of the cathedral, for the danger of attempting to proceed to it without his cognisance was by far too evident for him, Markham, to think of doing so.

"I understand," he said, "that the principal object of interest in this place is the cathedral."

"Yes, sir," responded the officer, "but if you leave early in the morning you will hardly have an opportunity of visiting it."

"Unless we go to-night."

"Is it not too late, gentlemen?"

"Not at all; I suppose it is possible to get a sight of it for money at any time? I never yet heard of anything in this country that had not its price, and more especially anything connected with the established church."

The officer laughed, as he replied—

"Ah, sir, you are right enough about that, no doubt, and for that matter, you



might, by paying sufficient, lodge in the cathedral if you like; so if you and the young gentlemen wish to visit it this evening, I will make the necessary enquiries."

"Thank you. Just say that if any one will be there at eight o'clock to show it to us, we shall not grudge recompensing them for the trouble."

"That will be all right, sir, no doubt—the clerk will jump at the offer; but I will, of course, gentlemen, take care that your wishes are attended to."

"Not sooner than eight."

"Certainly not, sir."

When the officer was gone, Markham Brereton turned to his fair friends, and said—

"Now the period of an appointment with Claude will be about seven o'clock, and, therefore, as the ice is broken concerning our visit to the cathedral, our great object will be to get there early. No doubt this officious fellow will accompany us. Indeed, he is not now to be shaken off, and so he must take the consequences of so doing."

"He must," said Cicely. "Avarice alone has been the cause of all his pretended civility and proffers of service to us, so that he has really laid us under no debt of gratitude, and as you say, Markham, he must take the consequences of his own scheming. Those consequences we will, of course, all of us, make as light as possible, consistent with Claude's security."

"Exactly so. Now, as soon as the street begins to wear a dusky aspect, I will propose we walk through the town. If he will still hang upon us, we cannot very well prevent him, for although he might appear not to think anything of it, we run the chance of his playing the spy upon us, which would be ten times worse than if we took him with us, for in the latter case we have a command over him, and in the former none."

Both Cicely and May saw what good reasons there were for enduring the society of Mr. Jenkins, and then in about another hour the streets wore a dim and sombre look, and Markham, in answer to the landlord, who came himself to know if they would have lights, said—

"Not at present, for we purpose taking a stroll for an hour in the city."

They all fully expected that upon that news being taken to him, the officer would appear. They were not disappointed. He came, as he said, to offer his humble services to them in the walk, as it would be some time before the clerk would be at the cathedral according to orders. Brereton at once accepted the officer's services, and in the course of another five minutes the incongruous party was in the street.

## CHAPTER CII.

### NIGHT AT THE CATHEDRAL.

As JACK had truly described it to Claude, in a damp and musty churchyard, where in summer a stench arises from old graves, and where in winter the air is filled by the sickening steam from vegetable and animal decay, stands, like some large Leviathan stranded accidentally in that spot, the cathedral. About the exterior of that building there is nothing but what may be all summed up in the one word, ponderosity. Yes, it is ponderous, and that is all. The night was absolutely still. So calm an eve had seldom peeped out from the heavens. Not a breath of air stirred the leaves upon the old elms—the long grass, rank and yellow, upon the grave mounds stirred not, and there was that peculiar clearness in the atmosphere which in this country is usually the precursor of rain. All nature seemed to be indulging in one of those silent pauses which are unnoticed amid the turmoil and roar of life in cities, but which, in the deep solitudes of the country, come upon the imagination with a wonderfully mournful effect, sending the thoughts far back to other scenes and other conditions, and conjuring up to

the mind's eye forms that long since have mingled with the dust. The hour of seven has struck, and for half an hour the sun had sunk in the west, when the dim shadowy forms of two men came picking their way among the tombs. They paused not until they reached the entrance of the cathedral, and then, by the iron railing which shuts out the profane vulgar from too close a contact with the doors, they stopped. Those men were Jack and Claude.

"This is the place," said Claude Duval. "Oh that I could see those whom we came to meet."

Jack did not at first reply to these words. He was looking warily about him, for he keenly felt the peril of their situation, and a kind of presentiment of some dreadful coming struggle lay brooding at the bottom of his heart. When he did speak it was in low and anxious accents.

"Yes, Claude. Heaven send we were far away from this place. Its aspect to me is soul-depressing. We seem to be quite alone among the graves here, and beneath the shadow of this huge pile of stone."

"Quite, Jack—quite. The doors here seem close enough. Do you know, Jack, I have a great admiration for the continental fashion of the open church night and day. Many a conscience-stricken heart, upon the impulse of a moment, might wish to commune with its Maker, but in England the doors of the temples are closed except for the mere formalities of worship. Oh, what a trade is this religion in England!"

"Yes, Claude, but you and I may set the locks at defiance if we please, and I have been thinking that by far our safest way would be to hold the conference we propose within the walls of the building, instead of without. Shall we make an attempt at an entrance?"

"A happy thought, Jack. We go to desecrate no shrine—to outrage no sanctuary. Open the door if you can, Jack. You are better at that than I am. From the interior we can manage, no doubt, to keep watch for the coming of our friends."

While Claude kept watch that no one approached, Jack plied his skeleton keys and soon turned the lock of one of the small doors that led into the long centre aisle of the cathedral. There was no other fastening but the lock to contend with, and when that was overcome the door yielded at once.

"Come, that's done," he said.

"Is it open?"

"Yes. We can keep it nearly closed, and watch from the inside the arrival of our friends. I suppose, Claude, if they come not within an hour, now, you will give them up?"

"I shall be inclined to do so," said Claude as he made his way into the cathedral. "How cold the air feels here, Jack, in this vast shell of stone."

"It does, indeed. But our advantage is great here, now. Nothing is more unlikely than that this place should be to-night visited again, and if it should be it will only be a night-watchman to try the doors. We shall be able to see him coming and to hold this one sufficiently firm against him to convince him it is locked as usual. How strange it is that the very atmosphere of such buildings as these seem to overcome one with a religious awe. I could never make out why it was so."

"Then I will tell you. It is the large space that produces that effect, and nothing else. There is something so grand and majestic in a large covered space, that for a time it overpowers the faculties, and most people involuntarily speak in whispers when they find themselves beneath a roof of extraordinary span. If this temple were dedicated to an Indian idol, instead of to the true God, that effect, which is purely physical, would be the same."

"Is the place growing lighter?"

"Yes, Jack. Ah, how beautiful!"

The moon had suddenly sailed out from amid the clouds, and shone through the windows of the cathedral, revealing its gigantic proportions to the eyes of Jack and Claude. Under the magic and exquisite influence of that calm reflected light the tall columns, the fretted roof, and the marble flagstones, seemed as though

they were all fresh from the hands of the sculptor, while the carved images upon stone tombs came out in broad relief, seeming almost instinct with life. They were men of the world, those two silent spectators of the scene of beauty before them but chilled as were their feelings and sensations by many a rude turmoil of life, even they for the time forgot everything but the beauty and the majesty of the shrine in which they were. A low moaning noise came upon their ears. A startled



MARKHAM BRERETON DELUDES JENKINS BY HIGH-SOUNDING TITLES.

bird that had crept in at a broken lattice pane sixty feet from the floor fluttered across the roof, and then a gust of wind swept round the hoary pile, and the clouds once more crept over the moon's face.

"The calmness is over," said Jack.

"It is," said Claude. "Oh, would that they were here. What a melancholy wailing the wind makes in this vast space. We shall, after all, have a night of

storm, surely. And they are not here. Jack, I cannot remain caged in this place much longer. Are you keeping an eye upon the door?"

"I am peeping out, Claude, but as yet see no one. Let us have a little patience yet. It would be to them a most grievous disappointment to get here after much peril, and then not see you."

"It would be so. It would be so. We will wait as long as we possibly can, until hope itself has fled, and there can be no further likelihood of their coming."

These words had scarcely passed Claude's lips, when Jack said to him—

"This way—this way! Look out, Jack, and decide for yourself if these are them. No—no. They cannot be. There are four."

The reader can come to a tolerably good conclusion as to whom the four persons were, now approaching the gate of the old cathedral. There were Markham Brereton, Cicely, May, and Mr. Jenkins, the officer, who thought he had dropped into such a good thing. As it will be, doubtless, recollected that Markham Brereton had made no attempt to keep the officer from following them, it may be inferred that he stuck tolerably close to them all the way from the Crown to the Cathedral. This fourth personage, however, was a puzzle to Claude and Jack.

"Hark!" said the former—"don't speak, Jack, while I take a good look at yon fellow who is in their company. What, in the name of all that's foolish, could have induced them to pick him up? Why—why it's a police officer!"

"A what?"

"A police officer—I know the rascal's foxy-looking phiz; and should know it among a thousand—his name is Jenkins. By what evil chance has Cicely fallen into the company of such a man. This is a circumstance which staggers me."

"Do not be hasty. Who knows but this may be a something that the party could not prevent. Wait until you know more about it."

"I suppose I must. They pause."

"Well, gentlemen," said Jenkins, to the party which he thought so noble.

"Here is the old cathedral sure enough; but it will be some time yet before the clerk is here with the key to show it, as I told him eight o'clock, you understand."

"Ah," said Cicely, "but the door is not fast."

"Not fast—I wonder whether thieves have found their way into the sacred building. It cannot be—yet—yes—it is so. The door is only ajar; perhaps, after all, the clerk is there waiting for us. Suppose we walk in, gentlemen?"

"With all my heart," said Brereton. "Oh, Cicely," he whispered, aside, "if Claude and Jack should be in the cathedral, for the sake of him and all of us, repress any sudden gush of feeling. Remember in how ticklish a position we all stand."

"Yes—yes."

They all followed Jenkins, who pushed the door wide open, but as Claude and Jack were behind it purposely, he failed to see them.

"A-hem!" he said. "A-hem! Is any one here? Eh? eh? Well, it is a strange thing for the doors of the cathedral to be left in this manner, open to any one, and nobody here to make any charge. God bless me, this is quite unprecedented. Is any one here? Why don't you speak?"

The whole party followed the officer, and Claude then, suddenly stepping up to him, grasped him by the collar, as he said—

"Pray what do you want here, Mr. Jenkins?"

"Murder! murder! Who are you?"

"Claude Duval!"

"The devil!"

"Claude, Claude," cried Cicely, as she sprung forward. Brereton and May too advanced, and Jack went to the little door and looked out. He thought he should be doing the best service to them by placing himself as it were upon guard, so that he should see if any one approached the place. He could not do better than this.

The officer's faculties, were so astounded by the unexpected assault upon the

part of Claude, that for a few moments he remained in a fixed attitude, as though he had died and stiffened in it. At length, recovering himself a little, he gave a yell of despair, for he thought, to be sure, that death would be his portion.

"Fool!" cried Claude, "what want you here?"

"Do not kill him, Claude," said Cicely. "At some better opportunity you shall hear all, and you will then be able to understand how he forced his unwelcome presence upon us. At present, your safety is a paramount consideration."

"Are you quite well, Claude?" sobbed May.

"Quite—quite; but this man——"

"Oh, spare me—spare me!" cried Jenkins. "I begin to see somehow, although I don't quite comprehend it, that I am in the wrong box. Oh, spare me—spare me! Don't take my life. It would do you no good to do that. Only let me go, and I will swear to you, by all that's sacred, that I will not betray you. Dictate to me any oath you please, and I will take it. All I ask is my life—my life!"

"You abject wretch!"

"Yes—yes. I am abject, for I am praying for my life—life that is so precious. Oh, spare me—spare me!"

Claude, by the dim light of the partially emerging moon, that again began to peep through a crevice in the clouds, looked caustically around him, for some place in which to put Mr. Jenkins for security, and observing at some distance to the right an ancient tomb, railed round, and within the enclosure of which was some sculptured figure of an archbishop lying on its back, with the hands closed in prayer, he said to Brereton—

"Hold this man for a moment, my friend."

Brereton did so, while Claude, advancing towards the tomb, found not much difficulty in pulling away one of the iron rails, so that there was thus space enough to allow of the passage of the officer through the bars. He then returned, and seizing him, he dragged him to the tomb, not, however, without some difficulty, which arose from the fears of Jenkins having rendered him perfectly supine and helpless, so that his legs doubled up under him, and he could not walk. Having, however, got him to the tomb, Claude tumbled him in and replaced the bar, so that Jenkins, in the dark, and amid the bewilderment of his own fears, did not know exactly by what process he had been placed in such a cage. He tumbled right over the sculptured bishop, and rolled down upon the other side of it, still roaring for mercy.

"Hark you," said Claude, "if I hear another word from you, it shall be your death warrant."

The officer was as quiet immediately as the defunct archbishop, or bishop without the arch, into whose company he was so unexpectedly thrown. Claude immediately returned to his friends.

"There is now," he said, "no time to lose. We have a couple of horses not very far off, and we must manage somehow to get the thirteen miles to Southampton. Oh, Cicely, after so many strange adventures and hair-breadth escapes, do I hold you to my heart again?"

Cicely sobbed aloud.

"Do not mar the meeting," said Brereton, "by tears. No one knows or ever suspects who we all are but Jenkins, and he is secure. [Come away now, at once."

Suddenly, before another word could be spoken, Jack closed the little door, and shot two bolts that were within, into their sockets, as he cried—

"Lost!—lost!—lost!"

"What do you mean?" shouted Claude, "are you mad, Jack, that you fill those who cannot bear such shocks, so full of terror?"

"I am not mad, I wish that I were so. A company of foot soldiers have just marched into the grave yard, at double quick time."

"Soldiers?"

"Yes; we are discovered, and all is lost."

"Except life and a thousand chances of escape," cried Claude, "see to all the doors, Jack. Perhaps, after all, this is a false alarm—nothing can be more unlikely than a discovery of us. Some guard in this direction may be about to be changed; or, perhaps, a sentinel is to be placed at the gate of the cathedral, but I cannot think that the troop of infantry has any direct meaning as regards us here."

"Claude!—Claude! we will live or die together!" cried Cicely.

"Yes, yes, dearest, we will live together, but don't talk of dying yet, for I do not intend to do so to oblige anybody. Jack, look to your fire-arms."

"Hush, hush."

Tramp! tramp! tramp! came the company of infantry from the barracks, and when Claude and those who were with him really thought that they were about to pass on without any pause by the gate of the cathedral, a loud voice cried—

"Halt!"

"They come," said Jack.

"Hush! hush!" whispered Claude, "let us listen, I am not sure yet, that we are in more than usual danger."

"Now, sir," said the same voice that had cried halt, "pray open the door at once, and my men will search the church; but, really, I think your statement is very improbable. You must have been deceived by some accidental likeness."

"No, Captain Hurst, no," said another person, "I tell you, sir, that I was coming to the cathedral to light the reflecting lamp in the centre aisle, and I saw a man whom I know to be Claude Duval, the celebrated highwayman, walking with another man; I saw him twice in London, and cannot be mistaken as to his identity. His features are indelibly stamped upon my memory, but his companions I don't know."

### CHAPTER CIII.

#### THE CONTEST IN THE CATHEDRAL.

THERE was now no sort of doubt about the danger that was approaching to Claude and his friends. One of those little cross accidents which will at times mar the best and boldest designs, had crossed the fate of those persons who had almost begun to think something like safety was dawning upon them. The speech of the clerk of the cathedral was only too painfully explanatory, and how to effect, now, a successful rally from the pressure of such a state of things, was a riddle difficult to answer. Cicely spoke first.

"Is there no other door, Claude," she said, "at which we may leave the place?"

Before Claude could reply to her, it seemed as though evil destiny had determined to cut off this small hope of escape, for the officer commanding the little party of military, said—

"Well, sir, if your suspicions are correct, you will, of course, have the credit of finding the highwayman, for a sentinel is by this time at every outlet from the building."

"God help us!" said Cicely.

May clung to Claude, and burst into tears. Jack and Markham Breton were anxiously whispering together while the rattle of the clerk's key in the lock of the door, which Jack had bolted in the inside, could be plainly heard.

"Fasten all the doors you can, Jack," said Claude.

"Yes, yes."

Jack flew from door to door, but he found that his services in that respect were not required, for that at which they had entered was the only one left merely to the frail security of a lock, all the others being fast bolted and barred upon the inside.

After fumbling at the lock for a time, they heard the clerk say—

“Confound it; this is the right key. What hinders the door from opening I wonder?”

“Why, of course, the persons inside,” said the officer. “They have fastened themselves in. Get out of the way, my men will soon force an entrance.”

“But stop a little. I don’t want the old door broke, if I can help it. Let me just make sure that I cannot possibly open it.”

He commenced again fumbling at the lock, and certainly Claude might be said to have a little respite in which to think, but too truly desperate was the condition in which he found himself. There he was, caged up in the vast area of that cathedral, with sentinels at each place of exit, and a strong force about to enter and seize him. The desperate plan of waiting until the door was forced, and then making a sudden rush from the place, and so probably meeting death from the soldiers, seemed to him the only chance of saving Cicely from the dangers of an actual fight in the cathedral. He said enough to let them all feel that such was his intentions. Cicely flung herself before him—

“No, Claude,” she said. “No. You fancy that you can die alone, but discard that idea. You shall not do so, for now I solemnly swear by the God in whose temples we now are, that if you are killed I will not survive you.”

“Cicely—Cicely, rely——”

“No more, Claude—no more. You have said that we should live or die together, and we shall. Here are five of us. Let us make what resistance we can, for our fates are bound up together, and may not now be separated.”

“That is true,” said Brereton. “Claude, I advise a retreat to the further end of the cathedral.”

“Do with me as you will,” said Claude. “But you don’t know how willingly I would lay down my own life to see you all in safety.”

With hurried footsteps they now all betook themselves to the further end of the cathedral. They ascended some steps, and pushing open a pair of folding doors, they found themselves in the crypt where service is performed, and the moon having again fairly struggled out from amid a mass of clouds, there was amply sufficient light in the place for them to see everything.

“We can make a stand here,” said Brereton. “By these folding doors we shall have an advantage. I advise that we stay here, and, above all things, let none of us fire until we are first fired at. Let all we do be done in self-defence. Thus, let what we do be done effectually. Fire low, and do not, if possible, waste a shot.”

They formed in an anxious group at the head of those few steps, and just within the folding doors, one of which they kept closed. And now they were so far off from the outer gate of the cathedral, that they could no longer hear any of the conversation that took place outside between the officer and the clerk, but they were soon made aware of the fact that the latter had given up the idea of opening the door that Jack had bolted by fair means, and had surrendered that part of the business to the soldiers. Heavy blows with the butt-end of muskets against the old oak panelling resounded like the reverberations of thunder through the cathedral. In rolling echoes from wall to roof the sound was multiplied until the whole space seemed full of destruction. Bang! bang! went the muskets against the panels, and then a sudden cracking sound proclaimed, the door burst from its hinges. There being now nothing to obstruct the sound, they heard the officer crying “Forward!” and in another moment the troops were within the building.

“Surrender at discretion!” said the officer, “or you will only meet with certain death.”

“Oh, save me!—save me!—The first thing you do, save me!” cried Jenkins, popping his head through the railings of the archbishop’s tomb. Murder!—Help! help! Save me, whatever you do, I am nearly dead already, indeed I am.”

The sudden appeal from such a quarter, produced no small amount of amazement in the minds of all who had forced a way into the cathedral. The officer ordered his men to halt, and sent a sergeant with four men to the tomb, to see

who it was that implored assistance in such piteous accents. Claude Duval and his party might have taken an opportunity of firing upon that sergeant's guard, if they had not fully made up their minds not to be the aggressors.

"Who are you?" said the sergeant, when he got to the iron railings of the tomb.

"Jenkins—Jenkins! Did you never hear of Jenkins? Oh, have mercy upon me!"

"How the deuce did you get into this cage?"

"It ain't a cage, good people. It's a tomb, and for I don't know how long, I have had no company but that of a dead archbishop, and there he lies. Oh, take me out. Take me out!"

"It's very easy to say take me out," said the sergeant, "but how to do it is quite another thing. You had better come out as you got in. I suppose you managed to squeeze yourself somehow through the bars, for they seem all right enough."

It will be recollected that Claude had replaced the bar he had torn away, so that in appearance it looked just as solid as any of the others, and it could only have been found by trying them all round."

"I can't get out," said Jenkins. "Only look!—my head won't go through."

Mr. Jenkins rather incautiously, to demonstrate to the sergeant that his head would not go through between the iron rails, gave it so vigorous a push that it did go through, but the getting it back again seemed to be quite a different affair. In vain he turned and twisted it in all directions, and nearly dislocated his neck. There he remained as if in the pillory.

"Help, help, help!"

"Don't make that row," said the sergeant, "you did it yourself. I can't waste time upon you. I must report myself. Right about face. March!"

"But you won't leave me in this predicament? Anybody might come and knock my brains out, and I not able to move my head from one side to the other. Oh, you wretches, I only hope and trust some of you will catch it, as most assuredly you will. Murder! Murder!—I won't be quiet—that I won't. Murder! Murder! Fire! Help! Murder!"

By the time the sergeant had got back to the main body, some usual military precautions had been taken. A file of men were placed at the beaten down door, and a corporal was busy lighting a large link that the party had brought with them. In another moment, and while the sergeant was repeating to his officer the odd situation of somebody who called himself Jenkins, the torch was ignited, and a dull reddish glare was cast upon the soldiers, and upon the majestic architecture of the cathedral. The officer now divided his force into three portions, one of which he kept in the centre of the building under his own charge, while the other two he sent right and left to march up the side aisles, with orders to penetrate into every nook and corner, and make prisoners of whoever was met with. He then ordered the men he had with him to advance. They had not gone many steps, when a loud voice—it was that of Claude—cried from the position in which he and his party were—

"Halt!"

So mechanically had the soldiers been in the habit of pausing at that word, that they did so for the moment, until the voice of their officer, crying "Forward!" came again upon their ears.

"Advance another twenty feet and we fire!" cried Claude.

"Forward, men. Forward!"

The officer came gallantly on with his sword in his hand, and as the troops seemed resolved to take the party by storm, there evidently was no other way of stopping their progress but by firing at them, and Claude did not do so a whit too soon, for the officer, when he got near the steps, made a dart to ascend them rapidly—he gained half way up, when Claude fired a pistol at him. He turned clean over upon his heels, and his head fell upon the marble floor with a frightful crash, that would have been death without the assistance of the pistol shot that



had entered his lungs. The soldiers halted now without orders, and raising their muskets to their shoulders, fired a volley. The effect of that discharge of fire-arms within these echoing walls was something truly prodigious. The noise was of the most tremendous character that can be conceived, and it was some minutes before any sound could be heard amid the roar of that mimic thunder.

"Speak, speak! all of you," cried Claude. "Are you hurt? Cicely, May, Jack, Brereton."

"Well—well."

All answered but Jack—for, as yet, no Jack was upon the ground; but Claude was so delighted to find that neither Cicely nor May had received any hurt, that he forgot to ask where Jack had disappeared to.

"Fire!" he cried. "Fire upon them. That is right."

Both May and Cicely fired the pistol they each held in their right hand, and with Claude's and Brereton's shots they made four, which certainly did some execution among the soldiers, for there was evident confusion for a few moments, and the link lay half out upon the floor.

"Fire away, my lads!" cried the sergeant, who now took the command of the soldiers. "Fire away, and then rush in upon them and take them."

Another volley immediately succeeded, and then the soldiers made a rush forward.

"Fire!" cried Claude, and four more pistols flared and thundered in their faces. A bullet had just touched Claude's shoulder, and Brereton, too, was slightly wounded.

"Forward, forward!" cried the sergeant. "Give them no time, my lads."

One of the soldiers dashed up to the folding-door. Claude met him, and successfully eluding the bayonet, closed with him, and wresting the gun from his hands, sent him headlong down the steps again, with a blow upon his skull that put an end to his worldly troubles. It was at this juncture that Claude heard the voice of Jack crying—

"Back, back, back! There is safety this way."

He obeyed the summons and retreated. Two more soldiers scrambled over the body of their fallen comrade, and rushed into the crypt. Claude at a venture levelled the gun he had at them, and pulled the trigger. It was loaded, and one of the soldiers fell. The other did not fly, but he turned and cried to his comrades—

"Come on. Come on!"

There was a momentary respite from hostilities, while the remainder of the soldiers scrambled into the crypt, and Claude felt a hand grasp his arm, while Jack's voice whispered—

"Follow me. I have found a door by which, I think, we may leave the cathedral. This way. This way."

"Thank God, Jack!"

"Quick! Quick!"

"Is all well with Cicely and May? Where are they?"

"Here, here!" cried Cicely. "Oh, Claude, is not this horrible?"

"It is forced upon us. Ah!"

The soldiers had hastily formed, when they had got fairly within the crypt, and had fired a volley at the fugitives, whom they could only see in the distance. Cicely had been leaning upon Claude's arm. She fell with a shriek upon his bosom. The musket fell from Claude's hand, and he felt a cold rush of air as an open door swung close at hand. Jack dragged him past it down three or four steps, and then pushing open a little arched door, he dragged him and Cicely through it. May and Markham Brereton, who was supporting her, followed, and Jack closed the door.

"Not a word—not a word," whispered Jack. "I have purposely opened a side door through which they will suppose we have escaped. It is ten chances to one that they will do so, and then we shall be here in security. Hush, hush! if you value your lives say not a word."

"Cicely! Cicely!" gasped Claude. "Cicely! Cicely!"

There was no reply.

"Good God!" said Jack, "you don't say she is hurt, Claude?"

"Savages! monsters! they have killed her! Let me go, and take such vengeance as a maddened heart may take before it burst, unhand me, Jack."

"Claude—Claude—will you sacrifice us all because you must have revenge? Shame upon you if you do."

Probably no other argument in the world than this would have had any effect upon Claude, but this did—it was just the sort of appeal and reproach which he was sure to feel acutely, and he was silent accordingly. The soldiers came marching on, while the shout of the serjeant of "Forward!—forward!" came plainly upon the ears of the fugitives, and then, when he reached the open door through which the cold air came, they heard him cry—

"Escape—escape! After them, my lads—they can't be far off!"

There was a rush of feet, and then all was still for a few moments, after which one solitary voice, at an apparently long way off, called—

"Murder!—murder! Help!—help!"

It was Jenkins, who, being disregarded by everybody, was still in his awkward position, with his head through the rails of the archbishop's tomb. At any other time Claude might have laughed at the predicament in which Mr. Jenkins was placed, but now, with the insensible, and, for all he knew, dead form of Cicely in his arms, the hilarity and joy of his heart seemed to be gone from him for ever.

"Jack," he said, "I must see how it fares with her. I cannot—will not stay here."

"Follow me," said Jack. "Mind the stairs—God knows where this leads to; but follow me, Claude, and we will get a light as soon as we are out of the reach of the door. Hope for the best—she has perhaps only fainted, Claude, from over excitement. Follow carefully."

Jack slowly descended a narrow stone staircase, and Claude, clasping Cicely to his heart, followed him as closely as foot could fall. Markham Brereton and May brought up the rear of this now most melancholy and forlorn procession. Oh, what language could paint the feelings of Claude during their slow and dreary progress down those steps?

## CHAPTER CIV.

### THE VAULTS.

Down, down many steps—old worn steps, some steep, and some so slant that by the foot reaching them unexpectedly a jerk was given to the whole system—down—down—far below the floor of the old cathedral. Cobwebs gathered round their faces—reptiles ran screeching before them, and a damp unwholesome odour came from deeper, deeper still.

"Jack—Jack," said Claude, "where are we going?"

"To safety, I hope. Have yet a little patience. How is Cicely?"

"God! I know not. If she would but speak. Cicely—Cicely! No—no. I tell you they have killed her—why did they not kill me? They have killed my heart?"

"Oh, Claude—Claude," said May, sobbing, "you will kill me too, to hear you speak thus. Mr. Brereton, speak to him, I pray you."

"Courage, Claude—courage," said Markham Brereton. "Do not allow yourself to be beaten down in this way."

Claude made no reply, and Jack in a few moments said—

"We are at the foot of the stairs. Stop all of you, while I get a light. Stop a moment."

They all paused, and in a few moments they saw a faint blue light from a phosphorus match—then quite a variety, and then Jack lit a little piece of wax candle, and held it up so that its tiny beam fell upon the group upon the stairs. Those beams could not have fallen upon a stranger scene. Claude was first, with Cicely in his arms. She was pale, but her paleness was nothing to his. It seemed



as if the blood had for ever departed from his cheeks. It was a paleness nearly allied to that of death itself that he exhibited. The heart of this strong, bold man was nearly crushed and lost. Behind him, a few paces higher up, appeared May and Markham Brereton. They looked all the anxiety they felt.

"Come on!—Come on!" said Jack. "We can pause here, Claude." He hastily stuck the little piece of wax candle against a projection in the

stone wall, and then, throwing off his coat, he laid it upon the damp ground, saying—

“Place her here, Claude, and you will soon, I hope, see that she is not much hurt, if anything at all.”

Claude did not speak, but he slowly descended the remainder of the steps, and then, stooping low down, he placed his insensible burden upon Jack’s coat. One tear fell upon the cheek of Cicely. Jack saw it, but he would not notice it.

“How fares it with her?” said Markham Brereton.

May knelt down by her side.

“The—the light!” gasped Claude.

“Yes—yes.”

“Nearer—nearer still! Thank—thank you, Jack. Nearer yet. Hush!—hush!”

Cicely’s hands were crossed upon her breast, and compressed tightly one upon the other; and for a moment or two, Claude only looked in her face.

“Does she sleep?”

May shuddered, and laid her hand upon Cicely’s brow.

“Cold—cold!”

“No—no!” cried Claude, “not quite cold. Do not tell me that.”

“I have some wine here, in this small flask,” said Jack. “Touch her lips with it, Claude, or try to make her swallow some. It may recover her.”

Claude took the little flask in silence, and gently poured a few drops of the red wine that was in it upon the lips of Cicely. In about half a minute there was a slight spasmodic movement of the throat, and then, after two or three nervous twitches, the eyes opened.

“Cicely!—Cicely!” cried Claude.

She did not speak.

“Cicely—Cicely. I implore you. My Cicely! ’Tis I. Do you not know my voice? Speak to me, if it be only one word?”

“Cicely!—Cicely!”

She did not speak, but she looked up in his face with such an expression of hopeless agony, that it was indeed heart-breaking to see her.

“One word. Only one word!” added Claude, in tones of anguish. “If you cannot speak, Cicely, it is my crimes that have killed you.”

A strange, half-uttered sob, like that of some dying bird, came from her lips, but the sound did not form itself into any articulate one. Claude shook like one wrestling with death, and while the tears chased each other down his cheeks, he tried again to place upon her lips a small portion of the wine from the little flask that Jack had handed to him, but he trembled so excessively that he was unable to do so. Markham Brereton, without a word, took the flask from him, and with a steadier hand administered the wine. It had, as before, a temporary effect, and Cicely appeared to be looking down at her hands, that were crossed and placed one upon the other, tightly upon her breast. Claude placed his own hand upon one of them. It felt like lead.

“My Cicely,” he said—“my only love—my wife, speak to me now.”

She was evidently making a great effort, and he stooped low, reclining his ear to catch the smallest articulate sound, and then, in a feeble whisper, she did say—

“Claude.”

“Yes—yes, she speaks—she speaks! Again Cicely—again.”

A change came over her face. It was like the change upon the fair face of some sunny landscape, when clouds sweep between it and the glorious orb of light. A horrible metallic-looking lustre came across her eyes, and the flesh of the round and beautiful cheeks sunk deeper—deeper still. The breath came in intermitted gusts from her bloodless lips.

“Dying—dying,” cried Claude. “She is dying.”

“No—no,” almost screamed May. “It must not—cannot be.”

“Cicely—oh, Cicely,” murmured Markham. “Sister, speak to me.”

The dark shade came more and more over her face. The cheeks sunk more to the bones, and a startling projection of the lower part of the face did much to alter the whole aspect of it. Claude wrung his hands and wept bitterly.

"She is dying!" he said. "She is going from me. She is dying—Cicely!—Cicely. They have killed you—God! they have killed you."

"No—no," almost shrieked May.

"Look upon her," cried Claude, echoing the shriek. "Look upon her and tell me if she lives—Cicely—Cicely—Cicely, I say. One word—only—only—one word."

There was one faint sighing breath. It came like a zephyr, and it passed away like one. It was the last breath of Cicely. Claude staggered back until he was stopped by the wall, and there he stood, looking more like some figure sculptured upon a monument than a living man. His lips were parted, and his face was of a marble paleness. His matted hair hung in dishevelled masses. His hands were clasped, and all he said was—

"God—God—God!"

He then fell forward upon his face and lay profoundly still. Jack was inconceivably shocked, but May and Markham Brereton were kneeling by the side of Cicely, and their whole attention was absorbed in a contemplation of the dead. Markham gently took up one of the hands that lay across the chest of the dead. It was cold and heavy. He placed it by her side. Slowly then he raised the other, and then with a shudder, he saw that there was a gun-shot wound in the breast, from which the blood was slowly oozing. The bullet had entered her lungs, and hence she had been totally incapacitated from uttering one word.

"Yes, she is dead," said Markham.

It seemed as if those words were a talisman to call Claude Duval to life again. With a bound he sprang to his feet, and in a voice that rung through the vault, he cried—

"Revenge! Revenge!"

May clung to his knees.

"Claude! Claude!"

"Vengeance!"

"Claude!"

"By the Great God!"

"No, Claude. No—no—no—a thousand times no! You shall take no impious oath of revenge—of ill-directed revenge. You cannot tell what hand sped the bullet that did this mischief. Are you to make war against all the human race for one chance act? No, Claude, you dare not—you shall not. Speak to me. Do not look so cold and stony at me. Claude—Claude, I say. Oh, brother—brother, speak to him. Is he going mad?"

"Duval," said Markham Brereton, "recollect yourself. Speak to me."

Claude pointed with both his hands at the corpse of Cicely. Speak to that, he said—I say speak to that. And so they have killed you, my poor girl! He knelt down, kissed the cold lifeless lips. And this," he said, "is human justice!—this is human vengeance. I—I think at times there have been soft places in my heart, but there never will be again—never—never—I am adamant now."

"For the love of Heaven, brother, think of something," whispered May, "to remove him from this fearful condition."

"What can I say?"

"Anything that will occupy him. Lead him to think of placing her in the grave—and—and of prayer."

The emotion of May overcame her, but, wrung with grief as his own heart was Brereton took the hint that his sister had given, and touching Jack upon the shoulder, for he was standing glaring at Claude as if stupefied, he said—

"A grave!"

Jack started.

"A grave for the dead," said Brereton.

After dashing aside some tears from his eyes, Jack looked about him vacantly. He then approached Claude and laid his hand quietly upon his arm.

"Old friend," he said, "shall we not consign to the earth what is now earth?"

He pointed to the dead body. Claude looked at him, and then said in a deep hollow voice—

"It is over!"

"What is over, Claude?"

"Follow me."

He stooped and lifted the body of Cicely from the floor, and carried it as tenderly in his arms as though she did but slumber, and any rude shock might yet awaken her to a sense of pain. He strode in silence towards the staircase by which they had all descended. In vain May tried to stop him—in vain both she and Brereton spoke to him. On—on he went, with his still and cold burthen. Jack snatched the little wax light, which was now nearly expiring, from its place against the wall, and rushed after him.

"He goes, perhaps, to destruction," said Brereton.

"Then he shall not go alone," said Jack. "I am willing to die with him. I come—I come, Claude. Your old and faithful friend will be with you to the last."

"What does he intend to do?—oh, what does he intend to do?" cried May. "Will any of our intellects survive this dreadful night? Claude—Claude!"

Markham Brereton rushed after Jack, and May could not remain alone in that mournful place, so she followed close upon the footsteps of her brother. Claude did not pause, but ascending the whole of the steps, he passed through the little door into the cathedral. At that moment Jack's little light expired. The clouds, however, had swept away from before the face of the moon, and a clear white light was shining in the cathedral. The door at which the soldiers had left the building was now closed, and there was nothing to indicate that the sacred pile had so recently been the scene of strife and bloodshed. Claude strode on until he reached the communion-table, in that portion of the church which the limited requirements of Protestantism had apportioned off for the services of its ceremonies, and then, sweeping off a book and some other matters that were on the table, he laid the dead body of Cicely thereon.

"Let the priests," he said, "who affect to do their duty here to God, do their duty to these remains of one of His best and purest creatures."

"Will you leave her, then?" said Jack.

"Yes, yes. Cicely, farewell—farewell, dear one."

Again he kissed the pale lips, and turning to his friends, he said—

"Well, why do you not go? Why do you linger here?"

"Come away at once, then, Claude."

"No, I stay with my dead. You, all of you, go, for there is danger; but, I stay with my dead."

"No, Claude," sobbed May, "you must come with us. They will kill you if you remain here. This is no asylum for you!"

"I want no asylum, now, but the grave. They have killed the better part of me, for they have crushed my heart. What more can human spite or human vengeance do against me? Yes, Cicely, I will stay with you. Go—go all of you, and God's blessing be with you."

"No," said Jack, "it is my belief, that when the soldiers fail in finding you in the environs of the cathedral, they will return here, and they will fire upon any one whom they may see, in revenge for the loss they have themselves received. I will stay, Claude, and die with you."

"And I," said May.

"And I," said Markham Brereton.

"Claude looked at them all.

"No—no—no," he cried. "This should not be a temple for human sacrifice. Go, I implore you all to go, and leave me to my fate. I have nothing to do with

life now. I pray you, if you love me, think gently and kindly of me when I am gone, and leave me to die with her. But a little space she has gone before."

"As you please," said Jack, "if you will stay, you involve us all in your destruction, but if you leave here you save us. If you like, Claude, you may sacrifice the living for the dead. Say no more about it, Claude."

## CHAPTER CV.

### THE REVENGE OF CLAUDE.

COULD Claude Duval hear such words as these from those attached friends, who had done so much, and suffered, and sacrificed so much for him, unmoved? Could he, without rousing himself to a different state of feeling, accept that one last instance of their devotion to him? No, it was not in Claude's nature to do so. There was a brief struggle between the morbid feelings that the death of Cicely had awakened in his bosom, and his better thoughts, and then the latter triumphed. For a moment he bowed down over the corpse, and his very soul seemed to be shaken by the wild tumult of passion that he felt. Then he rose, and by the pale moonlight, they could see that his face had undergone a remarkable change. For the first time, marks of age began to show themselves upon the countenance of Claude Duval. They all remarked this phenomena, but they said nothing. Claude was now in reality twenty-nine years of age, and he looked ten years older at the very least, when he rose up from that prayer, or vow, or whatever it was, which had bent him over the dead. He turned to his friends—

"You have conquered me," he said.

"Thank Heaven!" said May.

"Yes," said Markham Brereton, "I, too, thank Heaven. Remember, Claude, that you do not alone suffer; she was my sister, the last tie of blood that bound me to the world; I loved her too for her gentle virtues, but life must not be cast away like a broken reed, because those whom we love precede us upon the grand route to eternity."

"Enough—oh, enough," said Claude; "dear friends, now let me ask of you one last, and only favour. It is, that you will not speak to me of her."

"As you please, Claude."

"There will be times and seasons when it may drive me mad to think of this night. Do not! oh, do not, you three, who are the only witnesses to what has happened here, refer to the dreadful scene, unless I speak of it to you."

"We promise!" they all said,

"It is enough. Come away."

Claude took three steps from the communion table, upon which lay the corpse of Cicely, and then he wavered, for he could not think of so parting with the fond object of his only love. With a sob that struck a most painful dread into the bosoms of his friends, he turned, and again sought the communion table, where he bent over the lifeless remains of his Cicely.

"Oh God, can it really be!" he cried. "Can it really be—oh God!"

May would have sprung towards him, but Brereton held her back, saying—

"No, no. The streams of the mind, like those of the material world, will not be stayed. No human power can do so. They must, and they will run their course I pray you, May, to let him alone."

"I had hoped," said May, "it was over."

"And I."

Claude rose again, and walked towards them. He spoke quite calmly—

"Earth," he said, "has me back again."

Jack slid his arm within that of Claude's, and as he led him gently on, followed by Markham Brereton, he said—

“Come, Claude; our horses, you know, wait for us at the Old Farm upon Child's Hill. Come, the night is clear, and we shall reach Southampton yet before midnight.”

“No—no.”

“Oh yes, Claude, “we shall easily.”

“No, I say, Jack; no.”

“But is not such your intention, Claude? In a foreign land you will find that peace and consolation, which in England you will never know.”

“Listen to me, friends.”

They walked slowly by Claude's side, and thus he spoke—

“My span of life will now be short, but until some bullet lays me low, I will be a scourge and a desolation. Society rose up in arms against me, saying ‘no longer this man shall be again a vexation—we will kill him.’—Well, I was willing to go far away, never again to show my face beneath the sun of England, and God knows, and you know, that I made what may be called superhuman efforts to accomplish such a purpose.”

“You did—you did.”

“Well, they would not let me. The bloodhounds came upon my track; I was sold for paltry gold to him who should slay me. And I need not say with what relentless hearts they have carried out their object. I shall not live long, but while I live, it shall be to make war against the laws, and the laws' administrators and executors. My career may and will in all human probability be a brief one, but it shall be a bloody one.”

“Oh, no—no, Claude.”

“Sister, say no more; I am fixed.”

“This is a sad determination, Claude,” said Markham Brereton, “for those who wish you well to listen to. I pray you think better of it.”

“There are moments into which are compressed the agonies of years, and there are moments in which the mind lives an age of thought—I have had such moments.”

“But,” said Jack, “remember——”

“I will remember, Jack,” said Claude, “that you are my dear friend, and that I am your's. Further, then, do not let you and I go in our remembrances.”

“This is sad, indeed,” said Brereton.

“Not sad for you—nor for you, May. Markham Brereton, you love her!—Take her. She is a good girl. Take her, and the best thing you can both do is, as speedily as may be, to forget that there is in the wide world such a person as Claude Duval.”

“Oh! brother—brother!”

“I do love her with all my heart,” said Brereton, “and I will, while I live stand between her and all harm; but we can neither of us forget you, Claude, if we would, and we would not forget you if we could.”

“No, never—never, brother.”

“You will be his Cicely?”

“Yes.”

“Then so far I am content. God bless you both. Perhaps I am mad, but if I am, ask yourselves what I have suffered, and then perchance you will not wonder at it. Come, let us leave this place now. Methinks the air is full of blood.”

“Blood, Claude?”

“Yes, I seem to move as through a heavy misty atmosphere, which has the scent of human gore. This feeling will pass away; but now, as you say, Jack, we must seek our horses, and then—why, then, to London.”

“To London?”

“Yes, Jack. Once more to London. I have been a something to be feared and dreaded. What shall I be now? We shall see—we shall see. The moon shines bravely. How rich and rare it makes the old cathedral to look. One



would scarcely think, now, the creatures that could fashion this were such men of sin, and carnage, and horrors, as human nature may be."

"I will step a few paces before," said Markham, "and see if our route is clear."

"Yes, yes," said Jack, "it will be well to do so."

Markham hastened on to the little door by which they had entered the cathedral, and by which they hoped to leave it. He approached it very carefully, and as he came near to it, he found that it stood open. He was about to pass out by it in order to look abroad, when he heard the tramp of a footstep without. He paused instantly. Tramp—tramp—tramp came the footsteps, and Markham Brereton's watching experience at once told him that he was listening to the tread of a couple of soldiers. They passed the door, and after proceeding a distance of about thirty feet, they turned and came as regularly back again. Being convinced that there was no danger of their penetrating into the cathedral, he approached the little crevice that the door was open, and peeped out. There he saw two sentinels on duty, with their full arms and accoutrements. He walked gently back again to his friends.

"There are sentinels in couples," he said, "posted round the cathedral, and any attempt to leave it would be attended with the greatest danger."

"Danger?" said Claude.

He pronounced the word in such a tone, that Brereton replied at once—

"Claude, if you wish to throw away your life, you can do so. There is the door; but I thought, whatever might be your plans of revenge, that you had given up the idea of suicide."

"I have—I have. Forgive me. We will leave this place if we can. That word 'Revenge!' Brereton, is useful to me. Say it, if you see my spirit sinking, and I shall again recover, and be once more myself. Come on, and let us listen if any chance of eluding these sentinels presents itself."

"They all proceeded close to the door, and after waiting a moment or two, they heard the sentinels coming on with the same regular tramp. When they neared the door, one spoke to the other, saying—

"Stand at ease, Jem."

"Very well; I ain't so chilly as I was. It's a deuced dull road this."

The stocks of the muskets rung upon the stone paving as the two soldiers stood at ease beneath the ancient porch of that House of God, which upon that night had been so awfully desecrated by man in his worst aspect. What were the money-changers in the Temple to those who sought that ancient pile, which had so often echoed to the voice of holy supplication, for the purpose of slaughtering a fallen creature for money?

"Let us listen to them," said Claude. "We may gain some useful information from these men."

Brereton and May stood close together, rather to the right of the little doorway—Claude was the foremost, and Jack was within about two paces of him. They all four kept perfectly still while the following dialogue took place in rather a low tone of voice between the two sentinels.

"It's very odd how they got away," said one."

"Very."

"I can't at all understand it; and our officers think, I suppose, that they must be in the building yet."

"Not a doubt of that, or they would not have distributed their whole force round it in sentinels—doubled, too—while they went to the barracks for a stronger party to look into every nook and corner of the old church."

"I suppose not. I only wish they would come back."

"Yes, this is dull work."

"It is; but what puzzles me is, what became of the woman. I saw her clear enough, and shot her through the heart. I never felt so sure of a shot in my life. I saw her fall back plainly, and if she was not killed by me, nobody ever yet fell by a musket bullet."

"Jack," said Claude.

"Yes, Claude."

"You hear that, Jack?"

"I do. Hush!"

"Are you quite sure now, Jem, that you hit her?" said the other soldier.

"I tell you what it is, I wish this hour may be my last if I didn't. Thinks I, what makes these fellows fight so is this woman, and if one of them is only laid down, they will give in. What makes you doubt it?"

"For the best of all possible reasons, that I saw no woman."

"But you heard that police fellow say that they were dressed in men's clothes, and what's more, the hat of that one had fallen off, and then there was no mistaking her."

"Well, I don't envy you the feat. Now, to tell the honest truth, Jem, I didn't like the job at all, and the only time I fired, I let fly so high that I reckon the bullets went a good six feet over anybody's head."

"Then if I don't report you, my name is not Jem Mason, and I didn't come from the county Cork, old boy."

"You may report and be hanged. Thank God, I have a good friend in Captain Sopwath, and I don't think he will let me come to any harm on the word of an Irishman. I was a fool to exchange one word with you, and I'm only sorry I am posted with you."

"Are you, by gosh? It's mighty soft hearted you are. I only wish I had another shot at them."

Claude's hand had been upon the door for the last two minutes. He did not say another word beyond the remark, if remark it could be called, that he had made to Jack, but suddenly, like a flash of lightning, he flung the door open and stepped out. The soldiers started, but before either could adopt any offensive line of operations, he seized the musket of him who had not murdered Cicely, and wrenched it from him.

"Fly for your life!" he cried.

The Irishman immediately raised his piece and fired at Claude. The ball grazed his side, but he felt nothing of it. To reverse the musket and rush upon the soldier was the work of a moment. The one who had been disarmed by Claude, cried in a loud voice—

"Good! good!"

The other, finding his shot ineffectual, threw down his musket and tried to escape. He got about a dozen steps from the spot into the churchyard, when Claude, by a terrific hop, overtook him. Whirling the musket in the air round his head, he brought the brass bound stock down with terrific force upon the skull of the soldier. There was a horrible crashing sound as the bones of the head gave way before that blow, and the body fell rolling over a grave mound. Claude felt that the blow did not want repeating, and casting the musket down, he was within the church again in another moment.

"Follow me," he cried. "Quick! quick!"

They all rushed after him, and across the grave-yard. In two minutes they were in the high street of Winchester.

## CHAPTER. CVI.

TO LONDON.

THEY emerged close by the Old Cross. May had darted from the arm of Markham Brereton, and was clinging to that of her brother. She looked in his face tearfully.

"You are calmer now, Claude."

"I have begun to be avenged," he replied.

"On—on," said Jack, in an anxious whisper. "To your right, Claude, and walk fast ; we shall get through the High Street to Child's Hill. Quick—quick, Claude, or you may lose all the advantage we have gained."

"Yes," said Brereton, "they will not put up with this defeat very quietly. If we do not soon get clear of Winchester, we shall have more of our enemies than may be pleasant. What a night this has been ?"



CLAUDE AND JACK INGENUOUSLY CONCEALED FROM THEIR PURSUERS BY A COUNTRY LAD.

"And not over yet," said Jack.

"Claude, with May clinging to his arm, made his way to the right as he was directed to do by Jack, and at a rapid pace sped down the High Street of Winchester. They soon reached the little branch of the river Itchen, which is the motive power of some water-wheels, and with the babbling music of the streamlet in their ears, they began the ascent of the hill that overlooks the city. That hill

is mostly chalk, with but a thin upper stratum of loam, which a slight shower penetrates in a moment; and there had been rain enough already upon that eventful evening to make the narrow path up the side of the hill perfectly slippery. Several of our party had falls, but none of them were serious, and after about ten minutes' toil, they reached the summit of Child's Hill. Then the country spread itself out in those sweeping slopes and uplands, so peculiar to the coast portion of Hampshire; and upon glancing towards the city, they could see the lights twinkling like stars, and dimly too they could distinguish the massive old cathedral, dusky and grey, huge and shapeless, against the night sky.

"Follow me," said Jack, "the farm-house is quite close at hand. Follow me."

Jack pursued, for some distance, a path skirted on the left hand by a plantation, while on the right it was open to the meadows and corn-fields, and after a short time he opened a gate, and in a few moments they were all in front of the house. It was no part of their inclination, however, to make a stay at the old farm, as no doubt all the environs of the city would be speedily reached for the fugitives, so Jack led them round the house to the door in the garden wall. The horses could just be seen dimly, but at the sound of the footsteps approaching, they approached in the most docile manner.

"What shall we do?" said Brereton; "two horses don't conveniently mount four people."

"Leave Jack and me," said Claude. "You, Brereton, and May, mount and be off. We will shift for ourselves somehow."

"Fly," said Jack, after a moment's pause. "This is no time to be particular. Let us all go on until we find an opportunity of getting some conveyance. We can walk, Claude, tolerably fast; and Mr. Brereton and your sister can accommodate their progress to ours."

"I will walk," said Brereton. "You, Claude, mount your own horse, and if you fall into any danger, never mind us, but gallop to London. I'm sure Jack and I can walk fast. Now, May, mount—keep your brother company."

"That will do very well," said Jack, "but for God's sake, be off quickly. All our lives may hang upon the events of the next quarter of an hour."

May and Claude mounted, and in another minute the little party left the old garden of the farm-house, and emerged into one of the cross-roads that pursue their way upon the high ground in the neighbourhood of Winchester.

"Stop one moment," said Jack.

They all paused.

"As I thought," Jack added, "if we had staid another minute, we should perhaps have found it difficult to escape. I can hear men ascending the hill side. We have been traced in some way, and we shall have yet a hard struggle for it. Come on."

"At a walk, merely, so that the sound of the horses' feet should not be too apparent, they proceeded along the road which took a north-easterly direction, and they soon, notwithstanding they appeared to go very slowly, left a considerable distance between them and Winchester. Suddenly they heard the grinding sound of wheels rapidly approaching them, from the direction in which they were proceeding, and in a few moments the lamps of some vehicle flashed upon the darkness of the road.

"Some one is coming," said May.

"Get to the road-side," cried Jack. "Leave me to see who it is."

The lights rapidly approached, and the party soon saw that they belonged to a chaise that was being driven at a very rapid rate by some one. Whoever that one was, he seemed to have observed that somebody besides himself was upon the road, for he called out in an imperious tone—

"Get out of the way, will you, or I'll run over you."

At the same moment they heard him lashing his horse furiously. The animal swerved to the road-side. Up went one of the wheels on to the bank, and over went the chaise as easily as possible, to all appearance. But as regards upsets on the road, appearances are often deceitful; for although the chaise may come down

agreeably enough, its occupant may not do so; and in this instance, the man, who had evidently considered that the high-road was made especially for his convenience, rolled out head over heels with a vengeance, that for the time being seemed to completely knock the breath out of his body. The horse lay kicking, but Jack sprung towards it, and quickly released it from its harness, when it sprung to its feet, and was off like the wind.

"Is he killed?" said Jack, as he took one of the side lamps from the chaise, and approached the man who lay in the road. "No: he is only stunned. Claude, this is a chance that may not again come to us."

"How do you mean, Jack?"

"Why your horse, you know, will go well in harness. Suppose we put him in the chaise, and you and May, and Mr. Brereton can get into the vehicle, while I ride saddle. We shall all get on without fatigue, and quickly too."

"It's a good thought," said Brereton; "but what shall we do with this man?—not leave him in the road, Jack."

"Certainly not. Lend me a hand, Mr. Brereton, and we will place him comfortably among the long grass in this meadow close at hand. There's a gap here in the hedge that is just the thing to carry him through."

Jack took the man's head and Markham Brereton his heels, and so they carried him through the gap in the hedge into the meadow, where they laid him down. Jack's private opinion was, that he was very drunk; but at all events he could come to no harm where they placed him, and as they intended to borrow (P) his chaise for a short time, it was the very best thing they could do for him. Jack had released the horse without any damage to the harness, and when he and Brereton raised the chaise, which they easily did, they found that, beyond one of the steps being broken off, it had not sustained the slightest injury. Indeed the step, by catching the ground first when it fell over, had sustained all the shock of the upset, and saved the whole machine. Claude's horse was quickly put in, and May and Brereton got into the vehicle. By a little—a very little crowding, it held Claude likewise, and Jack mounted his own horse, which May had been riding, and they were all ready for a start again.

"I'll go before," said Jack, "and pay the toll-bars, so that there will be no delay as we proceed: and now come on."

He set off at a hard trot, for he knew very well what Claude's horse could do, even with three people in a chaise behind him. At a good even pace of eight miles in the hour, away they went; and Winchester, with all its sad recollections to the party who were taking flight, soon faded away in the distance. They agreed that Jack should be the pioneer of their flight, and he was looking out for some road that would take them still further to the right, and out of the general track, when a loud voice from the road-side cried—

"Hilloa! where do you come from?"

"Winchester," said Jack, as he pulled in.

"Is there any news of the notorious highwayman, Claude Duval?"

"Plenty. He is nabbed at last."

"You don't mean that!—I say, Griffiths, here's somebody from Winchester says Claude Duval is caught at last."

"The devil he is," said another voice. "Well, I told you I thought it was of no use humbugging here any longer. Where was he taken?"

"In the Old Cathedral," said Jack. "The whole city is alive with the news, but they say he shot two or three people before they got him."

"That's likely enough. We had better push on to the city. Thank you, sir. Sorry to have interrupted you. Good night, sir."

"Good night," said Jack. "It's no interruption. I'm very glad I was able to tell you."

"Off went Jack again, and soon overtook the chaise which Claude had quietly driven on, but not so far as to be out of ear-shot, for he would quickly enough have gone to Jack's assistance if the conversation with the officers—for officers they were—had not chanced to go off quite so smoothly as, by good fortune, it really

did. The fact is, they had no suspicions of any one coming from Winchester. They looked for Claude as coming in the opposite direction altogether. After the party had driven on another mile or so, Jack let the chaise come up to him, and then called out—

“Stop a moment, Claude. I want to speak to you.”

Claude instantly drew up.

“This won’t do,” said Jack. “We must get out of this road, right for left, the very first opportunity, or we shall, all the way to London, be running the gauntlet through parties of the police. We might escape them, it is true, but it is not now worth while running the risk.”

“What do you advise, Jack?”

“Why, that we go across the country for thirty or forty minutes, until we get into quite a different line of road. What do you say, Claude—shall we adopt that course?”

“Any course you please, Jack, now. Let me be where I will, it is indifferent to me now. I have all the world before me, and I care not in what part of it fortune places me for awhile. Take the whole direction of the route, Jack.”

Jack did not think proper to make any remark upon the desponding character of Claude’s words, but he merely turned his horse’s head again and went on.

“Let May speak to him,” he muttered. “The women are always best to cope with a man when his heart is sad.”

After proceeding about two miles further, and hoping for a road to the right, which, for various reasons, Jack thought would be preferable, he suddenly came upon one to the left, at the corner of which was a finger-post. It was much too dark for him to see what was there indicated, for the moon was again, as it frequently had been during the course of that night, shrouded by heavy clouds which obscured most effectually its light from the earth. Jack called, however, to Claude to draw up, and approaching the chaise, he said—

“I must borrow one of the lamps to see yon finger-post. I think I know the road, but we must trust as little to chance as possible.

Taking the lamp from its place at the side of the chaise, he held it up at arm’s length, and with some difficulty read upon the finger-post—“To Stockbridge.”

“Ah! that will do,” he cried.

“Where will that lead us?” said Brereton.

“It is the high road to Salisbury, or rather, if I may call it such, it is a high cross-road. We will push right on to Salisbury, and then take our route to London by Andover, unless”—here Jack stooped close to the ear of Brereton as he replaced the lamp in the iron socket, and whispered to him—“unless, on the road between here and Salisbury, you and May can persuade Claude to turn yet his face to the south, and make an attempt to leave England.”

“It would be the best.”

“Unquestionably.”

Markham Brereton nodded, as much as to say the attempt shall be made, and then Jack cantered down the Stockbridge road, promptly followed by the chaise which had formed so great a convenience to the fugitives. This road which they now took was different, very remarkably, from the one they had been pursuing. An air of coldness and desolation had rather characterised the road they had left, but this one to Stockbridge was quite verdant, and beautiful large trees hung upon each side of the way, whose topmost branches at places met over head with a pleasant rustling noise, and even at mid-day must have made a deep shady alcove. At that time, however, when all was darkness around, they made that part of the road look like a cavern. The lights from the chaise whistled along like Will-o’-the-Wisps, lending to the rich vegetation of the road-side a flickering radiance, and imparting to the leaves of the hedge-trees that metallic aspect which artificial light gives to vegetation. Neither Jack, however, nor the party in the chaise paid much attention to the scenery around, for their thoughts were too busy with their own griefs, and hopes, and fears. The picture was to

them a chaos, from out of which were to be shaped the events that were to make or mar them.

"This is gloomy," said Brereton.

Claude started.

"Pardon me," he said, "I did not hear you."

"Hear me, Claude," said May, "I wish particularly to speak to you—I hope you will pardon what I am about to say."

"Say on, May. Say on, sister."

## CHAPTER CVII.

### THE OLD MOON TAVERN.

MAY, now that she had got so quietly leave from her brother to speak was silent for a few moments. It was not that she did not know what to say, but simply because she could not make up her mind which was the best way of saying it. At length, in a faltering voice, she said—

"All that you love, Claude, has not passed away?"

"No, May."

"Then you will, while you grieve for what is gone, think yet of what remains?"

"Yes, May."

"Oh, Claude, I am your sister—your only one. Do you remember when you and I, upon Hampstead Heath, knelt by—by—our father's—"

"Corpse," added Claude; "I remember it well."

"Then, Claude—" she began to weep so bitterly, that her words were scarcely articulate. "Then, Claude, you promised to be father—mother—brother—friend—all to me. You may still be so, Claude. Time, in which we were estranged, has passed away. The years that have gone are lost to us, and time present is but as a dream, but the future is the property of all who choose to use it. Claude, do you understand me?"

"I do."

"Then, Claude, it is that future—which is your property, and my property, and every one's property who likes to put in his claim to the possession—that I would have you use. It is that future, Claude, that lies outstretched before you as a glorious possession which you may make what use of you please."

Claude was silent for a few moments, and he said, in a tone of deep earnestness—

"I do mean to make something of the future."

"But something worthy, Claude? Something worthy of yourself and of those who love you."

"One is dead already."

"One?—One what?"

"One of those for whom I yet cling to life. One of the murderers of Cicely. I swear that—"

"No, no, Claude, you shall make no rash oaths; I feel now moved to say to you what I so much wished to say, and it is, that, for the sake of those whom you still love, you should not now sacrifice yourself to a spirit of revenge. The road is yet open to you to leave England. The boat still lingers by the beach. The ship still tosses on the sea, that will carry us all far—far away. Do you hear me?"

"With all my ears."

"And you will—you will—"

"Have my revenge."

May sighed deeply, and covering her face with her hands, her convulsive sobs shook her whole frame. Markham Brereton, who had said not one word to inter-

rupt the foregoing brief conversation, passed his arm round her waist and pressed her gently to him. It was as though he had said—

“Here is one who will yet be to you, father, brother, and friend. You are not quite desolate, May Duval.”

She felt the appeal and looked up.

“Markham?”

“Yes, dear May.”

“Can you say anything?”

“Hold!” said Claude. “There is no doubt he could say much—very much. Reason and argument are all upon your side, but I am unchangeable. Do not seek to turn me from my course. You could succeed but in one way, and that would be by killing me. Adopt that plan, and you do indeed stay it, but it is the only way.”

“I have nothing to say,” remarked Markham Brereton, “but to hope that if time softens your determination, Claude, you will not allow a slavish love of consistency, as it is called, to stop you from the adoption of another and a better course.”

“I will not.”

“Now, May,” added Markham Brereton. “You have acted quite right. You have done all that any human being could do. You have spoken well, and you have done your duty by your feelings. Leave the rest to time, for I am sure it will bring about the best results. Remember, that wounds freshly made, will not even bear the most delicate handling.”

“You are right,” said May, “I will say no more.”

“That is a great relief to me,” said Claude.

“During this discussion, Claude had unconsciously driven the chaise very slowly, so that Jack, hearing that something was going on, had ridden close enough to hear all that passed, and he felt satisfied that a strong effort had been made to turn Claude from his purpose, and still it had been made ineffectually. He said nothing himself, for he found that the dialogue was in good hands, but when he found that, he rode on with a feeling of great depression.

“Alas!” he said, “Claude will sacrifice himself.”

Jack was now very fearful that some one might be met upon the road whom Claude would take it into his head to include in his plan of general revenge against all who in any way had been instrumental to the death of Cicely, and he looked out very anxiously as he proceeded. The road for four miles further was solitary, but suddenly the lights of the chaise flashed upon a horseman, who seemed to be pausing for its approach by the road side. They all saw this man. Jack, as he passed him, raising his voice, said—

“Good night.”

The man made no reply, and in another moment they no longer saw him. Claude, when May looked into his face again, was very pale. They went on without making any remark about this stranger, until the lights of the chaise flashed upon him again, or just such another figure upon horseback, standing by the road side. Jack was taken by surprise, swerved a little, but quickly recovering himself, he cried—

“Who are you?”

There was no reply.

“Stop, Jack,” cried Claude, “I will suffer this no longer.”

“As he spoke he threw the reins to Brereton, and stood up in the chaise.

“Who are you?” he cried. “Speak, or I fire.”

There was no reply, and Claude fired. The chaise had got on some dozen yards past the spot where the figure had been seen, so that it was, to tell the truth, rather a random shot, but yet Claude took it, and then, before either May or Markham Brereton could stop him, he sprang out of the chaise, and snatching one of the lamps from the side of it, he rushed back to the spot where the horseman had appeared. Jack, being mounted, followed him instantly.



"Hold, Claude! Hold!" said Jack. "Do nothing hastily; you may be running into some snare set on purpose for you."

Claude held up the lamp. There was not the smallest vestige of any one there, or of any one having been there.

"This is strange," said Jack.

"Strange, indeed," said Claude. "Hold the lamp, Jack."

Jack did so, and Claude scrambled to the top of a high bank crowned by a thicket, with here and there young elms shooting up from amid the blackthorn. He looked earnestly around him, but he saw nothing but the quiet undisturbed vegetation.

"Escaped?" said Jack.

"Perhaps so," replied Claude.

He then descended the bank, and slowly walked back to the chaise again, into which he got without a word.

"You found no one," said May.

"No. Into thin air that horseman seemed to dissolve. I am not superstitious, but yet it is very, very strange. Markham, do you believe in the supernatural at all?"

"If you mean," said Brereton, "to ask me if I incline to the opinion that the man on horseback was a ghost, Claude, I answer no as unhesitatingly as you like. Shall I drive?"

"Aye, if you will."

Claude made a movement to give Markham Brereton his place, but the latter checked him, saying—

"I shall do very well here. You watch the hedge as we go along. Who knows but we may see our mysterious mounted acquaintance again. You too, May, keep watch; I shall have enough to do to attend to the horse."

"In this way they all went on for another mile, when Claude cried—

"There—there he is again!"

Brereton pulled up.

"Stop! Fiend—devil; be you what you may!" cried Claude, in an excited tone. "I fear you not, coward. Do you again vanish from me?"

"Gone!" cried Jack. "He is gone again. Oh! Claude—Claude!"

"What would you say, Jack?"

"Nay," cried Brereton, "this is folly. Are we children, to be thus played upon? You take the reins again, Claude, and I will keep my eye fixed upon the hedge, and with a pistol in my hand, that has never yet played me false, I shall not fear to fire at whatever I may see. Drive on, Claude."

Scarcely had these words come from Brereton's lips, when the most horrible yelling laughter that could be supposed to come from the lips of any fiend, came upon the night. This dreadful yell—half shriek, half laugh—lasted but a moment; but it seemed to have filled the air for full five minutes afterwards with its terrible echoes, and it made all those who heard it tremble with affright. The two horses shook and cowered from the hedges, and Claude, as he grasped the side of the chaise, said, in a gasping whisper—

"Can—can such—things be?"

"God of Heaven!" said May. "What was that?"

Brereton was silent, and Jack sat upon his horse, huddled up as though he had been death-stricken by that frightful sound, which had found an echo in all their brains, and loaded the night air with horrors. There was a pause of some minutes' duration, and then the shrill sound of a distant clock came upon their ears. Claude gave the horse a lash with the whip, and off they all went.

\* \* \* \* \*

In another half hour it was day-dawn. The mystery of the horseman by the road-side, and of the horrible laugh was discussed, and after exhausting all conjecture upon the subject, Claude and his friends gave it up in despair; but yet it made a deep and lasting impression upon the imagination of them all. They pro-

ceeded right on to Salisbury without meeting with any adventure worthy of notice, and at that city they put up for six hours. After that time they proceeded in as direct a route for London as they could. They passed through Andover, Kingclere, and Reading, and finally entered London by the western road without meeting with any adventure of sufficient consequence to stand beside those remarkable episodes in the life of Claude Duval, which we have already laid before the reader.

"Where shall we go?" said Brereton.

"Follow me at once to Drury Lane," said Jack. "We shall find shelter and welcome at the 'Moon!'"

In a few minutes more they travelled from Holborn into that salubrious (?) thoroughfare.

"Our journey is over," said Claude.

\* \* \* \* \*

They alighted at the "Old Moon," which has already been introduced to the reader, in Drury Lane. And thus was Claude Duval once more, after making the most vigorous attempt to leave his evil courses, thrown into the arena again. Was it fate—providence—chance—or what was it that had stopped this man from leaving England as he meditated, and trying, in some foreign land, to regain the good name that had passed away from him in England. Alas! what a thousand pities it was that one gifted as he was by nature, with capacities of a superior order, should, by a confluence of circumstances, be thrown upon the world as one of its scourges—an outcast from all that was good, peaceful, and happy. At that juncture, when his heart was softened by affection—when he had about him those whom he loved and who loved him, and who were ready to share his voluntary exile, surely society should have held back, and said—

"Let him and his go."

But no, the spirit of legal revenge had taken hold of the authorities, and they had offered the most tempting rewards to the underlings of the law for the destruction of this man. It would seem that in this transaction—for it must be remembered that from first to last the authorities knew that it was to leave England Claude Duval wished, they did not say to themselves—

"Let us get rid of this man, who makes our highways dangerous," but "Let us have this man's blood, for he is willing to turn away from his wickedness."

Never had human being been pursued with such inveterate rancour as he had been—and what was the result? One of the most pure and innocent beings that the light of day ever shone upon had been sacrificed, while he, against whom we may say the resources of a nation had been put in motion, escaped, and with a bosom burning with revenge stood free and unshamed in one of the most populous thoroughfares of London. No one had yet gloated over the gold that was to be the price of his destruction. No one had yet succeeded in selling the blood of Claude Duval to the authorities. Disappointment, death, and pain had resulted from the brutal attempt to place society in arms against a human being who had virtually said—

"Forgive me—I will sin no more!"

## CHAPTER CVIII.

### THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

AFTER his great fatigue, Claude slept well. The publican had placed him in a room where he knew he would be safe, for the only entrance to it was at the head of his own bed, so that Claude was very effectually hidden. The comfort and serenity of the rest of our travellers were well seen to likewise, and when

the morning light from a small window in the roof of his chamber, not larger than the removal of one tile afforded it to be, fell upon Claude's eyes, it reminded him of all that had happened for the last ten days, which seemed like the feverish excitement of a dream. There he lay, the man who had eluded the police of a nation, who had bearded and insulted all the force, civil and military, who could



ANTHONY CONCEALS CLAUDE DUVAL IN THE BEAM AT THE "OLD MOON."

be brought against him. There he lay, looking up to that small window, as calm and passionless as though he had been one of the most ordinary personages the bright sun ever looked down upon with an eye of warmth. But this quiescent state was not to last. Gradually the mental functions unfolded themselves, awakening fully to life and energy, and then Claude felt it was indeed no dream that he had passed through, but a fearful, horrible reality. And yet in all his

adventurous career, in all his hair-breadth escapes, there was nothing to chain his attention—all was forgotten save one frightful image, and that he saw in his mind's eye with a distinctness that looked like present visibility. It was the still mute form of the murdered Cicely upon the communion-table of the old Cathedral of Winchester. Yes, that was the image that rose up between him and all other objects, and seemed as though it would for ever so rise up to madden him by the thought that indirectly he had been the means of leading her to such a fate.

"Cicely! Cicely!" he cried. "Oh, God! she is lost to me for ever. I can, in another world, hope for no connection with her pure spirit, for she is with God! while I—oh, horror!—horror!—horror!"

Tap!—tap!—tap! came a sound upon the wall of the room. Claude was still as the grave in a moment. A rustling sound succeeded. Then the click of a small lock, and the night-capped head of Anthony, the host of the "Old Moon," was popped into Claude's little chamber.

"Holloa! captain," he said, "what's the matter?"

"Oh, is it you?" he said.

"Yes; all's right. Are you ill?"

"Sick at heart, Anthony."

"Oh, that will get all right. I know you have gone through what no other man ever went through, and I will venture to say, what no other man ever will go through; but you make yourself comfortable, and always remember that what's past is gone."

"No, Anthony, no."

"No?"

"The past leaves its worse than presence behind. It leaves the pain of the wound that it has inflicted, to fester in the heart." Oh, if I could but forget."

"Humph!" muttered Anthony to himself. "He seems in a bad way this morning, poor fellow. I'll just get up and brew him something rather strong. Well, well—I don't wonder at it, for if only one half of what I have heard about him lately be true, he has had enough to turn the brains of most men. Cheer up—cheer up, Claude."

"I will try, Anthony."

"Then it's as good as done. If a man tries to cheer up, half the battle is over, and he is in a good condition for winning the other half. Be still, and don't, on any account, stir from your hiding-place till I tell you."

"I have no inclination to move just at present."

"Good; I won't keep you waiting."

Anthony was hastily dressing himself while this little colloquy was going on between him and Claude, and by its conclusion, he had completed his toilette. He hurried down stairs, and made enquiries of a scout he kept about Drury Lane as to whether there was anything of a suspicious character going on.

"All is quiet, master," was the reply; "but an old woman has been by the house a great many more times than necessary."

"An old woman?"

"Yes, a big old girl, too, that looks, to my mind, not just the thing."

"Well, Bob, keep an eye upon her, and if anything further should happen, just pop into the bar to me, and if I am not there ring my private bell."

"Yes, master."

This old woman, who was reported to have passed and repassed the public-house much oftener than seemed reasonable, might, or might not, be an emissary of the police; but, at all events, he was not disposed to put himself out of the way about trifles, and leaving to his scout, Bob, the task of watching her, he went into the bar to prepare something for Claude. This something consisted of half-a-pint of the finest old port wine, warmed, sweetened, and spiced, but without a drop of water in it. He took it up to Claude himself, and when, by dint of persuasion he had induced him to partake of it, Claude could not but admit that he felt much better in consequence."

"Tell me," he said, "how are my friends?"

"All right and comfortable. Mr. Brereton is waiting to see you; and as for Jack, he ain't up yet. Lord, what a rum story that is of Jack's."

"It is indeed. Do you know where my sister is?"

"Not I; but Mr. Brereton, I dare say, can tell you. Shall I bring him in?"

"Yes—oh yes."

"Very well; you make yourself quite easy, and I will soon put things to rights for you, and above all things, remember that you are quite safe."

"I know I am."

"That's right; so now I'll bring in your friend, Mr. Brereton, to you, as I dare say he will be up and about soon."

The landlord left Claude to his meditations, and in a very short time he returned with Brereton, who, to get into the room had to scramble over the head of the landlord, since it was the bureau that hid it from observation. Claude smiled faintly when he saw him, and held out his hand. Brereton grasped it.

"Are you well, Claude?"

"As well, Markham, as I can hope to be after——"

He paused, and turned his head aside, for the sight of Markham Brereton again brought Cicely vividly before his imagination. Brereton then spoke—

"We are both afflicted," he said, "from the same cause. I have lost a sister whom I loved tenderly, and you a wife, who in another land might, and no doubt would have been, the solace of your life. But it is as useless as it is unmanly to indulge in long continued grief for the dead."

"Can we help it?"

"Yes, in a great measure. Reason will go far to enable us to help it, Claude."

"Can reason reconcile me to her loss?"

"Answer me a question, Claude, instead of asking me one."

"I will."

"What would you have suffered to spare Cicely pain?"

"Anything in the world. I am one who can calmly bear pain, so that it is only myself that suffers, and not those whom I love."

"Indeed then, Claude, you have answered as well as me. Does Cicely suffer?—No. Is she enduring pain?—No. Death is the end of all pain and of all suffering. It is then, not for her, but for yourself that you weep. Think again, Claude, and you will see that I am right. You know that I loved her."

"You are right," said Claude. "All grief for the dead is perfectly selfish."

"Certainly it is."

"You have done me good, Markham, and I thank you for it. I shall be better now, but while I may succeed in controlling my tears for Cicely, I will not forget that I have yet to avenge her."

"Forget that, Claude. Those who took her life were merely the weak assistants of others; and you sacrificed the actual one of them who did the deed. By seeking for the revenge you talk of, you might as well feel your ire kindled at the musket from which sped the fatal bullet."

"You mean that I cannot reach high enough in my vengeance to strike those who put the instruments of their own barbarous policy in motion?"

"I do."

"You are mistaken, Markham."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You may, in your cool judgment, believe or believe me not, but in this matter of private revenge, where there is a will there is a way; he who seeks the revenge is sufficiently unscrupulous as to the means which he takes to accomplish it, and as to the extent to which it may work. That am I!"

"I see," said Brereton, "it will be quite useless to argue this point with you just now, but I hope that time will soften your feelings."

"No—no."

"You do not ask for May?"

"Pardon me, I had forgotten. When the whole soul is engrossed by one sub-

ject, there can be few others than can for a moment even successfully intrude; and yet I do love May. Is she well?"

"Yes, perfectly; but full of heavy affliction. I have procured a lodging for her with a widow woman in Museum Street, close at hand. And now, Claude, what are your real views as regards the future?"

"I am at war!"

"At war! With whom?"

"With what is called society, Markham Brereton."

Alas, Claude! is society worth your making war against?"

"It has made war against me, Markham, and so you cannot blame me for accepting the challenge. Henceforward I shall do what I can to conquer. I shall take to the road again."

"I regret to hear you say that."

"What then would you have me do, Markham? What is there left for me but the road? I have once taken to that pursuit, and it is evidently the determination that society has come to, to keep me in it. I am as one to so many, that it is impossible for me to resist its behests. So, to the road again go I."

"Alas! alas!"

"Do not pity me. Some friendly hand will lay me low; and he who sends a hatchet now through the brains of Gentleman Jack, as they will call me, will not incur any great penalty. With my last breath I will forgive him."

Markham Brereton saw that there was nothing further he could say that would be at all likely to influence Claude, at all events at present, so he gave up the matter in utter despair. Claude seemed to see exactly the state of feelings of Markham, and after a few moments' pause he said to him—

"Remember that I have no tie now to bind me to the world. If you had not loved my sister as you do, I should, perhaps, have thought it necessary to live for her, but as it is——"

Markham Brereton held up his hand and said—

"Hush."

"What is it?" said Claude.

"I hope nothing that concerns you, but I heard just now a small bell ring violently—there it is again."

"It does concern me."

Scarcely had Claude pronounced these words, than the door at the head of the landlord's bed opened, and Anthony made his appearance.

"No hurry," he said. "Slow and sure, but the grabs are upon us."

"Ah!"

Claude started up and laid his hands upon his pistols.

"No, no," said Anthony, "they will do sometimes, but not now. We must play the fox's game, not the lion's. Come along, Claude, and you, Mr. Brereton, if you will lend me a hand we may manage matters."

"Anything that I can do," said Brereton.

"This way. Now, what I want you to be at is to help me to move my bedstead to another part of the room, so as to leave the door opening to Claude's chamber quite clear to be seen. I will bestow him somewhere else, and if you will then occupy his bed for half an hour, all will be right."

There was no time for anything in the shape of delay. Brereton and Claude both exerted themselves to do what was necessary, and the arrangements of the landlord were completed in a few moments. Claude dressed himself hurriedly, and while Brereton undressed and got into the bed, he followed the landlord from the room. The small bell rung again sharply.

"Ah, there is no time to lose," said Anthony. "Come on, Claude, I will place you where the devil himself would find it no easy matter to find you. This way—this way, Claude. After me."

## CHAPTER CIX.

## A SEARCH AND A VISIT.

WE may mention that the scout who was placed by Anthony upon the watch in Drury Lane, had soon seen good reason to believe that the seeming old woman who had passed the "Old Moon" so repeatedly, was none other than an officer of the police in disguise, and such being the fact, he, of course, was not slow in giving Anthony notice of it. He rung the small bell, which was a warning of danger in the "Old Moon," and then going to the street again, he saw enough to fully confirm his suspicions. The pretended female, upon reaching the corner of a court in Drury Lane, was joined by six men, and after a brief consultation they all came at a brisk pace towards the public house. Now, in those days, and in these likewise, for all we know to the contrary, officers of the police prided themselves very much upon the manner in which they were able at a glance to know a thief from a true man, and it is probable enough that practice and experience may have supplied them with a kind of tact in that way; but admitting so much, there is another fact in connection with the subject that deserves notice, and that is the extraordinary skill and cunning with which thieves will scent out an officer. Let the police functionary conceal himself how he will, he is sure to have a something about him that proclaims his calling, and if this was the case long ago, when officers really took pains to conceal their profession, and put on good disguises, what must it be now, when a policeman, if he disguises himself ever so cunningly, always takes care to keep on the police boots, and generally police inexpressibles. These Solons of the "force" must be of the opinion of those wild animals, who, when they are chased, hide their heads in some hole and fancy themselves out of sight because they cannot themselves see, forgetting that they leave out their tails to tell the secret of their whereabouts. But to return to the scout. That individual no sooner saw that assurance was doubly sure, than he made his way to the private bell again, and gave it a vigorous pull. This was the peal that had convinced Anthony that the danger was getting really imminent. We shall now, therefore, again accompany the landlord and Claude. Duval thought that he was to be secreted in some of the underground regions of the house, and he was surprised when the landlord did not take him down stairs at all, but only traversed with him a long landing on the upper floor until he came to a room that was used as a kind of store for keeping all sorts of out-of-the-way goods. Old butter firkins, jars, bottles, baskets, broken furniture, cheeses, and such a *melange* of matters as might be supposed to be partly the refuse and partly the stock of a public-house, was there to be found. The Old Moon was one of those ancient wooden houses of which now so few remain in London. It occupied the space of at least two modern residences, in which everything is done that can be done to save a foot of land, and the consequence was, that it had in it such a number of intricate passages, that it would have taken a month's residence within its precincts thoroughly to comprehend it. Then, in the construction of the old house, about as much timber was used as would now-a-days suffice for an ordinary street of "eligible dwelling houses." In almost all the rooms there were huge beams, standing up like giants, to support the walls and the roofing, while across many of the roofs, just about a foot or so from the ceiling, would run a beam of extraordinary thickness, which was supposed to hold the walls together in some way, and by adding weight to add solidity and security to the structure. It is with one of these horizontal beams that we have now to do in the attic full of miscellaneous property to which we have already alluded. This tremendous beam of wood, which was about three feet square, did duty as a shelf as well as a stay to the house, for on the upper side of it were placed a number of small articles, and several hooks and nails driven into the side of it, served to suspend some hams and bottles of odd-looking liquids with greasy cords round their necks. To the surprise of Claude, the landlord commenced stripping this beam of all its various encumbrances.

"What are you about?" said Claude.

"You must hide here."

"Hide here?"

Claude looked around him and shook his head.

"You don't see any likely place at all here, do you now?" said Anthony.

"I confess I do not."

"Well, I'm glad of that, for if you don't see it others may not. Come, look at this beam of wood, it has a solid look about it."

"Ah, it is hollow."

"Yes, when I said solid, of course, that did the business. Behold, Claude. I don't think you will have much chance of being found out here."

Anthony had cleared the beam of all obstructions, and then, by the aid of a small chisel that he picked up from the floor of the attic, he took out the side of the beam, showing that, in lieu of being solid, it was only composed of four pieces of wood, not thicker, each of them, than floor boarding. The space in the inside was quite large enough for a man of a size beyond Claude's, and he saw in a moment that he could lie down within it, and suffer no personal inconvenience.

"Will that do?" said Anthony.

"Yes—yes. I have my pistols with me, though, so that, if by any chance they should find me out, they shall not obtain a bloodless victory."

"I don't think you will have occasion for them. No less than five of the best men on the road have found shelter and safety here at different times, and it will be odd if it don't serve your turn for once. Now for it. Clamber up.—Don't mind me."

Anthony stooped down with his hands upon his knees, so as to form a bank for Claude to clamber up by, and he did so in a moment.

"All's right," said Anthony, when he saw him lying down within the seeming beam. "Now I'll cover you up, and don't stir until you hear me say 'All's right, Claude.'"

"I will not."

Anthony immediately replaced the side of the beam, and then silently, but rapidly, proceeded to load it again with all the articles he had displaced from it. He carefully placed dust in the seam where the boards joined, and in the space of about two minutes he had completed his arrangements, and instantly left the attic.

"Master!—Master!" cried a voice from below. "Master!"

"Aye!—Aye!"

"Here's some gentlemen want to see you."

"To see me? I'm coming."

When Anthony reached the lower part of the house, he was met by Jack in the costume of a waiter, for he had put on such a disguise for the express purpose of preventing his recognition by any one. He was even now afraid that the officers, who were not far off, would hear him if he said anything confidentially, so he kept up his assumed character in speaking to Anthony.

"Master," he said. "You are wanted directly."

"Indeed, Sam. Who is it?"

"Some gentlemen, sir; and they have shut up the front door."

"The deuce they have."

As Anthony passed Jack, the latter said in an earnest whisper—

"Is he safe?"

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven! I am easy, then."

"Hush!"

Anthony passed on, and soon encountered the officers, one of whom said to him—  
 "Well, Master Anthony, this is rather a serious affair. We have positive information that some one uncommonly like Claude Duval came here last night. You know he is no common criminal, and his capture no common object. The consequences to you of hiding him here would be absolutely ruinous, for the magistracy will take it u



"Well," said Anthony; "what's the end of all this?"

"Why, good advice, if you will take it, Anthony. It is to give up him whom we seek at once, and spare yourself the consequences of having him found here, hidden by you. Come: a hundred pound note is worth having. No one will be a bit the wiser, while you will be something the richer."

"That's true."

"Will you take it, then? Only say the word."

"Now do I look like such a goose as to refuse a hundred pound note when it is offered to me in this sort of way, for nothing?"

"Not exactly for nothing. Next to nothing, you may call it. You have only to give up to us, without further trouble, Claude Duval, and his associate, a man whom we don't know by name, but should know by sight."

"Without further trouble!" exclaimed Anthony, opening his eyes to their utmost width. "Well, that is a good idea. How am I to know what amount of trouble it may be to catch a man, who, for all I know, may be in the moon?"

"That is sufficient," said the officer, with an air of vexation. "If we find him, the consequences of hiding him be upon your own head, Mr. Landlord. Now, my friends, we will not leave a hole or corner unsearched in this house."

"I might," said Anthony, "ask you for your warrant, only that I really would much rather you should satisfy yourselves than not: so search away as long as you like, only I don't see why you should shut up my door and stop my business. That I won't put up with, for your warrant, if you have one, won't carry you so far."

"We will try that," said the officer. "Your house is pretty well surrounded by this time. There are twenty-five officers on this expedition, so that you see we feel tolerably confident of our man here, whatever sort of face you may put upon the matter."

"As you will.—As you will. I cannot resist so many; but I will take proceedings if I find I have the power to do so."

Two of the officers now remained to keep guard at the door, while the remainder of the force commenced a search, such as the "Old Moon" had not witnessed for a very long time indeed. Each of the officers had a holster pistol in his right hand while he made this search for Claude Duval; and there can be very little question but that, had he been seen, the intention was to shoot him at once, rather than run any further risks with him, especially as the government proclamation promised the same reward for him, alive or dead. The cellars, which were very capacious, were thoroughly searched, but, of course, without any result but disappointment. Anthony accompanied the officers, and it was amusing to see how they watched his looks upon coming into any room to commence a rigorous investigation of it. When minute after minute passed, and room after room was searched without any one being found, the officers began to get desperate, and muttered oaths and threats of what they would do if they did catch Claude, escaped from their lips. At length the landlord's bed-room was entered, and one of the officers walked into that very apartment which had been so recently occupied by Claude Duval.

"Hilloa!" he cried. "Here's some one in bed."

Two others immediately joined him, and dragging the bed clothes from the lower part of Markham Brereton's face, one cried—

"Who are you?"

"Pray what is that to you?" said Markham.

"Oh! I know him," said another of the officers. "Don't you recollect he was tried at the Bailey for highway robbery?"

"And proved to be innocent," said Brereton.

"Well, yes; but—but a man who has once been tried——"

"Whether innocent or guilty, has the odium attached to him for ever, I am quite aware that such is the case in this free, enlightened, and religious country. It is as well established a fact in England, as that he who is poor, must necessarily be dishonest. Well, what do you want with me?"

"Nothing with you, sir."

"Then get out of my bed-room."

"It's rather odd for a man to be in bed so late."

"Very likely."

The officer found that there was nothing to be got by prolonging a conversation with Mr. Brereton, so, after an active scrutiny of the chamber in which he lay, they took their leave of him, and proceeded to the examination of the rest of the rooms upon that floor. One of these rooms was the one with the beam. That apartment was the last but one that was searched. The officers turned aside an old door frame that was in one corner, and then, with a hearty curse of their own non-success, they left the room. Anthony breathed more freely, for admirable as the hiding-place of Claude was, yet human means are not infallible, and he might have been discovered, notwithstanding all that had been done to keep him secret. In another half-hour the search was over, and the principal officer turning to Anthony, said—

"We are foiled, but not satisfied."

"Very good. I can't help it, whether you are satisfied or not."

Without another word they left the house; but a quarter of an hour after that, two men, habited like graziers, came into the public-house, and asked if they could be accommodated for a day and a night. Anthony knew both of them.

## CHAPTER CX.

### A GREAT PERSONAGE.

JACK was in the bar of the "Old Moon" when these two men came in.

"Oh, yes," said the landlord. "I shall be glad to accommodate you."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said one. "We be strange to Lunnon."

"Ah, you look like it. I suppose you will stay now?—or do you propose looking about you a little, and coming here to sleep?"

"Oh, we have been looking about us a bit, and we have seen St. Paul's, and the Tower, and the Exeter Change besides; so we wool stay now belike."

"Very good. Just step this way, and I'll show you the parlour, gentlemen.

What would you like to have for dinner?"

"Anything as you have, landlord. We be main peckish."

Anthony showed them into the parlour, and handed them a couple of newspapers. Then telling them that he would send them in some steaks and pickles in a quarter of an hour, he left them to themselves. When he reached the bar again, he said—

"Jack, do you know them?"

"No."

"One is Foster, the officer, and the other is Lee, the police spy."

Jack changed colour.

"Pho! there is no danger now they are known. No doubt they think that they are doing the thing rather cleanly, but as soon as I knew really who they were, the danger ceased. Look here, Jack. You see this little bit of red cord projecting from the wall?"

"I do."

"Well, Jack, keep your eye on the parlour-door, and if you see one of them come out, just give this cord a touch. It rings my little alarm bell."

"I understand. You are going to prepare Claude?"

"I am. But we must not seem to know anything; I will order them their steaks and pickles, and you draw them a pot of porter, Jack, and take it in to them. You can manage to do that?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

Jack did do it to perfection, and with the porter in his hand, and an apron and pair of sleeves on him, he looked the very beau ideal of a respectable middle-aged waiter. A wig and some colour very different from the natural one of his skin, pretty effectually disguised his face, so that he had no fears that either of the men in the parlour would know him. Jack entered the room quite briskly.



CLAUDE'S REVENGE ON LORD ABINGDON, THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

"Porter, gentlemen. The steak will soon be ready."

"We be main obliged to you," said one, and then with a wink at the other he added, "what do you think?"

"No, no," said the other, "don't risk it."

Jack quite understood that one of them was for trying to suborn him, but that the other thought it would be decidedly unsafe to do so. He did not wish them to

try it, for now that he knew who they were, he had nothing to gain by any confidence they might be indiscreet enough to place in him.

"Any further orders, gentlemen?" he said.

"No, no, only the steak and pickles."

While this was going on, Anthony slipped up to the attic, in the cross-beam of which Claude was concealed, and said to him—

"All's right, Claude. How are you?"

"Quite well," said Claude, "can you let me out?"

"Yes, in a minute."

It took some time to unhook the hams, candles, and other matters that hung on the side of the beam, but at length Claude was liberated from his curious place of concealment, and the moment he reached the floor, Anthony said to him—

"The Old Moon is too hot to hold you, Claude."

"Ah, I thought it would be." Your opinion only tallies with mine. You think I ought to leave directly?"

"I do indeed."

"How, Anthony?—that is the only question."

"Why, look you, Claude; I am quite convinced that a strong push is being made to take you here; therefore, to leave by the door is out of the question. The old house is pretty well watched in all places. But where there is a will there is a way. I will have your horse waiting for you at the corner of Denmark-street, and there is an empty house in the court at the back of here, and one of the windows of which is only about fifteen feet from the corner of a part of the roof of this house. If you can leave by that window, you can get out at the back of the empty house, over a yard or two, and so make good your escape. Will you try it?"

"Will I? Can you doubt?"

"Very well. Come on at once. Only leave word where Jack shall join you, for, after you are gone, I know that wild horses would not keep him here."

"Let him meet me by the One Tun on Hampstead Heath, one hour after sunset to-night."

"Good. You may take your oath that he will be there, Claude; so now come at once, and be off, for I shall not feel comfortable while you are in the house."

"Is it safe at daylight?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly. The court has not the sort of inhabitants to betray you, and if any one wished to do so, who might by accident see you, they won't have time till you are off and away. What costume will you wear?"

"I will fit myself out from Jack's portmanteau. By the bye, did you remove it from the bedroom?"

"Not I."

"It would have told tales if the officers had looked into it, but we ought to owe something to good fortune as well as to ill. Show me the way, Anthony, to my room again, for amid the intricacies of your old house I might lose my way."

Anthony conducted him to the chamber, where they found Breerton up and dressed, waiting for some intelligence. He was well pleased to see Claude, who soon made a most remarkable change in his appearance, for he looked like some respectable clergyman when he had made himself fully up.

"Now," said Anthony, "we shall need all the strength we three can muster, in order to place a plank that I have got ready over the chasm between the gable end of this house and the window of the empty one in the court."

"I can jump it," said Claude.

Anthony shook his head.

"No, Claude. If the space that is filled up by the window were open, I should say, jump away, but it is an awkward thing to jump against a closed window, with the chance only of your weight carrying you through it. The least thing might send you a depth of sixty feet upon the cold stones below."

"I don't want to die yet," said Claude; "I must have my revenge yet. I will

preserve my life and my strength more religiously now than I have ever done before. I consider that I have a mission to perform."

Brereton would fain have made some remark upon this subject, but he did not like to do so, for he knew enough of Claude to feel convinced that if anything turned him from his purpose of taking vengeance upon all who were in any way accessory to the death of Cicely, it would be time—Time, that great agent of all mental changes! He and the landlord, with Claude closely following, went to one of the attics, in the roof of which was a trap door opening to the top of the house. In that attic, too, was a long piece of planking, quite of sufficient dimensions to reach the fifteen feet required, and as light as was consistent with strength. It had before done the same service that it was now called upon to perform. After they had all three scrambled on to the roof, and dragged the plank after them, Anthony pointed to the gable end which faced the window, and said—

"It will take us all three to hold the plank by the small end of it here, while we push it across the chasm."

It was an awkward job, for there was but a frail place for them to stand upon, but they did, after two or three abortive efforts, succeed in getting the further end of the plank fairly rested upon the window sill of the empty house, and what was more, they were pretty well satisfied that two children, at an attic window close at hand, were the only auditors of the transaction, so that one part of the danger that had been apprehended from the affair, was got rid of.

"Good bye, Claude," said Brereton.

"Good bye, and good luck to you," said Anthony.

They both shook hands with him, but Claude's feelings were too much upon the strain for him to say anything, and only looking an adieu, he commenced the passage of that frail and perilous bridge. To walk across the bridge would have been next to impossible, for the vibration of so frail a structure would have been sufficient to throw any one off it. He did not therefore venture upon such a course, but upon his hands and knees he set out upon the expedition. Even then it was a perilous affair, and the more especially as he had to make his way through the window when he got across the plank. The window was close shut, but Claude, as soon as he reached it, having previously provided himself with a glove, dashed his hand through the first pane of glass he came to, and unfastened the window. It was then but the work of a moment to fling up the sash.

"All's right," said Anthony.

"Thank God—yes," said Brereton.

Claude did not stand upon ceremony in getting into the empty house, but head foremost, in the best way he was able, he plunged through the open window, and so for a moment disappeared from the sight of his friends. This disappearance, however, was but for a moment—they saw him again, waving his hand, and then he was gone and the window closed.

"For the horse," said Anthony. "Ah, the bell!—Jack has something to tell me, I suppose. Come on, Mr. Brereton. We must get down stairs as quickly as we can, now, for something is amiss."

They both ran along a narrow passage, and got to the head of the attic stairs in a few moments. Anthony went first. The stairs were very dark, and he had not got down above half-a-dozen of them, when a voice a short distance below him cried—

"Who are you?"

"The devil in a gale of wind," said Anthony. "Who are you?"

"Never you mind. Surrender, or I fire. I am an officer."

"Blaze away."

Bang! went a pistol shot.

"All's fair at fair time," cried Anthony, as he sprang upon one of the pretended graziers, who by the flash of the pistol upon the dark staircase had been revealed to him. He got hold of the barrel of the discharged pistol, and wrenched it from the officer's hand, and then, as he dealt him a blow upon the head with the butt end of it, he said—

"My friend, if you play at bowls you must expect rubs!"

They heard the officer fall backwards and go bumping down the attic stairs until he reached the landing place, and then all was still."

"Have you killed him?" said Brereton.

"On my faith I don't know, but he tried to kill me."

"He did."

"Then let him take his chance. I will run down and open a shutter of the staircase, for I can enlighten the route to my attics when I like. You stay where you are for a minute or two, Mr. Brereton."

Anthony ran down stairs and opened a shutter. A stream of light came in, and there lay the officer perfectly insensible. At that moment a voice from below called out—

"Mr. Lee—Mr. Lee—where are you?"

"Who's that?" said Anthony. Below there! If you are a friend of a gentleman who lies here upon my landing, you had better come up, for something seems to be rather the matter with him."

"Beware all of you," added the voice; "I am an officer, and I'll blow out the brains of the first man who raises a finger against me. I am Foster, the officer."

Accompanied by these words up came the other mock grazier, with a loaded pistol in each hand.

"Holloa!" said Anthony. "Ain't you a grazier either?"

"You are all my prisoners."

"Certainly, if you wish it. The 'all' is only me and this gentleman, and the whole of our crime is that we were coming down stairs and heard a row, which has apparently ended in the upset of your friend here."

"Who has done this deed?"

"Ah, that's the question. Somebody ran down stairs very fast, and must have passed you, I should think."

"No. No one passed me that I was aware of, unless they stood up in the dark, for your staircase, at places, is like night. This sort of thing won't do though for me. It was a fool's trick of Mr. Lee to proclaim himself so soon, but he thought he would do wonders by popping up-stairs at unawares."

As he said this, the officer made his way into a front room, and throwing up the window, he sprung a rattle that he took from his pocket, which, in a few moments, brought half a dozen more police to the house.

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## CHAPTER CX.

### CLAUDE'S PROGRESS IN REVENGE.

WE must leave Anthony to get on with the police in the best way he is able, not for a moment doubting but that his sagacity and courage will be more than a match for them, while we follow Claude, with whose fortunes we have more immediately to do. When he had waved his hand in token of adieu to Brereton and Anthony, he closed the window of the empty house, and began to make the best of his way out of it. He ran down stairs, and opening the back-door, got into the yard; from which, the only mode of escaping was by crossing two other yards, and then dropping from the wall of the last one into the small paved court. It was not a time for hesitation, so Claude clambered the first wall in a moment, and crossed the first of the two yards between him and the court. No one appeared to offer him the least obstruction, but when he got into the second yard he almost jumped upon a man who was walking in it smoking a pipe.

"Holloa!" cried the man; "old friends generally come in at the street door. Who are you?"

"A fugitive," said Claude.

"Oh, from the 'Old Moon?' The grabs are after you?"

"Yes."

"All's right, then. Don't you cross into the court. They have got a couple of runners at the mouth of it. I'll let you out at my door."

"I am much beholden to you."

"Oh, don't mention it. The family, of course, must help each other. How is old Anthony?"

"Quite well. You are then, I presume——"

"A cracksman, at your service. I don't ask who you are, because I suspect."

"Suspect what?"

"You are young Guy, called the 'Yorkshire Knight,' ain't you?"

"No. I am Claude Duval."

The man with the pipe started back in surprise. Dashing the pipe then to the ground, he cried—

"Here's a honour. Have I *actively* got Gentleman Jack in my crib? Lord love you, haven't I often wished to say something to yer!"

"What was it?"

"Oh, nothink; but how is yer, my tulip? That's all. Come on. I'll walk along of yer, if yer like, a little way. The idear that I should be having a quiet go in at a pipe quite promiscuous, and come across Gentleman Jack. Well, if I don't tell this here story to the old woman and the kids, may I be —— Oh, dear—— oh, dear, what a world we live in, to be sure. This way. What will you have now?"

"Nothing, my good friend. Nothing! Believe me my situation is a very urgent one, or I should not leave you so suddenly, but I have an appointment, which it is of the utmost importance I should keep. I won't come to the 'Old Moon' again though without paying you a visit, you may depend upon it. I shall know your house again. Good bye."

Claude shook hands with the cracksman, and was safely let out by the front door of his house. The sun was shining fitfully as he made the best of his way along a street that led him into St. Andrew's-street, and then proceeding along High-street, St. Giles's, he soon reached Denmark-street, and cutting off the distance as much as possible, while he did not walk so fast as to attract attention by seeming to be in any extraordinary hurry, he soon reached St. Ann's Church. Close to the curbstone was a boy, holding Claude's horse.

"All's right," whispered Claude, as he took hold of the bridle. "Do you know me?"

"Yes, sir. Oh, yes."

Claude mounted, and then he added—

"Who am I, then?"

"Claude Duval," said the boy in a whisper, while his eyes sparkled with animation.

"And do you know what a large reward is offered for me dead or alive?"

"Yes. It comes to £2000, they tell me, now."

"You might soon earn it, by giving the hue and cry after me in the streets of Soho."

An angry flush came over the boy's face.

"An angry flush came over the boy's face. You don't know me half so well as I know you," he said, as he turned away.

"Hold," said Claude, taking a handful of guineas from his pocket. "Buy yourself something in remembrance of Claude Duval, my lad, and remember that we are friends. Shake hands with me."

The boy did so, looking quite radiant with satisfaction. He would have refused the gold, but Claude pressed it upon him, and then galloped away, leaving him standing by the church door gazing after him. It was odd that Claude Duval, since he had made up his mind to meet Jack at the 'One Tun' at Hampstead, should not travel northward, but he did not do so, for, on the con-

trary, he made his way into St. Martin's Lane, and then at a very steady pace he crossed Charing Cross, and betook himself towards Downing-street, which all the world knows is a little past the Treasury. The clock at the Horse Guards struck twelve as he passed it—he was rather surprised to find that it was so late.

"Well, well," he muttered. Perhaps that is all the better, as I am going to set my life upon a cast this morning. I will do something that will surprise Europe."

He turned his horse's head up Downing-street, and stopped at the official residence of the Secretary of State for the Home Department. Several servants were lounging about the place, and one went towards Claude, seeing him draw rein at the door. Now Claude's appearance was, under all circumstances, strikingly in his favour. There was about him an air of aristocratic grandeur of aspect, which he would have found it as difficult to conceal, as any one not so gifted by nature, would have found it difficult to assume, and now, attired as he was in the ecclesiastical habit, and so superbly mounted as he was, it was not to be wondered at, that the servants should treat him with marked respect. To the footman, who approached, Claude said—

"Is Lord Abingdon here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Hold, or get somebody to hold my horse, and when my groom comes, tell him I shall walk across the park, and meet him with the horse at Buckingham House."

"Yes, sir."

Claude dismounted, and ascended the steps of the Home Office. He was at once ushered into a room upon the ground floor, and a servant out of livery respectfully requested to know his business.

"I wish to see my Lord Abingdon for a few moments upon a private matter of some importance—I am Dr. Bleadon."

The servant bowed, and made an exit. In the course of about five minutes, there came into the room a gentleman, who in the most polite manner said—

"Lord Abingdon very much regrets that he cannot have the pleasure of seeing you personally, as he is very particularly engaged, but he desires his compliments, and that you will be so good as to tell me your business. I am his lordship's private secretary."

"Sir," said Claude, "if the business that has brought me here was anything but what it is, I should not have solicited an interview with his lordship, but have asked for you at once. I am sorry he cannot see me, as in that case I must go as I came. I should have thought that my position in society would have put an end to any supposition that this call could be a matter of idleness or impertinence."

The secretary looked puzzled.

"Pray, sir," he said, "wait a moment or two, and I will speak to his lordship again. Is it a matter of public importance?"

"It is indeed."

Away went the secretary, and down sat Claude. In the course of five minutes more a gentleman entered the room, and slightly bowed.

"Have I the honour of speaking to Lord Abingdon?" said Claude.

"Yes, sir. I am Lord Abingdon. Pray be seated. I regret to have kept you waiting. Dr.—Dr. Bleadon, I think?"

"Yes. Seat yourself, my lord, and tell me before I begin. Are we strictly private here?"

"Well, I—I really! Suppose we make certain by stepping into the next room, Dr. Bleadon. This way, if you please. I suppose you have some plot to tell us of, and I can assure you that his majesty's government will feel sincerely obliged for any communication that may tend to the preservation of the peace of the nation."

Lord Abingdon led Claude from the large reception-room into a much smaller



apartment, and Claude himself closed the door, and took care to keep between it and his lordship, as he said—

“My lord, there is a highwayman named Claude Duval.”

“Oh, is it about him. I wish you would see Mr. Hope.”

“No, my lord, I must see you. It was known to you and to the police that he wished to leave England for ever, but large sums were issued for his capture, and what was worse, a sum was set upon his destruction. He was hunted like a wild beast, and that, too, at the very time that you knew he wished to leave England, having found ties that would perhaps have made him in some other country a happy and useful member of society. My lord, why did you do all this?”

“Upon my word,” said Lord Abingdon, “this serves me right for departing from my rule of never granting an interview to a stranger. Good morning, sir, good morning.”

“Not so fast. Do you fancy I have taken all this trouble just to say to you what I have said?”

“What else for, sir?”

“Blood for blood. I have come to blow out your brains. The consequence of the orders emanating from you to hunt Claude Duval, has been the murder of one so dear to me that I cannot trust myself to say more upon that head.”

“Pray, sir, let me pass.”

“No. You are a dead man if you raise the least alarm.”

“Who are you, that dare——”

“I am Claude Duval!”

The face of Lord Abingdon turned of an ashy paleness, and he sunk back into a seat, as he gasped—

“You are Claude Duval.”

“Yes, you have, no doubt, heard of many of my extraordinary disguises, and this is one of them—I only live for vengeance now. Well I know that at the sound of the pistol shot that will deprive you of life, and make a vacancy in the Ministry, your domestics and others here will rush upon me, but I have another pistol for myself. You and I will descend, my lord, to posterity in the same page of history.”

“Good God!”

“God is good, no doubt.”

Lord Abingdon slid from his chair on to his knees, as he said—

“Oh spare me!—spare me. Why should your revenge fall upon me? Oh! spare my life, and I will get a free pardon from the crown, and an unmolested passage where you please. I am a man with a family.”

“Oh, your family will be well provided for out of the public purse. You know that well enough, my lord. I could have, for myself, freely forgiven the man-hunt in which you and your myrmidons engaged—you as paymaster, and they as the executive—but death followed in their bloody footsteps, and one of the fairest and the best of human beings was the victim. I will sacrifice you to her memory.”

The Secretary of State fell at Claude's feet, and with tearful accents pleaded for existence.

“Spare me, oh, spare me!” he said. “Indeed it was not I, half so much as my Lord North, who issued the offers of reward for you. It was not, indeed. Oh, do not kill me here in cold blood. If I have, in my mistaken zeal for the public service done you personal wrong, I ask you to forgive me as you hope to be forgiven, and when you are before your God, and it shall be said, ‘This man has taken life,’ you can say, ‘that, although full of your wrongs, and with me in your power, you spared me and left me to Heaven.’ What is a life? I must die at some time—perhaps of a lingering disease, during the agony of which I may many a time wish for your pistols to end my sufferings. Is killing, vengeance? Alas, no. I have already in my fears suffered twenty deaths. Spare me—pardon me!”

“Abject wretch!”

“Yes. I am abject. Only spare me. In all your career you have never done

a deed like this. You have often spared a fallen foe, but you have never yet sacrificed one. I repent of what I have done. God asks no more."

Claude paced the room twice with perturbed steps, and each time that he passed the kneeling secretary, that exalted individual made a catch at his legs to implore his clemency. At length Claude paused.

"I cannot do it," he said. "It is contrary to my nature. I cannot do it.—Rise, sir, you are saved: and now, I suppose, you will do your best to have me killed or apprehended."

"No. Indeed I will not. Go in peace."

"It will look better if you see me to the door, my lord. Beware of treachery."

"Upon my sacred word I mean none. You shall go as you came, and I only wish that this visit may be buried in oblivion. I will withdraw the reward for your death; and if at any time I can do you a favour, I will."

"Very well. We shall see."

Lord Abingdon walked with Claude to the outer door, and the servants were amazed to see the disordered condition of his lordship.

"Remember!" said Claude, when he had mounted.

Lord Abingdon bowed, and then, as soon as Claude had ridden off, he turned round and fainted in the hall of the house. A scene of confusion instantly ensued, and it was a full hour before he was restored to consciousness.

## CHAPTER CXI.

### THE RETRIBUTION AT HAMPSTEAD.

CLAUDE said not a word until he was two miles from Downing-street, a distance that took him fairly on to the North-road, and then drawing a long breath, he uttered the ejaculation of—

"Thank God!"

After thus breaking silence with himself, he added—

"Yes: I thank God that I did not take that man's life. I might have done it—I meant to do it; but it is not done, and I am the happier. I would not have the weight of his blood upon my soul. Alas! what common every-day materials, after all, go to the composition of a great man!"

As he uttered these words, he came to the junction of roads that divide to go to Highgate and Hampstead respectively, and he took the left-hand one, which would lead him to the latter village, though a verdant lane rather than a road, for such at that time, with its tall elm trees, was the route to Hampstead. As he went on, he asked himself if the Secretary of State would keep his word with him or not. If he did not, an immediate change in his (Claude's) equipments would be very necessary; while, if he did, the disguise he was at present in, was in all probability the one most likely to suit his purpose of personal concealment.

"I will risk it," he said; "for once I will trust to the word of a great man. He surely cannot be so base as to betray me now."

With this comfortable assurance, Claude Duval jogged on, and soon passed the Load of Hay, then a long, low, rambling-looking wooden house by the way-side, and considered to be a considerable distance out of London. Without pausing for a moment Claude rode up Haverstock Hill, and passing the Grange, he soon scampered through the straggling High-street of Hampstead, and arrived on the Heath. Claude, who knew every tree, and hill, and dale in that charming spot, was always much affected upon coming within its precincts. It reminded him forcibly of his boyish days—of his mother, and her long sufferings—of his father, and his unjust death—and it reminded him likewise of the vengeance he had taken upon the man who had hunted and persecuted his father to death—the death of a felon! But the day was yet young, and although well disguised,

Claude felt the impolicy of passing much time upon the Heath, exposed to the gaze and curiosity of chance passengers, as well as of the residents upon that favoured spot, so he made his way at once to the One Tun public-house, where he had agreed to meet with his old friend Jack. Then pulling up his horse, he ordered the best dinner the house could afford to him for money, and taking his seat by



CLAUDE AGAIN ON THE ROAD—ROBBERY OF THE YORK MAIL.

an open window that commanded a view of the beautiful heath, he gave himself up very much to the thoughts of the busy past. And oh! how like a dream of romance did much of his life appear to him, when now looked back upon from his present vantage ground of safety. He wondered how he could have gone through what had happened to him, and now he shuddered much more at past risks, than he had done when they had been present ones. But soon to Cicely

his thoughts ran, and as she had been, and as she was, he pictured her to his fancy. So beautiful, so gentle, so pure, and so good as she had been, to think that she was now a corpse. That that silvery voice was hushed for ever—that those sparkling eyes had lost their lustre—that the soft skin had upon it the pestiferous damps of the grave, and that worms could riot within the chambers of that brain which for holy and beautiful emotions had known no superior, and but few equals. Oh, it was maddening to his very soul. Resting his head upon his hands he wept convulsively. During the continuance of this accession of grief, the waiter came into the room, but he stopped short when he saw the respectable parson-like looking gentleman in such dolour. Claude did not hear him until he made some noise purposely in placing some things upon the table for the dinner. Then Duval looked up.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the waiter, "only come to lay cloth, sir."

"It's of no consequence. A gentleman of my profession must see much to weep for in the depravity of human nature."

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. Any pickles, sir?"

"No—no—"

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir."

All this man's feelings and capabilities seemed comprised in "Yes, sir. Certainly, sir."

"Will, then, dinner be ready soon?" said Claude.

"Yes, sir. Hilloa! another gent on oss back, as I'm alive. Coming directly, sir."

The sound of a horse's feet coming directly up to the inn-door were now plainly to be heard, and Claude looked from the window. What was his satisfaction to see that it was Jack himself, so much sooner than he had expected him.

"Jack!" he called, from the window, "Jack, I am here."

Claude's name was upon Jack's lips upon the impulse of the moment, but he prudently suppressed it, merely calling out in return, "Ah, sir, I am glad to see you;" so that Claude might act as he pleased, either to admit him as an equal or keep him out as a subordinate, whichever he might think would look best, and be the safest to do as regarded the people of the inn. Claude, however, did not think that there was any reason for keeping up any distinction between himself and Jack, and he beckoned to him to come in at once to the room, where the dinner would soon be laid.

"Jack," he said, "I did not expect you for some hours."

"Nor I you," said Jack. "But I thought, as I had nothing better to do, I might as well come here and wait."

"That was my precise idea."

"So I surmised when I saw you. I am very anxious, Claude, to know what course of conduct you intend to pursue."

"After dinner we will talk that over. Call me Mr. Brown before the waiter, and I will call you Smith."

The dinner was soon placed upon the table, and both Jack and Claude managed to do tolerable justice to it; so that by the time it was removed it was past five o'clock, and the evening was creeping on apace. Then Claude, drawing near to Jack, and helping himself to a glass of wine, said—

"Jack, I have failed."

"Failed in what?"

"In carrying out my scheme of revenge. Listen to me, and you will hear of one of my most hazardous adventures."

Jack listened with all attention, while Claude told him what had happened at the office of the Secretary of State; and when he had concluded, Jack shook him by the hand, as he said—

"Then really, Claude, you thought there was but little chance of us ever meeting again."

"I scarcely can say what I thought, Jack. My whole soul was bent upon revenge, until the moment it was in my power, and then a total revulsion of

feeling took place, and the affair looked too like murder to please me. I am very glad it went off as it did, Jack."

"And I, Claude. So much, then, for the past; now for the future."

"The road!"

"Really and truly?"

"Yes, Jack, the road for me. I am fit for nothing else, and nothing else is fit for me, Jack. It is my opinion. I know that it will be my death, but I likewise know that while I live, it is my life. Besides, Jack, what are you to do?"

"Never mind me."

"Yes, but I do though, mind you. The road will be a subsistence to both of us; and, according to our old plan, we will take from the rich and give to the poor, Jack, so that we shall be quite orthodox in our mode of life. I will endeavour to forget the past, or to think of it merely as a dream."

"That is wise," said Jack; "I only wish——"

"Wish what, Jack?"

"That I could forget all the past. But it is easier to wish for oblivion than to find it, yet time will do much."

"It will. But now, Jack, I have an account to settle here, as well as the money one for our dinner here."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; don't you recollect a public-house called 'The Antlers,' on the north side of the Heath, that is kept by a certain Mr. Matthew?"

"I do indeed. And you made the aforesaid Mr. Matthew a promise which, I guess, you will now fulfil, Claude."

"I will. Such revenges as do not take life or injure limbs I will take, for the sake of even-handed justice at large; so, in about an hour, Jack, we will pay a visit to Mr. Matthew, if you are inclined that way."

"Most willingly—most willingly, Claude. Now that you no longer talk of killing, you take a load from off my heart, such as I scarcely knew it sustained until now, when I feel relieved from it."

"They both rose, but before they could take a step towards the door, the noise and confusion incidental to the arrival of a carriage at the little suburban inn came upon their ears, and they, in a few moments, heard some people ascending the staircase.

"This way, madam;—this way, sir," they heard the innkeeper say. "A private room—oh yes, sir, there could not be a more private room than our best one, overlooking the garden, with a view all over the Heath. This way, sir, if you please, and the blacksmith shall attend to the tire of the carriage wheel directly."

"Oh—ah!" said a voice. "All's right—demme! Ah! come on, my Lady Bab, these things will happen—demme!"

"Surely," said Claude, "I have heard that voice before."

"And I, too," added Jack. "It is no other than Tom Brereton who speaks. The cousin of Mr. Markham Brereton; who accused you and Mr. Markham both of robbing him."

"It is—it is. Hush!"

"I do think I shall faint right away, Colonel Tomlins," said a lisping affected female voice. "Oh, dear!—oh, dear! The idea of coming to a common inn, where there may be common people."

"Why, my Lady Bab," said Tom Brereton, for it was indeed no other, "it is rather horrid. But sometimes people of quality have to put up with such things—demme!"

"What the deuce can be the meaning of all this?" said Claude.

The couple, who called each other respectively Lady Bab and Colonel Tomlins, were shown into the room adjoining that occupied by Claude and Jack, and as there was only a very thin partition between the two apartments, our friends had no difficulty in quite clearly overhearing what passed.

"This promises some sport," whispered Claude to Jack. "I will forego my visit to 'The Antlers' for an hour or so."

"My dear," said Tom, "I will just pop down stairs—demme!—and see what sort of accommodation this beggarly place has, and then come back to you in a jiffy."

"Oh do, Colonel. Come, quick."

"Yes, my ducksey."

"Oh—oh!"

The sound of a very amorous salute followed, and then Tom left the room. He had not been gone a minute when, after a deep sigh, the lady said—

"Oh, dear! if I can but go through it, of course, it will be the making of me; but I sometimes do think that something will happen to prevent me. Oh—oh—how my heart beats, to be sure. If, now, I was to meet anybody who happened to know me, and say—'Lor! that is only Lady Bab Percival's waiting maid.' What should I say to the colonel, to be sure?" But I think the one hundred pounds I placed in his hands has quieted him. It was lucky I found so much in my lady's escritoir. But to marry a colonel with a fine estate in Oxfordshire is worth some trouble, and when he finds it out, what can he do? Nothing but give me a fine maintenance, to be sure, and that will be right enough I'll be bound. I shall be some honest man's money after that, I rather think.

"This is rich," said Claude.

"Very," said Jack. "What will you do?"

"Certainly nothing to interfere with the denouement of this comedy."

"Denouement! How do you mean?"

"Why the marriage. Are they not well mated? The mock colonel with the mock lady? In truth, it would be a thousand pities to separate them."

"It would."

"And yet I will have some sport. I owe Tom Brereton a grudge. I can't think how he came to evade the indictment for perjury which was brought against him at the Old Bailey. However, we will have that hundred pounds, Jack, for pocket-money, that Lady Bab speaks of."

"Very well, Claude. If we make up our minds to rob true men, surely we may rob thieves, so have it, in the name of all that's lucky, for cash we want, and cash we must get somewhere, you know."

"Precisely, Jack. I want to distribute a few hundreds among those who have befriended us lately."

## CHAPTER CXII.

### A COMIC ADVENTURE.

At this juncture Tom Brereton returned.

"My charmer," he said, "the carriage will soon be ready."

"Ah! colonel, what a man you are."

"Yes: I believe you, my love. My estate in Oxfordshire made a man of me. I believe your ladyship has some large properties in Wilts?"

"Oh! dear, yes. Quite a castle."

"Really. Well, my love, this secret marriage of ours at Hendon church will, I rather think, astonish your noble family a little."

"Yes, dear; but what care I, as long as I have the man of my heart?"

A tap at the door, and then the opening of it, announced a visitor to the enamoured pair. It was the landlady, who came to offer her services to the lady; and the mock sprig of nobility tripped off, leaving Tom Brereton in a very happy frame of mind.

"Well," he said; "so I shall make my fortune by marriage after all. What a lucky thing that I should attract this lady at the masquerade, and that she should so soon consent to a run-away match. The stupid pump, to believe that I am a colonel with large estates. Egad, I never had any estate but a very small

one at Guildford, and that the confounded lawyer has got possession of, for freeing me from that bothering affair at the Old Bailey. I wonder now what has become of that Claude Duval. What a desperate fellow, to be sure. How I have watched the newspapers to see if there was any news of his being killed or taken. Ah! well. I dare say I shall never again encounter him. Let me see. Lady Bab's hundred pounds, and my own eighty pounds, make a hundred and eighty pounds; and that's about all I have: but her ladyship will pretty soon put me in funds, and after we are married, as long as she makes me a handsome allowance, what do I care what she says or what she thinks? She is not so young. An old maid, or she would not have snapped at me so easy."

Tom now walked to and fro in the room for a few moments, and then stopping suddenly, he said—

"I wish I could get those jewels she has from her. They are worth something. Besides, I feel confident she has got more money. Bother her, why didn't she give it all to me? Well—well; I'll get it, and a pretty lot beside. I'll go and see how that fellow is getting on with the horses now."

Down stairs went Tom; and Claude, after whispering to Jack that he would be back again in a few minutes, popped down after him. Tom—after speaking to a coach-smith, who was putting the tire on one of the wheels of the hired carriage which had conveyed him and the sham lady back to Hampstead—walked through the inn, and took a stroll in the garden at the back. It was there that Claude joined him, and walking up to him when he was at the furthest distance from the house, he suddenly said—

"Good day, Mr. Tom Brereton."

The start that Tom gave was quite ludicrous.

"I—I—I ain't Tom Brereton.—I am Colonel Tomlins."

"Oh! nonsense. I know you. I am Claude Duval."

Tom staggered back until he was stopped by a tree; and there he stood, with his mouth and eyes wide open, looking the very picture of consternation and amazement.

"Hark ye," said Claude Duval, "this house is completely in my power, and all the people in it are in my pay. Now, I tell you, that if you don't quickly give up all the money you have about you, I will tell Lady Bab who and what you are."

"Oh! don't—don't!"

"Come—the cash."

"I—I—have only twenty pounds: that's all."

"Stuff: you have a hundred and eighty."

Tom uttered a deep groan, and would have fallen on his knees; but Claude stopped him by saying—

"You had better appear as much at your ease as possible, for Lady Bab can see you from one of the windows, and she might put some awkward questions to you if she sees any fear exhibited on the part of the gallant Colonel Tomlins. Produce the money, and remember I shall give orders to whoever you may speak to upon the subject here to blow your brains out at once."

With tears in his eyes Tom produced a pocket-book, from which he handed Claude the money.

"Oh! dear—oh! dear," he said. "I can't now pay for the marriage ceremony or the mending the tire of the wheel."

"I don't want to stop the marriage," said Claude. "Here are a couple of guineas for you, which will suffice for your expenses. When you are married, you know, you can draw upon the lady for some cash; and now, if ever you breathe to any living creature the fact that I have robbed you, I give you notice that I will find you out, if I have to travel five hundred miles to do so, and smash your skull."

"Oh dear!—oh dear."

Claude turned round, and with all the unconcern in the world made his way back to the house again, where Jack was, as may be supposed, rather anxiously expecting him.

"Take the money, Jack," said Claude. "You had better be cash keeper. I should like to send a couple of hundred pounds as soon as we are worth as much to Anthony, for I am sure he is not doing quite so well as I could wish him."

"You have relieved Tom Brereton, then, of his cash?"

"I have, and now for the lady whom I hear coming in good time. Hush!"

"Colonel," said the mock Lady Bab. "Colonel. Oh, he is not here."

"This way, madam," said Claude, in his most insinuating tones as he opened the door of the room in which he and Jack were. "This way, madam, if you please. Mind the mat."

"Thank you, sir. Is the colonel here?"

"No," said Claude as he closed the door, and put his back against it.

The lady, we beg pardon, the lady's maid, gave a faint scream.

"Another such cry," said Claude, "and it is your last in this world. Listen to me, madam, and act prudently."

A terror came over Tom's female companion. Nothing short of discovery of who and what he was, stared her in the face.

"You are," added Claude, "Lady Bab Percival's maid, and you have robbed her of a hundred pounds, with which to blind the eyes of Colonel Tomlins, whom you intend to marry if you can do so?"

Down went the mock lady upon her knees.

"Oh, Mr. Officer, for such of course you are, spare me!"

"Upon one condition. We officers, after all, are only men."

"Oh, anything—anything."

"You have some jewels of your lady's."

"Yes. A necklace, earrings, brooch, and bracelets."

"Hand them to me."

After some rummaging in rather a capacious pocket, a small pocket-book of red morocco was produced, which contained the articles mentioned. After assuring herself that they were them, and that they were of considerable value, Claude handed them to Jack, and then he said—

"Now, madam, money."

"Money!"

"Yes, I will, and must be paid well, if I permit you to proceed without interruption, and marry the colonel without exposing you."

"And you will?"

"Yes, if you pay me. As I said, we are but men."

"Then take all. There are thirty-four pounds, and it is all I have, but I'd give double the sum rather than the colonel should find out that I am not what I seem to be—that is, before the marriage—after it, I don't care, for he must allow me a handsome maintenance out of his estates, and then he may do with himself what he likes."

"Very well," said Claude, as he handed the money to Jack. "Now mark me, if you by look, hint, or word, let any living being know of this transaction between us, I will take care that you shall be hung, for I will never rest until I have accomplished that object. You are warned, so you had better make the best of it."

"Do you think I would mention it. Oh, dear no. I was never in such a fright in all my life, and I'm only too happy to get off so well. If I meet you again, and have the means, which no doubt I shall, I will give you a further reward."

"Very good. Now, madam, the best thing you can do is to get off from here, and be married to your colonel as soon as possible."

Claude moved aside from the door, and with some more profuse expressions of gratitude to him for his leniency, the mock lady reached her own apartment just as Tom Brereton, who, till then, had been composing his nerves below with a glass of something, made his appearance. There was a slight air of composure now in the manner of each of them, for they felt conscious of having a new secret to keep; but that soon vanished, and the carriage being reported as ready, off they whirled to the picturesque old church of Hendon, where the ceremony that was to make



them man and wife was to take place. In a little time after, Jack and Claude mounted and left the One Tun.

"Now for the Antlers," said Claude.

"But what do you mean to do?" said Jack.

"That I hardly know; I must be guided entirely by circumstances; I will do nothing very bad, but I will certainly frighten mine host of the Antlers a little, or I will know some very special reason for allowing him to escape. He wont know me in this disguise, and moreover, I fancy nothing is further from his thoughts now, after what has been heard of me, than finding me in this part of the country."

They stopped at a cottage about two hundred yards from the Antlers, and Jack and Claude both dismounted. A woman came to the door, and as Claude threw her a shilling, he said—

"Will you allow us to tie our horses for about ten minutes to your gate? We have a call to make in the neighbourhood."

The woman was quite poor enough to grasp at the shilling, and the two horses were tied up accordingly. Claude and Jack then went on foot to the Antlers, and strutted in with a careless air and manner. The landlord himself was in the bar.

"To the left for the parlour, gentlemen," he said.

"Thank you," said Claude, with an assumed lisp; "bring *uth* a bottle of wine—port if you *pleathe*."

"I have the finest port, though I say it, in all the country."

"They went into the parlour, and in about five minutes the landlord came in with a bottle of port and two glasses. The moment he got as far as the table, Claude adroitly stepped behind him, and kept guard at the door; then, when the landlord turned round, he said in his natural voice—

"Matthew, do you know me?"

"Good God!" cried Matthews, "it's Duval."

"Yes; you sincere, excellent, old friend, it is Duval. Why, man, you look as if you did not expect me; I promised to come, but a variety of engagements have kept me hitherto from performing my promise, but, however, here I am at last, you see."

"Oh, I am lost! I am a dead man!"

"Not yet, Matthew. If you call out, or make any alarm, you are, but if it is any consolation for you to know, that I mean to stop short of killing you, I tell you as much; but I promised that I would repay you for the trick you served me when I was last here, and by all that's holy I will keep my word."

As he spoke, Claude took a pistol from his pocket, at the sight of which the landlord gave a hideous groan.

"You are going to wound me," he said. "Oh, spare me!"

"Did you spare me? Come, Master Matthew, has your chimney here been swept lately?"

"Chimney?"

"Yes," added Claude, as he took out his watch and laid it upon the table.

"I give you ten minutes to get up this chimney and out at the top. Jack, you stand outside and see him do it. If by the time ten minutes are expired, my friend here don't call to me that he sees you, I will fire a brace of pistols up the chimney after you, so now you know what you have to do."

"Oh—oh!"

"Come, be quick; nine minutes only now."

"I—I can't. I—I don't—know——"

"Eight minutes and a half."

In a fit of positive desperation, Matthew ran to the chimney and put his head up.

"Eight minutes," cried Claude.

The struggle that he made to get up was prodigious. His feet rested upon the hobs for a moment or two, and then disappeared. Huge flakes of soot came

rolling down into the room, and the struggles of the landlord in the flue came distinctly upon Claude's ears.

"Six minutes!" bawled Claude up the chimney.

Down poured the soot, and up struggled the landlord. Jack, who had only gone outside, came into the room again; and, unusual of late as that operation had been to him, he faintly laughed—

"He can't do it, Claude."

"No, I don't expect he can," said Claude, as he drew the bullet out of one of his pistols. "Nor can we stay here, for we shall be smothered with soot."

Approaching, then, the chimney, Claude bawled out—

"Time's up!"

"No—no!" shouted Matthew, in stifled accents.

"Yes."

Bang went the pistol up the chimney, and down rolled Matthew, making sure he was shot, and bringing such a volley of soot down with him that Claude and Jack were glad to leave the man and the inn. On the door step nearly they met Matthew's wife, and she said—

"Lord bless me, gentlemen, what noise was that? Have you seen my husband?"

"Yes, mum," said Claude; "you will find him cleaning himself in the parlour."

They then hurried to the cottage where they had left their horses, and untying their bridles from the gate, they mounted at once.

"Where to?" said Jack.

"The road!—the road!"

## CHAPTER CXIV.

### THE OLD CATHEDRAL AGAIN.

WHAT a riot and confusion there was in Winchester, upon that evening when Claude Duval escaped from the old cathedral. How the alarm bell was rung. How the vergers ran about hither and thither; and how the old superannuated canons, who possessed stalls—and uncommonly snug stalls they are too—in the cathedral, looked aghast. How the soldiers swore, too; and how the drums beat, and a strong guard came from the barracks to do wonders, when the birds were fairly flown. The death of the soldier, whose brains had been dashed out by Claude upon the threshold of the sacred edifice, was quite an event, and the news of it spread over the city like wildfire, or like scandal, which is about the fastest spreading thing that we know of. The principal authorities of the cathedral, had been before that, duly informed that something very serious was going on within it, and the two acting canons—resident fellows, as they were called—were quite in a ferment. One of them was purblind, and the other was deaf, so that they were not such wonderful great guns, those canons, but yet in the cathedral, to the vergers, the beadles, the singing men, they were great men indeed. Now, in the good city of Winchester at that time there was an extremely uncomfortable-looking building to the eyes of these canons, and all the men and all the boys belonging to the cathedral—that building was an Unitarian chapel; and as the Unitarians are considered to be the radicals of religion, and shrewdly suspected to entertain various unorthodox views regarding established churches and pluralities, and rich endowments, and so on, no wonder that the canons condemned the aforesaid Unitarians to all the pains and penalties of burning brimstone, and lakes of boiling asphaltum, in another world! Didn't they wish they could have given them a taste of it in this? We should have said literally nothing about these sad Unitarians, but that the Rev. John Harper, the preacher at the chapel, walked down to the cathedral to see what was the matter, and the senior verger having announced as much to one of the canons—the bliud one—he sent for the

deaf one, and bawled into his ear-trumpet the propriety of going themselves, les the said Rev. John Harper should get all the credit of doing the right thing, while they did nothing.

"Oh, yes," said the deaf canon. "D-n him—I—I melan bless us! —a-hem!"

*C. S. P.*



CLAUDE, IN A MILITARY CHARACTER, AT OAKLEY HALL—THE EVELYNS.

"Come along then," said the blind canon. "You show us the way, Mr. Verger, and take care there is plenty of force."

"Ah!" remarked the deaf one. "We will let them hear what we have to say. To think of the cathedral being desecrated by a brawl about catching a thief! I hope nobody has disturbed the curtain of my stall."

Off they both went, and with them the two vergers and the two beadles, and

four singing men, and the scripture reader, and the chaunter, and heaven knows how many persons besides, who nibbled a good fat subsistence out of the old church. The distance was short, and by the time this *posse ecclesiasticus* reached the door of the cathedral, the constables, and a fresh detachment of military, arrived likewise. Torches were lit, and a general muster, as though they were an invading force, took place.

"Hilloa! hilloa!" cried the blind canon, "we must not have the cathedral desecrated. Come, come, come!"

"But if you please, doctor," whispered a verger, "it's thought there is danger."

"Who's Grainger?" cried the deaf canon, who had by dint of hard listening thought he heard something at last.

"I can see no danger."

"I should be surprised if you could see anything," muttered one of the singing men.

"Gentlemen," said the officer of the military party, "my men are ready. We have suffered some loss, and the guilty parties are suspected to be in the cathedral, so it is my duty to take them. If you will accompany me, well and good, but if not I go without you."

"I doubt, sir," said the blind canon, "if the Ecclesiastical Court would justify you in what you say. What do you think, brother canon?"

"Eh?"

"Oh, it's useless to talk to you. Well, sir, upon consideration, we will wait here while you go in and look about, and if there is really no danger, we will follow you."

At this moment the door opened from within, and a man appeared.

"Seize him!" cried the officer.

In an instant a file of men surrounded the new comer, who said—

"Dear me, what's the matter? My name is Harper."

"Oh, it's the Unitarian parson," said a verger, spitting as he spoke, as though he were in the presence of some unclean thing.

"Never mind," said the blind canon. "We don't know who it is. We find him here, and we know nothing. Lodge him in jail, that is sufficient."

"Sir," said the Unitarian preacher, "that you know nothing I will take for true upon your own word; but as for committing me to prison because I came to the cathedral to see what was the matter within its time-worn and venerable walls, that is more than you dare do. As for you, sir," to the officer, "I wish you would come with me, for I think there is some one lying dead in the body of the building."

"Lead on, sir," said the officer, who had rather a poor opinion of canons and vergers, and such like. "Lead on, sir. Forward! March!"

In filed twenty-five soldiers after the Reverend John Harper and the officer into the cathedral. They went on, guided by Mr. Harper, until they came to the communion-table, at the far end through the chapel, and upon it lay a body dabbled in blood. The soldiers held up their torches, and the officer, with Mr. Harper, advanced close to the communion-table, and looked into the calm still pale face of Cicely, as she lay there in man's apparel, as Claude had left her.

"Who is this?" said the officer.

"I know not."

Mr. Harper had some medical skill, and he at once tore open the vest of the body, and placed his ear upon the region of the heart.

"Not dead," he said, "and a woman!"

"A woman!"

\* "Yes, sir. Do you not see the breast? This is a most singular affair truly. It is not only a woman, but a young and singularly beautiful one, too."

"What—what—what?" cried the blind canon, suddenly advancing, closely followed by the deaf one and the whole of the ecclesiastical throng, for they had gathered courage to follow the soldiers into the building, after hearing that they encountered no opposition, and that all was still.

"A young female, sir," said Mr. Harper.

"Send her to prison."

"No, no; she is wounded."

"Eh? eh?" said the deaf canon, stepping forward and looking at Cicely.

"Why—why—it's a young girl. Send her to my house. Oh, the hussey!"

"A hospital," said the Unitarian preacher, "is the proper place for her. Who will assist me to carry her?"

"No, no—to prison. Let them look after her in prison," persisted the blind canon.

Mr. Harper at once raised the insensible form of Cicely in his arms, and said—

"Let who will molest me. This young creature is badly hurt. Be she whom or what she may, there is but one duty to be fulfilled concerning her, and that is the duty of hospitality and Christian kindness. You, sir," to the officer, "I presume, have no wish to interfere with my taking this young creature to my family?"

"None in the least. It is not delicate women we seek, but strong men."

"What are they doing?" said the deaf canon. "Tell me, somebody."

"Please, sir," bawled one of the beadles into his ear-trumpet, "the gentleman as you often says you wishes was fired is a going to take the young woman home."

"Stop the devil. I said I'd take her."

"But you shan't have her," said Mr. Harper. "I am a married man, and can give her to the care of my wife; while your three wives are dead, and your house-keeper does not bear the best of characters; so get out of the way."

Mr. Harper brushed past the canons, and bore Cicely from the cathedral to his own house, which was not far off.

"What does he say?" cried the deaf canon.

"He says, sir, if you please, that he'd rather have her than you, for you have had three wives already, and have got a housekeeper now."

"Search the whole building," said the officer to his men. "I will wait with a file of men here. Take any one you meet with, dead or alive."

Our readers are well aware that Claude and his friends had escaped, so that the search was productive of no results; and, therefore, we need not follow it, but proceed at once to the residence of the Unitarian preacher, whither Cicely had been taken so rigorously and so promptly. A very few words from Mr. Harper sufficed to explain to his wife and daughter how he came by his new acquaintance, and leaving her in their care, he went for a Doctor Macqueen, who was in the city, and an intimate friend of his, as well as a man of extraordinary skill in his profession. The doctor returned immediately with Mr. Harper, and by the time they reached the house of the latter, Cicely was in bed, and had given some signs of consciousness. The medical man at once instituted an examination of the condition of his patient. In half an hour a bullet was extracted from a spot near the arm pit.

"It's well," said Macqueen, "that I had some experience in gun-shot wounds when I was with the army. There she goes!"

"Dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Harper.

"No, madam. This is only a state of syncope, from which she will recover. If no very serious injury has been done by the bullet, and if no inflammation supervene, the patient may recover.—Who is she?"

"That we know nothing about."

A loud knocking at the front door of the house now arrested the attention of Mr. Harper, who was in the adjoining room.

"Good gracious!" cried Macqueen, "what chance has a patient in such a house as this?—Just knock down whoever it is at the door."

Mr. Harper went down stairs, and found a couple of constables, who said to him—

"Sir, we are directed by Hamilton, to take into custody the person you brought from the cathedral."

"What, a wounded girl!"

"We cannot help it. Such are our orders, sir. She will be attended to if she requires any attendance, in the infirmary of the jail. Have her we must, and have her we will."

"Not while I am here," exclaimed Mr. Harper. "You can go and tell Mr. Hamilton that he is a disgrace to the bench upon more accounts than one, and that——"

The officers made a rush into the house, and a dangerous riot between them and Mr. Harper would have taken place, had not the doctor suddenly called from above, in a loud voice—

"Let them come up, Harper—let them come up. It is all the better. Don't hinder them."

Mr. Harper was astonished, and the officers rushed past him, and up the stairs. He quickly followed them, and when he reached the room in which was the wounded person, he found them standing thunderstricken. The body was covered over, face included, by a sheet, and Dr. Marqueen was standing by the toilette table washing his hands.

"Take her," he said. "You are too late, that's all. A stronger warrant than yours has been here already, my men."

"Dead!" said one.

"Look for yourself. Don't say I told you."

"Oh, no—no. We know you, sir. We—we don't want to meddle with any corpses. They ain't at all in our line. Come along, Jem, this won't do. Come on. Beg pardon, sir, for giving trouble, but we had our orders."

"It don't matter a straw to me," said the doctor, "one way or another."

The officers, looking rather crest-fallen, descended the staircase, and without another word left the house.

"Alas!" said Mr. Harper, "and so all our care has gone for nothing?"

"Humph!"

"When did she expire, poor thing? Just as I was below, I suppose. Why do you laugh?"

"Humph!" said the doctor.

## CHAPTER CXV.

### CLAUDE'S RETURN TO THE ROAD.

"The road!" said Claude, when Jack asked him what he was going to do. "The road."

It would seem as if he wished to stop Jack from making any reply to this, for at the moment he put his horse to speed, and Hampstead Heath was soon left behind a considerable distance. Jack was well mounted, and kept up with Claude without any difficulty, and thus they rode on for two miles without encountering any one, or exchanging a single word. At length Claude pulled up.

"Jack," he said, "we are on the wrong road."

"How do you mean, Claude?"

"Why, that there will be nothing worth having here. We must find a way across the country to the great North Road, Jack. If I mistake not, there is a lane here that will take us to the right."

"Yes," said Jack, "I know it will. It is not fifty paces on."

"Come, then."

The lane was reached in a few moments, and Jack, as he pointed down it amid the darkness, said—

"It is three miles across the country to the Barnet Road, Claude, and when there, of course anything that goes or comes on the high North Road must pass us. But there have been so many robberies on that road lately, that no one is better watched or protected."

"That don't make much difference, I think, to us, Jack. Since you left the road, though, I should have thought they had got quit of their apprehensions, for time was, when for fifty miles upon the North Road travellers used to ask each other—'Have you seen Sixteen-String Jack?'"

"Ah, yes. They did. I have been asked the question myself, and I have often replied, 'Yes, in a glass, but you may see him without one. Look at me.' Come on, come on, Claude. I don't want to think of the past. It is too horrible for me, and contains far too many sad reminiscences."

"And what," said Claude, in a voice of gloom, "must be the past to me?"

"Think no more of it, Claude—think no more of it. Come, a sharp trot will take us to the North Road in twenty minutes. On—on."

Off they went down the lane. The dark, and by that dim light of the night, strange, mystic-looking hedges and trees flashed past them. Occasionally they would pass some garden wall, and a watch-dog would bay out his alarm. A gloomy mansion or two would loom upon their vision for a few moments, and then all would be trees and hedges again, from which now and then some startled bird would fly, with a shrill cry of fear, as the tramping of the horses' hoofs upon the hard ground startled it from its slumber. The air was keen and damp, and loaded with vegetable odours, mingled with which now and then would come the scent of the climatis; and so on they went until they suddenly emerged from the lane, and saw the lights twinkling in the high street of Barnet. Claude drew up, and so did Jack.

"How do you feel now?" said the latter.

"Better, better. Ah! some one comes. A toll—a toll."

They heard the tramp of a horse, at a canter.

"Stay for me, Jack," said Claude, and into the middle of the road he went.

"Halt!" he cried, and the passenger drew bridle.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing particular," said Claude. "Are you a gentleman?"

"Who dares question my title?"

"Oh, that will do. Are you aware that there is a toll levied upon this road, and that I am the new collector? Your money, watch, rings, and so on, sir, if you please."

"Ah! A highwayman."

"Exactly. Come, sir. Delays are dangerous, and my best friends say I am short tempered."

"Both friends and enemies say I am," retorted the traveller. "If you come near me, I'll knock you down with my riding whip."

"Indeed. Are riding whips to decide it? Here goes then."

Claude darted up to the stranger, who made a blow at him, which was dexterously avoided, but the heavy silver handle of Claude's whip fell upon the shoulder of the stranger, who gave a cry of pain, and shrunk down upon his horse.

"Is it enough?" said Claude.

"Curses on you, whoever you are. If I had but my pistols."

"What a pity. Now, sir, your money, watch, &c., &c."

"Well, well, you must have them."

He put his hand in his pocket, and rapidly pulling out a small pistol, he fired it in Claude's face. The bullet made a furrow along Claude's cheek, which at the moment he was perfectly unconscious of. The smoke and the charge so close to him, had no confusing effect upon him. Before the traveller could get away, he grasped the bridle of his horse, and said—

"Now, sir, your money, watch, &c., &c."

"Have you a charmed life?"

"Yes—quick, quick!"

The traveller handed to Claude a purse and his watch, saying as he did so—

"I'll have you yet, as sure as my name is Faversham."

"Faversham? Is that your name? You could not have one more hateful to me."

"What exception can you take to it? I am Sir John Faversham."

"The eldest son of Sir Lionel, of the Old Grange?"

"Yes—the same."

"Well; your father falsely swore away the life of my father, and so some years ago I shot your father upon Hampstead Heath; I have heard of you as his fiend-tempered, hard-hearted, generally disliked son."

"Villain! you are then——"

"Claude Duval. I thank you for calling me villain, for by so doing you have made a new quarrel with me; I had forgiven your pistol shot, but now we begin again. Dismount, sir, this instant."

Claude sprung from his own horse, and seizing Sir John Faversham by the leg, he tilted him off his horse, after which he began lashing him with the riding whip, until he was tired of the exercise, when he seized him by the back of the neck and tossed him into a pond by the way-side. The horse of Sir John galloped off, and Claude, as he mounted his own, cried—

"The next time we meet you will be more civil. Jack! This way! the road! the road! Life on the road for me!"

Jack and Claude galloped off towards Barnet.

"Did you hear all that?" said Claude, when they were about two miles on.

"Yes, all. You served him right. He is so generally detested for his vicious temper, that if he tell the story, it will rejoice everybody who hears it. My opinion is, however, that he will keep it a profound secret, and seek by some underhand means to have his revenge upon you."

"Let him, let him. Where are we now, Jack?"

"Near a public-house, called the Half Way." We are a good twenty miles from London now—just listen a moment; Claude, don't you hear wheels on the road?"

"Yes, yes. Let us step aside."

In a few moments, a man driving a small cart came by Claude. Fancying that he heard the sound of other wheels in the distance, as well as those of the cart, he called to the man, saying—

"Is anything on the road?"

"Nothing as I knows on," said the man, "but the York mail, that will be up soon, I take it."

"Thank you."

The man passed on, and Claude turning to Jack, said—

"I don't think I ever stopped the York mail yet; I will try my hand at that to-night. It will be something for the newspapers to talk about to-morrow, at all events, not that I expect much booty from mail-coach passengers. But there is always some fun in such an affair."

"And no small amount of hazard," said Jack.

"I think the hazard is less than it appears. People don't carry much money when they travel by public conveyances, and as it is, of course, everybody's business to repel an attack, it becomes no body's."

"There is something in that, Claude. But shall I not accompany you?"

"If I want you, I will whistle. But until then, Jack—pardon me for having the vanity to suppose I can rob the York Mail by myself."

"Very well."

Jack trotted his horse to the road side, and Claude stopped in the middle of the highway, to commit the audacity of stopping a mail coach, in which were four good horses, and upon the outside of which was a guard, with a loaded blunderbuss. He had not to wait long, for the mail was well horsed, and on it came, a great lumbering machine as it was, at a capital pace. The lights flashed upon the roadway, illumining the trees and hedges with transient beams.

"Hold!" cried Claude, in a voice that was plainly heard above all the rattle of the wheels, and all the tramp of the cattle. "Hold hard!"

The coachman half pulled up. With annoying quickness Claude rode up to the pair of horses nearest to the coach; and cut the traces upon the side next to



him. This was done before the coachman could think of what it was better to do. But the guard dragged his blunderbuss from the case, and presenting it at Claude, just as he had finished cutting the trace, cried—

“Take that, Mr. Highwayman.”

Click!—pluff! went the lock and the priming.

“Why, what a fool you must be,” said Claude, “who ever heard of a guard’s blunderbuss going off properly. Come down. Come down!”

“Oh, no—no—no.”

“Come down!”

Claude presented a pistol at him, and down rolled the guard. In an instant Claude seized him by the collar with his left hand, and fired his pistol into his ear with his right. Down went the guard, and then replacing his discharged pistol in his breast, and drawing out another, Claude cried—

“Coachman, sit still, and no harm shall come to you. Move, and you will be shot through the head.” Then bolting up to the coach door, he let down the window, and looking in, he said—

“Ladies and gentlemen, I will trouble you for your purses and watches. Quick—Quick!”

Two ladies who were there screamed, and two gentlemen gave up their purses with surprising alacrity. The ladies likewise handed theirs, and one her watch.

“More watches,” said Claude.

The gentlemen handed theirs, and the one lady, who had not produced such an article, said—

“Oh, Mr. Highwayman, forgive me for not having a watch. You shall have my rings.”

“Certainly not, madam. Do not distress yourself, I beg. I never like ladies’ rings. Gentlemen, if you have any, will you have the goodness to hand them to me.”

“I have none,” said one. “I, said the other, have one, but it is a mourning ring, which I wish very much to keep, if you will permit me.”

“Certain’y—certain’y, I make war against folk’s pockets, but not against their affections.”

“You are singularly polite. May we know who you are?”

“Claude Duval!”

There was a sensation among the passengers at the mention of this name, and one of the ladies said—

“Well, I don’t mind being robbed by Claude Duval, for it will be something to talk about as long as one lives.”

“Madam, you do me honour!”

“Come out of that!” cried a voice behind Claude, “I won’t stand nothin’. Come off thy horse, man, and I’ll show thee what I can do.”

“What can you do?” said Claude, turning round rapidly and surveying a brawny-looking countryman, who had descended from the roof of the coach.

“What can you do, my friend?”

“I bean’t no friend o’ your’n. Don’t make any use of thy popguns, and I’ll polish thee off in no time. Come, I’ll give it to thee.”

Claude whistled, and up came Jack.

“Hold my horse half a moment, Jack. Here’s a north-countryman going to polish me off, he says, if I won’t shoot him.”

Claude hastily dismounted, and the countryman sprung upon and laid hold of him round the waist with the grasp of a wrestler. Tug—tug—tug!

“Will that do?” said Claude coolly. “Try again.”

The fellow made a stupendous effort, and nearly bent Claude double, but the moment he let his breath go, Claude slipped his hands to the small of his antagonist’s back, and by a dexterous movement he canted him fairly over his head, and there he lay quite senseless upon the road.

“Will that do?” said Claude.

There was no reply, and Duval immediately mounted.

"Farewell," he said. "You will easily mend your traces, and you can say that you were stopped on the road by Claude Duval while there was a reward of two thousand pounds hanging over him for his death or capture. Good night."

Away he galloped and Jack with him, but the latter said—

"Ah, Claude, I'm sorry you killed the guard."

"Killed the guard? I did no such thing, Jack, I only frightened him. There was nothing but powder in the pistol; I dare say it scorched his whiskers a little."

"What a relief," said Jack. "Now, indeed, I see nothing, but a good scope for mirth in the stopping of the York mail. It will make some noise in London, Claude, to-morrow morning, I rather think."

## CHAPTER CXVI.

### OAKLEY LODGE.

"We must bait now, Jack," said Claude. "Look out for some resting place."

"There is a light on in advance a little way. Do you not see it? There, among the trees—there."

"Yes—yes. It is an inn."

"By the ruddy character of the light I should think it was, Claude. Let us drive on and take a look at it. Don't you think the country will be up in arms against us by the morning?"

"It may be, Jack. But it won't do for us to wait until then. We must make an appearance here again in about three weeks; the principle upon which we must go must be to visit one district only, occasionally. We must strike a blow and then be off."

"Then you have done for to-night, Claude?"

"I hope so, for I am tired, Jack. Ah, this is not an inn. Why, something is going on here, surely."

As he spoke, Claude drew rein at the lodge entrance to some estate. A large bright lamp was burning there, and the moment he and Jack appeared, a servant rushed out, and cried—

"Oh, sir, how glad we are to see you. Come in, sir. My young mistress, I am sure, will be quite delighted, and so will the old lady. This way, sir—this way. Is this your friend, sir?"

"My friend."

"Very good, gentlemen; any friend of yours, of course, sir, must be welcome indeed."

"The deuce he must," thought Claude. "Who am I taken for now, I wonder? Come on—come on, Jack. Let us see the end of this adventure."

The servant went on officiously enough before, and Claude and Jack paced their rather tired horses up a beautiful avenue of chesnuts, that led to what, as far as they could judge of it by the darkness, was a large and handsome house. They were met at the door by several servants, one of whom, an old grey bearded domestic, said—

"Is this the gentleman?"

"Yes," said the servant, who had met Claude at the gate; "and this is his friend."

"Nay," interposed Jack, who always had rather a dread of being introduced to high people and drawing-rooms. "He is good enough to call me his friend, because I saved his life once, I believe, but I am only a servant."

"Oh, how good of him!" cried all the servants in a breath. "How good of the major. How my young lady will delight in such a trait of goodness."

"The devil," thought Claude. "I am a major, am I?"  
 "I will remain with all of you," said Jack, "upon one condition; and that is, that no question is asked me."  
 "Oh, we have our orders to say nothing," remarked the servants. "Not one word will we say—not a word. This way, if you please, sir—(to Claude)—this



OLD MATTHEW, OF THE ANTLERS, PREVENTS JOLIFFE FROM SHOOTING CLAUDE.

way. There is a capital fire in the library, and Mr. Fordyce will be quite delighted to see you."

"Mr. Fordyce," thought Claude; "now, how I should like to know who he is."

Jack remained in the servants' hall, and Claude, having divested himself of his riding cloak, appeared in the really handsome suit of clothes, of rather a clerical

cut, in which he had paid his visit to the Secretary of State. He was conducted along a passage, and then through two elegantly furnished rooms into a third, which was covered upon the walls with books in superb bindings. An elegant chandelier was suspended from the ceiling, and an elderly gentleman, with a bald head, upon which was sprinkled some hair powder, rose to meet him. The old gentleman stretched out both hands, as the servant announced Claude as—

“Major Young.”

“My dear sir, I am delighted to see you, after all the sinister rumours to the contrary. Oh, what a world of anxiety Mrs. Evelyn has suffered upon your account. As for Belinda, I cannot say that she has really felt so sternly the affair about the property, for the loss of John has affected her too deeply.”

“Indeed, sir,” said Claude, who felt pleased, at all events, to find who he was taken for in the mystery.

“Yes, my dear sir. But the young folks will be young folks. The report of your death at St. Helena was confounding.”

“Not a doubt of it, sir.”

“But still, as the old family adviser, I stuck to it that the ladies should be allowed to remain in quiet possession of the estates until this day and night had passed away, for it was upon this date, you know, that you said you would be here, in your letter dated at Bombay.”

“Exactly.”

“Well, my dear sir, the Wights would not consent.”

“D—n them!” said Claude.

“Hush! hush! you military gentlemen get such a sad habit of swearing. As I was saying, the Wights would not wait, but swore they would come with their solicitor at twelve o'clock to-night, and take possession if you were not here to prove the signature to the deed sent home by John, and which you alone witnessed, for if nothing could be proved on account of your death at St. Helena, you see, the demise would have been useless, and the Wights, according to the terms of Wilkinson's bequest, would have become possessed of the estate in fee simple.”

“The devil they would,” said Claude, who felt rather confused at this legal jargon.

“Yes, major, and rather than be engaged in troublesome litigation, which would be adverse to the Evelyns for a certainty, they would have given way, not that the Wights would have shown them the smallest consideration, for a more selfish—oh, dear, I don't know what to say they are.”

“Really,” said Claude.

“Have you not heard John speak of them?”

“Very likely.”

“Ah, you did not pay much attention.”

“No, not much.”

“And yet, poor fellow, after you had taken care of him during a toilsome march of four hundred miles through the most hostile part of India, he actually expired in your arms. What must have been your feelings?”

“Ah, what, indeed. Confound the Wights, and the Wilkinsons, and the Evelyns,” thought Claude. “I only wish I was out of this.”

“So, sir, you see you perfectly understood our position. I dreaded the case of ‘Doe on the demise of Wilkinson,’ you see.”

“So should I.”

“Now, my dear sir, I will go and prepare the ladies for your reception. They will both be deeply affected upon seeing you.”

“But, my dear sir, I am so little accustomed to business, that now I hardly know what I am to do, precisely.”

“Dear me, it's as plain as possible. You see, John Evelyn, before he went to India, was not worth twopence, but old Wilkinson, who, to tell the truth, had robbed the Evelyns of a great amount of money, suddenly dies, and leaves John £100,000 and this estate, with a clause that he, John, might leave it to whom he

pleased, but that if he should die without issue, or without executing a deed of demise to any one, his, old Wilkinson's own family, in regular legal succession, were to inherit."

"Yes. Yes. To be sure."

"Well, John, when he heard all this, wrote back from Calcutta, that, as the army was going upon an expedition against the Jongmars, he could not, with honour, leave until the campaign was over, but that his sister, Belinda, and his mother were to take possession of Oakley Lodge."

"Where's that?"

"Here, my dear sir; here."

"Oh, ah; to be sure."

"Even to take possession of Oakley Lodge, and to have what cash they pleased. Lord bless you, sir, in the two years they have been here, they have not used a thousand pounds of the money at Coutts's. Well, major, then comes your letter about the death of poor John, and you enclosed a deed, which he made, while wounded, by the assistance of a civilian, who since died, putting Belinda in possession of the property."

"Oh yes, yes—I believe I was tolerably explicit."

"Very. Well, the Wights—old Wilkinson's heirs-at-law—laid claim to the whole, and commenced proceedings, saying—'If Major Young witnessed John Evelyn's signature to the deed, let him come and say so; but he does no such thing.' It was then, you see, that I heard of your death at St. Helena."

"But you see I'm worth half-a-dozen dead ones yet."

"To be sure. You said you would be here to-day, and I always doubted the news of your death, so I actually placed the servants on the look-out for you, and I am sure the pleasure I felt, as the old friend of the late Mr. Evelyn and all his dear good family, when I heard you had come, almost made me a young man again—that it did."

"Then," said Claude, who now had a clear comprehension of the whole affair, and of who he was mistaken for, "these Evelyns are amiable people?"

"Amiable? They are indeed."

"And what are the Wights really?"

"Why, old Wight, who married Wilkinson's sister, is a pawnbroker and money lender. His son Joseph is an attorney in Gray's-Inn—"

"That's enough," said Claude. "Damn them!"

"My dear sir!"

"Excuse me, but will you allow me to say a word to my man, whom I left in the hall; I should like to make a slight change in my dress. After riding many miles in one coat, one gets sick of it."

"Oh, certainly; I will have you shown to a chamber, while I prepare the ladies to see you, and your own man shall attend you. Dear me—dear me—I have been so remiss as not to ask you to take any refreshment."

"My good sir," I will take a cup of coffee with the ladies when I come down stairs again, if you please."

"Yes, yes. That will give them much pleasure, my dear sir."

The lawyer rang the bell and ordered a servant to show the major into a chamber, and to bring to him his own man. All this was done, and in the course of a few minutes Claude and Jack found themselves alone in a magnificent bed-chamber, with half-a-dozen wax lights burning upon the toilette table.

"Jack," said Claude, "shut the door."

Jack did so.

"Have you got our valaise?"

"Yes, they told me you wanted to make some change in your dress, so I brought it in my hand."

"Good. Now listen to me, Jack, and I will astonish you."

Jack did listen to him, and that most attentively too, while Claude related to him at full length all that he had heard from the lawyer.

"So you see, Jack," he said, "they will make me a military man, whether

I like it or not; and as, from all I can hear, I like the Evelyns and detest the Wights—why, I feel much inclined to support the character.”

“Do so, Claude. Let this be one of the good deeds that shall plead for you?”

“Humph! We won’t talk of the goodness of my deeds. But have we anything in the vallaise that will help to make me up in a more military appearance than I now have.”

“Yes. An undress officer’s frock-coat, elegantly braided. Oh, you will do famously.”

Claude put on the coat which, like all the apparel he had provided himself with, was of the first character, and with a rich new lace cravat he certainly looked a gentleman of extraordinary good breeding.”

“That will do,” he said.

“Do!” cried Jack. “They may look far and wide, Claude, before they find your equal. It is splendid.”

“Well, Jack, all you have to remember is, that I am Major Young of the Indian Army, and you have been with me in several battles, and once saved my life. You have a recollection, too, of John Evelyn. Now I will go down stairs. I can’t miss my way, for the staircase is sensibly lighted here.”

## CHAPTER CXVII.

### A FAMILY SCENE.

Claude, thus attired, and certainly presenting a distinguished appearance, descended the staircase, but just as he got within six steps of the bottom he saw a door open and the lawyer appeared.

“Ah! major,” he said. “I was coming to call you.”

“I hope,” said Claude, “I have not kept you waiting, sir, nor the ladies.”

“Oh, no. They are both in the drawing-room and will do themselves the pleasure of seeing you at once. They will be affected, but you will do your best, I am sure, to re-assure them and to waive any very close remarks concerning poor John. The less that is said of him the better.”

“I perfectly agree with you, sir.”

“Well, well,” muttered the old lawyer to himself as he preceded Claude. It is one comfort to find poor John’s friend such a perfect gentleman. Oh dear—oh dear, if he really had died at St. Helena in coming home from India! It won’t bear thinking of—it won’t bear thinking of.”

“Humph!” thought Claude. “I strongly suspect that there the real major does lie, but if by personating him I can do a great good to worthy people, I shall think the sin of doing so amply absolved.”

Claude was right, we think. The drawing-room door was thrown open by the lawyer, who stepping aside to allow Claude to enter first, said—

“My dear ladies, this is Major Young, and I introduce him to you as a real gentleman as well as a real friend.”

Claude walked into the room. A young lady whose age could not be above seventeen, advanced to meet him. She held out her hand, but before he could reach her she stopped short, overcome by her emotions, and burst into tears. An old lady was seated in an arm chair weeping bitterly.

“Pray be composed,” said Claude. “Accept such consolation as one who feels deeply for you, can offer. Remember, ladies, that we are all upon the shore of that unknown sea which washes the haven of immortality, and that the time will come when bright eyes that we loved upon earth will beam upon us for ever, and the smiles of lips we loved to kiss will be eternal.”

These words were uttered in tones of earnest and of feeling sympathy. The

ladies ceased their tears, and the old lawyer, as he retreated to a window, muttered—

“Yes—yes, he is indeed a gentleman.”

“Oh, sir,” said the old lady. “How much we owe you.”

“We can never be sufficiently grateful,” said the young lady. “May God bless and reward you, sir.”

Claude bowed, and with a smile said—

“I am sufficiently rewarded by having the good fortune to come in time, here. But I see you are about to take your coffee now. Allow me to feel myself quite at home, and at once to assume all the privileges of an old friend. Come, Miss Evelyn, pray be seated, and you, madam, will perhaps, allow me to take a place near to you.”

“Ah!” sighed the old lawyer. “What a thing it is in this world to meet with a real right down gentleman.”

It was yet some time before the old lady could recover her ordinary composure so as to be able to speak to Claude, and when she did, her first words were—

“Oh, sir, my poor John—my poor John.”

“Think upon some other subject, my dear madam,” said Claude.

“Alas! while I live I can never think upon anything else. Belinda, my dear, do you attend to the major, I am quite unequal to the task of doing so. God bless you, sir—God bless you; I do not so particularly say that because you came to save us from ruin as because you have been a friend to my poor John.”

“Mother—mother,” said the young lady, “say no more. Let us feel that, though John has gone from us, he is happier than if he were with us, and we shall see him again.”

“You are right, Miss Evelyn,” said Claude. “The more we bring our reason to bear upon the subject the more we shall be reconciled to death. In the first place, it is meritable and it is kind, but we leave some one behind to mourn for us. Then again, it is the end of pain and sorrow, whereas life is the beginning.”

“True enough,” said the lawyer, “life is like a long lawsuit, and death like a judgment in one’s favour, which puts us into possession, without cavil or dispute about title of the most splendid property in value—the limitless heaven!”

The old lady looked from one to the other, and gradually she dried her tears. Her reason was getting decidedly the ascendancy over any morbid feelings that had previously occupied her brain, and from that time forth it was not likely she would again make her few remaining years, years of sorrow. Belinda, too, looked more happy, and by the time the coffee had gone round twice, the little party looked quite a different thing to what it had been. An old clock upon the chimney-piece struck eleven.

“Oh!” said the lawyer. “Eleven o’clock. Why—our friends, I was going to say, but I ought more properly to say our foes—the Wights, will be here soon, no doubt; but here is what will confound them.”

As he spoke, he took a paper from his pocket, and handed it to Claude, who, upon opening it, found it was the deed which he was supposed to have witnessed. From the document he gathered the information that he was, for the time being, to be Cornelius Young, a major in the Bombay cavalry. At this moment, a servant came into the room and said—

“If you please, madam, there are some people coming to the house. They are talking very loud, and won’t say what their business is.”

“Let them come,” said the lawyer. “Take no notice of them.”

The servant retired.

“Now, my dear sir,” added the lawyer to Claude, “there is a nice fire in the next drawing-room, and by having the door of communication ajar, you will hear what these people say, and so be able to form a correct judgment regarding them. When I want you I will open the door, and then you can walk in.”

“Certainly,” said Claude. “Arrange the matter in any way you think proper, sir. I am completely at your service.”

Claude rose, and went into the next drawing-room, and he had not been there a

moment when he heard the old grey-headed butler arrive in the apartment he had left, and say—

“Ma’am, there are five or six men coming here, they say.”

“Let them come,” said the lawyer. “Let them come, Mr. Green. We are quite ready to receive them.”

There was a bustle of feet, and then the drawing-room door was roughly thrown open, and six persons entered. The foremost was a thick-set, bald-headed man, with a white face, and a most sinister expression about the eyes. He was followed by a much younger man, who seemed a little frightened, for he kept in the rear of the older one. These were Wight, the money lender, and his son, the attorney. They were followed by four rather seedy-looking individuals, of the class that are to be seen any day hanging about the inns of court. Old Wight advanced to the middle of the room, and said—

“Well, ladies, you see I am a little before my time. Better that than too late.”

“He!—he!—he!” chuckled the son, as he stole a furtive glance around him at the superb appointments of the room.

“Well, sir?” said the lawyer.

“And well, sir,” cried Wight, swelling himself out like a turkey-cock. “Pray, sir, what have you got to say?”

“It is natural, as you have come here, that we should ask you what you have to say. What is your business here, Mr. Wight, as I believe your name is?”

“Oh, very well—very well. My business here, then, is to take possession of this property, which you and the ladies have agreed I might do, if your witness to the deed of gift did not make his appearance before twelve to-night, and as we feel tolerably sure the person named died at St. Helena, we think of sleeping here to-night. You will, sir, provide yourself with a lodging; I have no objection to the ladies sleeping here to-night, but in the morning they must tramp, bag and baggage. At least, when I say baggage, I shall take good care they move nothing belonging to the house, at all.”

“He! he! he! father’s a sharp ’un,” said the son.

“But recollect, Mr. Wight, we might go to law to prove the deed by getting witnesses from India, on oath, to prove the major’s signature, and Mr. John Evelyn’s to the deed, you know.”

“Then I’ll throw the whole affair into Chancery, and there will be a receiver appointed to the estate, and you will all be dead and rotten before it’s settled.”

“Ah, dear me, yes. Well, if the major don’t come to depose to the deed, I suppose you will, if we give up quiet possession, allow the ladies five hundred a-year, as a maintenance, Mr. Wight. Recollect the income you lay claim to is somewhere about five thousand pounds per annum, independent of this estate.”

“Pho, pho! Don’t tell me, sir, let ’em get a living as they can, I don’t keep paupers. There’s the parish for everybody; I’ll tell you what I’ll do, I’ll forgive what they have spent since John Evelyn’s death, if they go quietly, but if they will go to law, I’ll arrest them for that, and I dare say it comes to something. You know I can claim it.”

“Oh, yes; certainly. If you can claim the estate, you can claim arrears.”

“Exactly, so you see we know all about it.”

“He! he! he!” laughed the son.

“Well then,” said the old lawyer, “since you have no feeling in this subject but for your own interests, and since it becomes absolutely necessary that these ladies should protect themselves, I have no resource but to introduce to your attention Major Young.”

As he spoke, the lawyer moved to the door of the room, and opening it, Claude stepped forward at once, and confronted the party. The consternation excited by his appearance was as great as if a bomb-shell had fallen into the room. Claude had upon his face a stern look as he advanced upon the Wights. The son got fairly behind the father, and Claude coming to within two paces of the latter, said—



"Well, sir, what would you with me?"

Old Wight stepped back until he trod upon his son's toes; but he made no answer for about half a minute, then, however, he contrived to stammer out—

"Are you Major Young, really; and not dead?"

"Ask your own eyes, sir, for the latter part of your question, and this gentleman," indicating the lawyer, "for the former."

"The devil!"

The son groaned.

"Thomas!" roared the old lawyer, and a servant appeared.

"Go and fetch a constable to turn these people out of your mistress's house directly."

"Yes, sir."

"Curse you all," said Old Wight, as he buttoned his coat up to his chin—"curse you all, I—I—d—n it, I should like to see you all roasting, I should, I—I—Come along."

The son, as he left the drawing-room managed to lay hold of a small bronze and gold inkstand, but Claude saw him, and with two strides he came up to him, and took him by the collar, at the same time saluting him with a hearty kick.

"Stop thief!" said Claude.

"Oh, oh, murder!"

Down dropped the inkstand, and old Wight, turning to Claude, said, as he shook his fist at him—

"That's an assault; if I don't have you up for it at the quarter sessions my name ain't Wight, that's all."

"Not quite all," said Claude.

"What more then?"

"Why at the same quarter sessions I'll charge your son with robbing in a dwelling-house."

"Oh, come away, father—come away. Don't mind him—come away!"

"Jack!" cried Claude; "Jack, bring me my horsewhip directly."

With this, the father and son, and the four doubtful-looking characters they had brought with them, made a wild sort of rush from the drawing-room and down the grand staircase as though they had been mad. They did not stop until they had got fairly out of the house, nor did they think themselves safe in the grounds, for they heard, as they passed through the hall, one of the servants say something about tossing them in a blanket.

"Well," said Claude with a smile, "you have got rid of your enemies."

"Thanks to you," said Miss Evelyn.

"Oh no, I have but done my duty, and I assure you I have not enjoyed anything so much for a long time, as the discomfiture of those Wights."

"Nor I," said the lawyer. "Now, ladies, do not let this gentleman and I keep you up. Go to bed, and we will have a bottle of wine together and then retire. In the morning we can talk over affairs more fully."

The ladies upon this rose, and old Mrs. Evelyn would kiss Claude, upon which Claude tenderly but respectfully kissed Belinda; and when they had left the room the old lawyer looked hard at Claude, and said—

"You are a single man?"

"Yes."

"Ah—humph! Whoever marries Belinda Evelyn, will get a treasure, for she is one of the best of creatures. Bless her, the more one sees of her the more one loves her. She is a real, honest, good English girl."

## CHAPTER CXVII.

## THE WESTERN ROAD.

THE comforts of Jack were not forgotten in the progress of this extraordinary adventure, and Claude with the lawyer sat up until one o'clock in the morning, disposing of a bottle of wine. They then, with mutual expressions of esteem, retired for the night, and Claude slept like a prince in Oakley Lodge that night. It had several times occurred to him to make a confidant of the lawyer, and to disclose to him the whole particulars of the mistake that been made at the lodge gate, in his identity. But upon second thoughts, he considered that it was as well to leave well alone, so he kept the secret locked up in his own breast. To be sure he had to parry some rather home questions concerning the late John Evelyn, but he managed to do so, and the lawyer had no more suspicion that Claude was not Major Young, than he had of his own identity. The bright sun was shining into Claude's bed-room when he awoke in the morning, and Claude lay looking about him in that half dreamy state, between sleeping and waking, which some persons declare to be the most delightful period of existence. No wonder that Claude fell into a train of reflections; and no wonder, considering all things, that some portion of those reflections were painful. His thoughts flew back to the time when he was at his father's humble, but once happy home at Hampstead; and he could, by closing his eyes, fancy that he saw the cottage porch, with its clustering climatis intermingled with the sweet woodbine, and the great chesnut tree; that was some paces before the door, and the little stream, too, that ran bubbling by, singing its pebbly song as though elate with idleness. And then in the strange dioramic view of the past, that imagination was presenting to him, came some darker passages in his career. His first robbing—his first—no, he would not, he could not call the death of Sir Lionel Faversham by his father's gibbet, a murder—it was to all intents and purposes, an execution.

"No, no," he said, "if ever there was an act which might be defended before the bar of Heaven, it surely was that of the son taking the life of him, who by the basest treachery had sacrificed his father." After this Claude's recollections went to Jack, and the gallant appearance that he had made when he, Claude, first saw him in the Hampstead-road in the waggon, which was a shelter at once for both man and horse. Alas! what a change had come over poor Jack! And as to the future, how dim and dreary it looked to Claude. He felt like some wrecked mariner deprived of his all, and cast upon the shores of a sea across which he was never again to wend his way. What was to become of him? What was he now to hope for? Was he to die in some ignoble scuffle on the road, or at last to be fairly taken and made a spectacle of, to gaping thousands upon the gallows? Tap! tap! came upon Claude's door. He started up in bed, and mechanically thrust his hand under his pillow, where he had placed his pistols over night. For many a long night Claude had not slept without these weapons close to his reach.

"Who knocks?" he cried.

"I," said Jack.

Claude knew the voice, and at once said—

"Come in, Jack—it is you, I think?"

"Yes, Claude."

The door was opened, and Claude placed his finger upon his lips, as he said—

"Hush, hush, Jack. Do not give utterance to that name. Remember who and what I am supposed to be here."

"It was a slip of the tongue," said Jack.

"Yes, and might be full of dangerous consequences. But have you any news?"

"None, but that, in the first place, it is time to get up, and in the next it is time to determine thoroughly what we mean to do."

"Yes, Jack, yes."

Claude began hastily dressing himself, and in a very short time had completed that operation.

"Now, Jack," he said, "the horses."

"Off and away!"



CLAUDE, AS MAJOR YOUNG, DOES A BENEVOLENT ACT AT OAKLEY HALL.

"Yes, as soon as consistent with common civility I can get away from these people; I only sincerely hope, much as I admire them, that I may never look upon their faces again."

"Why, what have they done to you, Claude?"

"Nothing, nothing; but I have by the merest accident in the world been able to do them a service, and I would not that they should even know me in any other character than that I was so strangely induced to assume, for worlds."

"I can understand that, Claude."

"I knew you would, Jack ; so get all ready as soon after we have breakfasted as possible, for I know, of course, that they will not let us go before."

"Not likely, Claude. I will see to the horses, and you will find me close at hand at any moment that you please."

Jack left Claude's chamber, and he had not been gone long when one of the servants of the house came to tender his services as valet to Claude : but there was no occasion for such service, since Claude was all but ready to go down stairs. He enquired if any of the family were stirring, and was informed that at nine o'clock the whole of them would be assembled in the breakfast-room. Claude, upon consulting his watch, found that it was then a quarter to eight only, and an idea struck him which he immediately resolved to put into practice.

"I have just time, I find," he said, "for half an hour's ride before dressing for breakfast with the ladies. Will you be so good as to order my horse, and tell my man to be ready to accompany me from the lodge."

"Yes, sir."

The servant evidently considered that there was nothing at all extraordinary in this, and he went at once to give the necessary orders. Claude followed him down stairs, and as he walked through the magnificent drawing-room, he could not but give a sigh to the thought that he, had fortune prompted him, might really have been the possessor of so much substantial wealth. He could not but feel, however, how dangerous such thoughts were to his tranquillity, and he crushed them in the bud. It did certainly occur to him to write a brief note, saying that he was compelled to leave without the formality of a leave-taking ; but then again, he shrank from signing the fictitious name to it, which would be absolutely necessary, and he preferred, after all, leaving without any such ceremony. The servant lost no time in giving the orders with which Claude had entrusted him, and the horses, with Jack, were soon at the hall door. Jack understood at once, from the message that had been brought him, what Claude meant, and consequently he had packed the *vallise* containing their disguises upon the back of his own steed, therefore all was ready. Claude sprang into the saddle, and without a word, turned his back upon the house, to the inhabitants of which he had been enabled to give so much satisfaction. They had proceeded about half way to the lodge, when Jack, riding closer to Claude, said—

"Have you left a note or message?"

"No, Jack."

"And yet you really mean to be off?"

"I do."

"Then the result will be that, missing us without a word of explanation, the good folks at the house here will spare neither time, trouble; nor expense to find out what has become of us. They will wait breakfast until God knows when, and then, upon finding we don't come back, they will fancy that we have become the victims of some foul play, and gratitude to you will induce them to raise the whole country upon the subject. You can probably, better than I, Claude, estimate what evils are likely to arise from such a state of things."

"Upon my word, Jack," said Claude, "all that is very true."

"You see it, Claude?"

"Oh, perfectly; and I find, and admit at once, that I have been precipitate."

"Will you go back?"

"Oh, no—no. And I do not like to write. But I will leave at the lodge such a verbal message as, at all events, will have the effect of preventing any such surmises as those you have mentioned occurring concerning us; and, whatever may be the amount of astonishment and regret occasioned by my taking so unceremonious a leave, there will be no hue and cry after me."

"Good," said Jack. "That will do."

By the time this little conversation had come to an end, they had turned a corner in the avenue of trees, and were within sight of the lodge entrance, at

which they had in the first instance been so strangely welcomed. Jack fell back to a proper distance from Claude, and the latter, slightly increasing the pace of his horse, soon reached the pair of handsome gates that formed the entrance to the mansion. The gate-keeper saw him coming, and respectfully opened the gates, and three men stood holding one of them back.

"Tell the ladies, your kind and good mistresses," said Claude, "that it is only from a feeling that it would pain me too much to bid them formally good bye, that I leave their home without doing so. Say that, if we never meet again, that I can never forget the few happy hours I have spent here."

"And are you really, sir, not coming back?"

"I am not. Good morning."

The man looked both grieved and bewildered, but he made no other remark; and Claude, with Jack so close to him as to preclude the possibility of any remark being made to him upon the subject, passed through the gate.

"It is done," said Claude, with a sigh.

"And very well done, too," said Jack. "It is a good job over, Claude; and now, here we are, with all the world before us, where to choose."

"What is your opinion, Jack, regarding Matthew, at the Antlers? Will he pocket the usage he got from me quietly, or will he raise an alarm that I am in this neighbourhood, think you?"

"He will secretly, and without for one moment allowing himself to be seen in the matter, let the authorities know that you are hereabouts."

"That, upon consideration, was my own opinion; so, Jack, if you see nothing to the contrary, suppose we strike across the country to the Western Road?"

"Agreed."

"Which will be the best way?"

"Right across the Heath, Claude, and so on through the lanes to the Edgware Road, and then we can get by Kilburn and Willesden, to the Western Road."

"Yes, that will be the best route. Come on, Jack."

The horses had had a good night's rest in an excellent stable, so that they were as fresh as the morning, and when put to a canter, got over the ground in famous style. The only drawback upon the ride was the fact, that both Claude and Jack were doing it upon empty stomachs. But this was a drawback which they fully meant to remedy upon the first opportunity that occurred so to do. Still they had to ride a considerable distance before they came to any house of entertainment; and they had skirted the little village of West End, and got into the immediate vicinity of the Edgware Road, before they saw the swinging sign of a little inn called "The White Horse."

"Will this do?" said Jack.

"Yes," replied Claude, "one place is about as good as another to us, Jack, provided we have no positive means of predicting danger in it, so let us alight and go in at once; I must own that life on the road without one's breakfast is but dreary sort of thing."

Jack smiled in that mournful manner that of late he smiled in, but he said to Claude—

"It will still be the safest course for us to pursue to keep up the distinction of master and man, for in that case you find out all that is going on in one part of the house, while I can keep a good look-out about the stables, and see all who come."

"True, true. But don't neglect your breakfast. Let it be of the best the house affords."

"I will."

They drew rein at the door of the little inn, and the ostler came to take charge of their horses.

"Feed 'em, sir?"

"No. Only hay and water," said Claude.

He dismounted and walked into the house. The landlady met him with a curtsey in the passage.

"Up stairs, sir, if you please."

"Can I have breakfast, madam?"

"Oh dear, yes, sir. Certainly, anything you please, sir. There's a room up stairs. Indeed, there's a nice room below, but Mr. Joliffe is there."

"Who is he?" said Claude, as he followed the landlady up the stairs.

"Why, sir, he is the constable, and as they say Claude Duval is about Hampstead, they are going to swear in some men."

"Really," said Claude, as the landlady threw open a door, and ushered him into a neat bow-windowed room looking to the front of the house.

"Yes, sir, but I don't believe it."

"Indeed."

"No, sir; for the person who says it, between you and me and the post, I wouldn't believe him on his oath."

"And who is that?"

"Old Matthew, who keeps the Antlers."

"His own antlers?"

"Dear me, what a gentleman you are to catch up one. The Antlers inn, I mean, which, though I say it, perhaps, who should not, is no more to be compared to the White Horse, than chalk is to old cheese."

"And so he actually says that Claude Duval is in the neighbourhood?"

"Why, sir; when I say he says it, perhaps after all I ought not, for he don't want anybody to know as much, but I heard Mr. Joliffe say that he got a letter, what he called a—a—synonymous letter, I think."

"Anonymous, I presume?"

"Very likely, sir. It was something of that sort at all events; he says that Claude Duval, the famous highwayman, was in the neighbourhood, and he soon found out it came from Matthew, and then they do say that the York mail has been stopped. But I am gossiping without attending to what you want, sir. Pray what may I bring you?"

"As good a breakfast as you can. I will leave it entirely to you."

"Very well, sir."

## CHAPTER CXIX.

### THE ATTACK AND AN ALARM.

THE landlady made an exit, and when she was gone, Claude examined the priming of his pistols, as he said to himself—

"So Master Matthew pants for revenge, does he, and has fairly taken the field against me? Well, it is quite natural, after what has happened, that he should do so; and he need not be half so much afraid of me as before. Then I had trusted him, and he betrayed me. For that I have taken my revenge. Now I have not trusted him at all; therefore it is all fair, and he comes against me like any ordinary opponent."

Having thoroughly satisfied himself that his pistols were in good working condition, Claude became rather anxious that Jack should be made aware of the state of affairs at the "White Horse." He thought the best way to do this would be boldly to ring the bell, and order Jack to be shown up to him. He did so, and in answer to the summons, rather a lout of a lad made his appearance; and when Claude said "Show my servant this room, and tell him I want him," he looked as though he were too stupid to understand even so simple an affair. He, however, growled out a sort of assent to the proposition, and left the room.

"I won't go without my breakfast if I can help it," said Claude.

At this moment he heard a great noise of footsteps upon the stairs, and the idea that danger was approaching came naturally to his mind. He sprang to his feet,

and stood with a pistol in each hand. In another moment he heard the voice of the landlady saying—

“The back room, Mr. Joliffe, if you please. There’s a gentleman in the front.”

“Oh, very well,” said a voice. “Now, my lads, come along, and I will give you your instructions how to act in this matter.”

The clatter of feet died away in the room adjoining to that in which Claude was, and then, before he could decide upon any particular course of action, the landlady herself came in to lay the cloth for his breakfast. She was followed closely by Jack, to whom, it appeared, the waiter had duly delivered Claude’s message.

“I hope, sir,” said the landlady, “you will excuse the house not being quite so quiet as it is usually, but Mr. Joliffe finds that the public room down stairs, of course, can’t be kept all to himself, so he has come to the back room on this floor; but the constables will soon be all gone, and then there will be no noise at all.”

“Thank you. And are they going after Claude Duval?”

“Yes, sir. I’m sure I don’t know whether to hope they will catch him or not. They do say he is a polite man to the ladies.”

“So I have heard, madam.”

“Oh dear, yes. Bless you, sir, there are no end of stories told of him. Ah—poor fellow! who shall say what drove him to be what he is?”

“Who indeed?”

“Ah! well—well: perhaps, after all, they may burn their fingers by meddling with him at all, poor fellow, and so I have told Mr. Joliffe, though he did only laugh and say he wouldn’t mind a slight scorch to lay hold of Duval.”

“This Mr. Joliffe, you say, is a constable?”

“Why, yes, sir; and he is a sort of clerk to the magistrates hereabouts, and all that sort of thing. You see, sir, he is going to stay here all day, and send people out to catch Duval, and to hear what reports they can bring him, and then, I dare say, we shall have Sir Lionel Faversham too, in the course of the day, here. That is the son of the old baronet who was killed on the heath, they do say, by Claude Duval, long ago. But one must not believe all one hears.”

“Certainly not, madam.”

The boy now made his appearance with a tray, upon which was, certainly, a breakfast that Claude felt strongly inclined to do justice to, notwithstanding that his position was getting each moment more critical. There were eggs in abundance—grilled ham—salt fish—and coffee and hot rolls—a breakfast peculiarly inviting to one who had ridden six miles on an empty stomach. Jack said not a word while the landlady was thus speaking, but when, after asking Claude if there was anything more he wanted, and receiving an answer in the negative had left the room, he said—

“Claude—Claude.”

“Hush, Jack! Do you forget that in the next room there is danger?”

“No—no. I heard all—I know all; but my voice was not sufficiently loud to reach any ears but yours.—What will you do?”

“Eat my breakfast, Jack.”

“What!—Can you sit down to breakfast while those who would destroy you are only divided from you by a thin partition?”

“And why not, Jack? With my breakfast, I assure you that I shall feel much more ready to combat with them than without it. And now that we are here, sit down, and as rapidly as may be, refresh yourself. We may have work before us that possibly will interfere with our dinner.”

Jack was truly astonished at the coolness of Claude, and before he could prevail upon himself to sit down at the table, he would first go to the door, in order to be fully satisfied that there was no listener there. Finding, however, the staircase and landing quite clear, he returned, and did partake of some of the breakfast, while Claude did the same, and said to him in a low voice—

“What have you heard below, Jack?”

"Only that the whole country will soon be up in arms against us."

"Is that all?"

"Yes—with a few trifling details."

"And do you know to whom we are indebted for all this?"

"No."

"Then I can tell you: it is to Matthew. Nay, Jack, we ought to have expected it. He is now a fair and open foe, and so I do not fear him. But tell me, do you think that there is the smallest suspicion below of who we are?"

"I do not, Claude: and yet a man did come and look curiously at the horses. I did not know him, nor did he look like an officer, or one who would be likely to know us; and so many persons affect to look curiously at horses, upon the affectation of being great judges of them, when their information extends not much further than knowing the head from the tail, that I did not take much notice of that circumstance."

"Humph! Eat away, Jack."

"I am satisfied."

"Very well—so am I. Now go, and boldly get the horses to the door. There is no one there, I think."

As he spoke Claude rose and went to the window, which commanded a good view of the front of the inn, and a road that led from it to Hampstead. After a moment he turned and beckoned to Jack.

"What is it?" asked Jack.

"Come and look. Do you know that man in the rough great coat, coming down the road?"

"Yes—yes. It is Matthew."

"To be sure it is. He is coming here to consult with the Mr. Joliffe who is in the next room, and a most fortunate circumstance it is too."

"Fortunate?"

"Yes, Jack, for as true as I stand here, I will frighten that Mr. Joliffe, and old Matthew, into letting us go as quietly as they ever mean to go themselves from this inn."

"Claude, you do things that nobody else can do, or ever thought of doing; I will keep out of the way of Matthew, for he would know me at once, and seeing me, he would guess that you were not far off."

"Wait until he comes up."

Jack did wait, and in the course of about five minutes, the greater portion of which were consumed by Mr. Matthew in rousing his spirits down stairs at the bar of the "White Horse" with something strong, he was heard slowly coming up to speak to Joliffe. Claude thought it just possible he might open the wrong door, and as he did not at that juncture want an interview with Matthew, he approached it, and held the lock. His suspicions were correct, for Matthew did try that room.

"Mr. Joliffe," he said, "it's only me."

Joliffe heard him, and called from the back room to him. "This way, Matthew—this way—I am in the back room."

"Oh, very well, sir," said Matthew. "Thank you, sir."

The door of the back room was opened, and closed again upon Mr. Matthew; after which, Claude, in a whisper to Jack, said—

"Well, what do you think of our affair now, Jack. Are we not in a prosperous condition?"

"Very; but hark! Some one else is coming up stairs. Hold the door still, Claude."

"I am. Ah, this visitor of Mr. Joliffe's knows the way, for he has gone direct into the room. I feel a great desire to know what he says. Jack, you turn all your attention to listening for the approach of any one from below, while I do these gentry in the next room the honour of listening to what they may be talking about."

This was hazardous, but it was, perhaps, the only way in which Claude could



ascertain the amount of his danger, and he was determined to adopt it. While Jack, therefore, with his body bent over the balustrades of the staircase, listened for any sound that might come from below, Claude placed his ear to the keyhole of the next apartment.

"Are you sure?" he heard some one say."

"If they are not the horses of Claude Duval, and the man who goes about with him, I will consent to be hung," said another.

"There, you be off, and get what armed assistance you can from Hampstead," said Joliffe, "while I and Matthew remain here. You need not be gone above an hour at the outside; and, for the love of Heaven, I beg that you will make no alarm here, for if you do, I won't take upon myself to say what might be the consequences."

"Nor I—nor I," said Matthew, whose voice betrayed the pitiable state of alarm in which he was. "Oh, how I do wish I had never meddled with the affair."

"Pho! Pho!" said Joliffe. "You be off, Simson."

Claude had enough. With rapidity he got back to his room again with Jack, and then he closed the door carefully. In another moment, he heard the man who was named Simson, and who had brought the report about the horses, go down stairs at great speed.

"What will you do, Claude?" again interposed Jack.

"Hark you, Jack—we must get away. You go down stairs and get the horses to the door, and trust me for coming after you."

"No—no, Claude, you are risking too much. If you are really going to face those men, let me be with you. I would live or die with you, Claude. You are by far too adventurous, and too generous to face such men alone, whereas with me in your company you are better protected against any danger."

"Believe me, my dear Jack, there is very little danger in this whole affair, and none at all against which I cannot be fully prepared. Go, if you really regard me, and get the horses to the door. Pay the landlady and the ostler."

"Yes," replied Jack.

Without another word Jack left the room, and then Claude began to make his preparations for the interview he was determined to have with Joliffe, and Matthew, the landlord of the Antlers. He found in a drawer of the room some corks, and providing himself with two of the largest, he put them in his pocket, and then with a double-barrelled pistol in his right hand—a small but admirable weapon, which he knew he could depend upon—he coolly walked across the landing, and with a sudden movement opened at once the door of the back room, in which were his two foes.

## CHAPTER CXX.

### THE CHASE AND THE CAPTURE.

JOLIFFE had a bottle of wine before him, and upon the table, likewise, was a plate with some nuts in it, so that it was quite clear he had no idea, while engaged in endeavouring to capture Claude Duval, and bring him to what he called justice, any intention of mortifying his inward man. Matthew was facing the door, as well as Joliffe, so that they both had the full advantage, such as it was, of seeing Claude the moment he came into the room; and stare they did with all the power they were capable of. Claude closed the door behind him immediately, and said, in quite a composed and confidential sort of voice—

"Gentlemen, have you any real business with me?"

"Oh, good gracious!" cried Matthew.

"Who are you?" said Joliffe, rising.

"Sit still, sir. I am Claude Duval."

Joliffe sunk into his seat again, and turned as white as a sheet, while Matthew's

teeth palpably chattered in his head, and his knees smote each other under the table.

"Sir," added Claude, looking hard at Joliffe, "have you any business with me?"

"No—no—I—I only—I arrest—you in the king's—name."

"Pray say that again."

Claude held his pistol in a direct line with Joliffe's eyes, and Matthew, in a tone of agony, said—

"He'll do it—he'll do it, Mr. Joliffe—he—he don't mind what he does. I shall never recover the full use of my back, through the dreadful chimney business."

"I—I don't want you, sir," said Joliffe. "This unexpected meeting is rather—rather in a manner of speaking——"

"Too great a pleasure," put in Matthew. "I'll go home, if you please, Mr. Duval."

"Not yet," said Claude. "Mr. Joliffe, I was led to believe that you wished nothing more than to apprehend me, and that, of course, by coming into your society in this way, I should be giving you the desired opportunity. Come, sir, you are armed. Here am I, the notorious Claude Duval. Why don't you immortalize yourself by taking me at once?"

"Here goes then," said Joliffe, suddenly pulling his hand from under the table. "Here goes for a try at it."

A pistol was in his grasp, but Matthew caught him by the arm, exclaiming—

"No, no, Joliffe. Mr. Joliffe, don't try it. You might as well try to shoot the devil himself, as Claude Duval. Lots have heard it. I tell you, sir, he is shot proof. Don't attempt it. You will fail, and then we are dead men."

Claude did not give Joliffe much time to contest the matter with Matthew, but leaning over the table, he wrested the pistol from him in a moment, and laid it out of reach, saying as he did so—

"Well, sir, have you done what you intend, or have you any other snug little chance ready, by which you think you may catch me?"

"Have mercy upon me!"

"Stuff—stuff."

"Oh, yes," added Matthew. "Have mercy upon us, Claude Duval."

"Mercy!—But what have you done to me, either of you, that you should call upon me for mercy? Mr. Joliffe, it is your promise to try and take me. It is mine to elude your attempt. I am not cruel nor revengeful. As for you, Matthew, we were once friends, at least, I thought so, and I trusted you. You betrayed me, and for that I owed you a grudge, which I paid off, so that in the present affair, except that you really have no business to interfere at all in the matter, I have nothing very particular to reproach you with."

"Then you don't mean," whined Matthew, "to do me any hurt?"

"None, whatever."

"Nor me?" said Joliffe.

"Certainly not."

"Then, Claude Duval, you are one of the most generous of men, for any one but yourself would take my life for that pistol business; and to show you that I appreciate your generosity, there is the fellow to the pistol you have already taken from me."

As he said this, Joliffe took another pistol from his pocket, and laid it upon the table, before Claude, who removed it more for the sake of keeping it out of Matthew's way than Joliffe's, for of the latter he had now no suspicions, but of the former he had abundance.

"Now, Mr. Joliffe," said Claude, "while I am here, you are acting under duress, but the moment my back is turned it will be your duty to give an alarm."

"Nay," said Joliffe, "I——"

"Now, hear me out. I say you must give an alarm. Your duty calls upon you to do so, and if you do not, you will be very properly subjected to the severest

reproaches, and in all probability sacrifice your livelihood. As for Matthew, true, it is quite another affair. No positive duty, on account of his position, calls upon him to give any alarm, or to raise any hue and cry after me."

"Oh, dear no," said Matthew. "How true that is."

"But," continued Claude, "he will do so as a matter of choice."



CLAUDE AND JACK DISGUISES ONE OF THEIR PURSUERS, AND GIVE HIM INTO CUSTODY.

Matthew groaned.

"Yes. He will do so from choice, arising from a deep and enduring hatred towards me, founded upon revenge."

Joliffe said nothing, but he felt the full force of what Claude said, and when the latter added—

"Therefore, Mr. Joliffe, I must prevent you, by gagging and binding, from

giving the alarm I speak of, because it is your duty to give it, and I must gag and bind you still more firmly, because it is your inclination to do it, Matthew."

Matthew merely nodded.

Claude began upon Matthew. First he securely tied his hands behind him with his own cravat, and then he propped open his mouth with the largest of the corks, and tied one of his braces round his mouth in such a way as effectually to secure the cork in its position.

"Now, friend Matthew," he said, "I will give you leave to call out if you can, until some one comes to relieve you."

"And don't drum upon the floor with your feet," said Joliffe.

"A good hint," thought Claude, and he tied Mr. Matthew's legs to the chair, in such a way that if he attempted to move much, he would in all probability get a very awkward fall, chair and all. There was no doubt in Claude's mind but that he had awakened in the mind of Joliffe a kind of grateful feeling for sparing his life after the pistol had been produced, and that Joliffe had purposely given him the hint about the possibility of Matthew giving an alarm by drumming with his feet upon the floor. Acting, therefore, upon this supposition, Claude, although he went through the same process of pinioning with Mr. Joliffe, he took good care that it should by no means materially incommode him.

"Now, gentlemen," said Claude. "I shall take my leave of you."

Neither of them could answer him, so he went off at once to the door, and left the room. Without, then, waiting one moment longer, he went down stairs, and passing rapidly along the passage, emerged at the front door, where, to his great joy, he found Jack waiting with the horses. Jack was mounted upon his own, and holding Claude's by the bridle.

"Is everything settled, Jack?"

"Yes, yes! Mount."

Claude did so. The landlady appeared at the door to make her best curtsey, and in another moment Claude was off.

"Hurrah!" said Jack. "You got the better of them."

"Easily, Jack. Matthew was the only real enemy I had there, and I have secured him sufficiently effectually, I think, to prevent him from giving any alarm until we are some distance off. Let us push on."

They put their steeds to a sharp trot, and were soon half a mile from the public-house, and rapidly approaching the Edgeware Road, when they heard the sound of a horse's steps coming at full gallop towards them. They both drew aside, in order to observe who it was, and to allow him to pass if desirable. A few moments sufficed to bring the horseman close at hand.

"Claude," said Jack, "it is the man who was looking at the horses in the inn yard."

The man impulsively pulled up, and his horse almost fell upon its haunches as he did so, so sudden was the check which it received. Claude dashed forward, and caught him by one arm, exclaiming as he did so—

"Any opposition, and you are a dead man!"

"Not exactly!" said the fellow, as he with his disengaged hand drew a pistol from the side of his saddle, and presented it at Claude. The latter had just time to throw his head on one side, and so escape a couple of bullets with which it was loaded.

"Good!" said Claude. "Now my friend, take that——"

"Spare me," said the man, "I yield to you. Make your escape. There is a strong party of twelve armed men, half a mile off only."

Claude had not intended to fire at him, but he certainly had meant to knock him off his horse with the stock of his pistol, but when the man asked for mercy he suspended the blow, and said—

"You deserve it, but I have let so many off, that I don't see why I should make a special sacrifice of you. Are they officers who are coming?"

"No, no! You are, I suppose——"

"Claude Duval!"

"Yes. Nobody but he would have escaped my shot, and then spared me from the consequence of missing him."

Claude was in thought for a moment, and then he said—

"Jack, dismount. I want you to hold this man a moment or two. Take off his horse's girth too, and open the vallaise. Quick, Jack; I think I hear the party he speaks of coming."

Jack could not conceive what Claude meant to do, but he rapidly obeyed the order given to him for all that. Claude dragged the man off the horse, and handed him then to Jack. One cut with a horsewhip sent the horse off at full gallop, so that that encumbrance was got effectually rid of. Claude then took from the vallaise an old scarlet coat that he had been in the habit of wearing sometimes, and a cravat with long lace ends. Both of them, with the assistance of Jack, he put upon the man, and then with some prepared gum that they always carried with them in the vallaise, Claude fastened upon his face a pair of false moustache and whiskers. The next thing was to gag him, which was soon done with a piece of wood cut from the hedge, and notched at each end so as to fit into his teeth, and as his mouth was thus opened as far as it would go, he could not by any effort release himself. With the girth of the horse then, which Jack had all ready, they bound his hands securely.

"Ah!" said Jack, "I guess now."

"Yes," said Claude, as he pointed to the man. "This shall be Claude Duval to those who are coming. Do you think they will know him?"

"Egad!" said Jack, "his own mother would not know him."

"Good. Now, my friend, come along."

When the man found the trick that was being played him, and that he was not in a state to say one word to save himself, he got perfectly frantic with rage. He tried all he could to release himself from the gag, but that was not possible without assistance to incline it on one side. Then, by dint of the most extravagant facial grimaces, he tried to get rid of the false moustache, but in that he was equally unsuccessful, for Claude had intended them for himself, and had taken care that they should be securely stuck on. As a last, and a very foolish resource, he took to kicking, and gave Jack rather a severe contusion on the shin.

"Oh," said Jack, "that's the game, is it? Well, my friend, as your hands are tied, it would be a shame to hit you, so here goes."

Jack saluted him with some tremendous kicks on a dishonourable portion of his anatomy, and after that process the man evidently thought that kicking was a sort of thing that could be repaid with so much interest, that for him it was a frightfully bad investment.

"Look, Claude, they are coming," said Jack.

"Yes; I see them."

A body of well-mounted men turned, at this moment, an angle in the road, and when he saw them, Claude laid hold of his prisoner by the collar of the red coat, and appeared to be hauling him along. When the mounted men saw this spectacle they halted; but Claude called out in a loud voice—

"Police!—police!—Constables! Are there any constables among you?"

Upon this the mounted party came dashing on, and one cried out—

"Yes—yes; I am a parish constable. What is the matter?—What is all this about?—Who have you got there, eh?"

"Claude Duval!"

## CHAPTER CXXI.

### A FIFTY-POUND NOTE EASILY EARNED.

At the sound of this name the horsemen all paused, and the one who had announced himself as a parish constable showed anything but an inclination to come any further forward. One well-dressed but severe-looking individual rode a few paces up to Claude, and said—

"Do you really mean to say, sir, that you have captured Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman?"

"Here he is."

"Dear me—dear me! And who are you, sir?"

"I am Major Smith," said Claude, "and was riding along, followed by my servant, when this fellow called upon me to stand and be robbed; but as that was a thing very far from my disposition to comply with, I resisted. He fired at me and missed me, and then announced himself as Claude Duval—so I took him, as you see."

"Why, good God, sir, you have done more than all the London police have been able to do!"

"Have I?—What's that?"

"Why, by capturing this man. Are you aware that you will be entitled to about three thousand pounds for this important capture?"

"Really—no."

"I tell you, sir, it is so. I am a solicitor residing in this neighbourhood, and can assure you of the fact. I only hope you have him secure."

Here the sham Claude made rather a violent demonstration with his feet, at the same time that he produced an unearthly sort of noise in his throat, which he, no doubt, intended should be a protest against the whole proceeding.

"Hold him fast! hold him fast!" said the attorney. "He's a most desperate fellow. Hold him fast, I beg of you, sir."

"Will you be quiet?" said Claude, at the same time he saluted the fellow with another kick behind.

How all the horsemen laughed, to be sure, to see, as they thought, the redoubtable Claude Duval, who had filled them all full of fears, had met with his master at last. The fattest man of the party was particularly delighted, because, only that morning, his wife had said that she only wished Claude Duval would stop her upon the Heath, as she would not mind being robbed by a highwayman, who she had heard was so very polite and kind to the ladies.

"Upon my word," said the attorney, "this is a most admirable piece of business. You had better take him."

The parish constable, who rejoiced in the name of Ploddy, looked as white as a sheet, as he replied—

"I—I—yes. That is, if the gallant major will be so good as to lodge him in the cage at Hampstead, while I go to Newgate to get some of the regular hands there to come for him. Would not that be best, sir?"

"Cage?" said the attorney. "Pho! pho!"

"Oh dear, no," said the fat man; "no cage. He would be out of that, and robbing and smiling at somebody's wife before you could say Jack Robinson. Oh, no, you must not lose sight of him, Ploddy."

"Yes, yes," said everybody, "Ploddy must take him."

Upon this, the constable looked about as rueful as anybody very well could, and sideling along, till he came near to the meek highwayman, he held up his little gilt staff, which, by the bye, shook in his hand, and said—

"Come, come, sir. Look at that, and tremble."

Everybody laughed except the attorney, who was naturally one of those savage and saturnine characters, who never laugh at a joke.

"This is trifling," he said.

The constable seemed to be in some fear of this attorney, so he approached a step nearer to the prisoner, and said—

"I will take him, sir, of course; but this gentleman had better go with me, as he is entitled to the reward."

"Oh, nonsense," said Claude; "I don't want any reward."

"Not want it?" said everybody.

"No, gentlemen, I don't want a reward for collaring a highwayman, who stops me to rob me. To be sure, my servant here assisted me; and if anything is to be had, he will, perhaps, put in his claim."

The constable gave a groan. From the disinterestedness of Claude, he had begun to hope that the £3,000 might find its way to him; but that the groom should rewaive his claim in such a manner, was a thing beyond possibility.

"Jack," said Claude.

"Yes, sir," said Jack.

"They say there is a reward for catching this fellow. How much do you expect of it, for helping me to get the better of him? Speak freely."

"Anything you like, sir."

"Oh, but I have nothing to do with it at all. I think—but I advance that merely as an opinion—that these affairs are always best left in the hands of the police, so perhaps this officer will satisfy you, and take the prisoner wholly to himself."

The constable whispered something to the attorney, who then said aloud—

"Very well. That may be done. If I understand you rightly, major—  
a—a—"

"Smith."

"Yes; thank you, Major Smith. If I understand you rightly, you renounce all claim to any portion of the reward or rewards offered for the apprehension of the notorious Claude Duval?"

"Certainly, sir. But my man here——"

"I am coming to that. In a word, will he accept of fifty pounds, and give up his prisoner to this constable, at once moving all further claim?"

"Take, it Jack," said Claude.

"Very well, gentlemen," said Jack. "Whatever my master says is right I will do. I know he is a good master to me, and lets me want for nothing."

The attorney looked gratified, for he had a private understanding with the constable to go halves. Taking his pocket-book, then, from his pocket, he produced a fifty pound note, and handing it to Jack, said—

"All these gentlemen are witnesses to these transactions, and I give you this fifty pounds in lieu of your claim for reward in taking Claude Duval."

"Oh, yes, it's all right," said Jack, as he coolly put the note in his pocket.

"Now. Take him," said Claude.

"Take him!" cried the lawyer.

The constable, in the most careful manner in the world, laid his hands upon the shoulder of the prisoner, saying as he did so—

"Gentlemen all, will you come with me to the lock-up? We can easily get a couple of men to stay with him until I return from Newgate with the officers who are used to tackle such customers as this."

"I will ride with you," said the attorney, "of course; and I dare say you will all, gentlemen, accompany the constable."

"Yes," muttered one; "and I will have my share of the reward, too, in spite of all the bargains between all the lawyers and all the constables in the world. I see how it is."

"And I," said another.

The attorney did not hear these demonstrations of hostility, he was so very busy in taking further precautions against the prisoner. These precautions consisted in tying a rope, which the constable had with him, round the neck of the unfortunate individual who, for the time being, personated our old friend Claude, and then, holding the other end of the rope, he proceeded in triumph.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it is quite a gratifying thing to throw such a windfall as this into the hands of our friend Ploddy, who is a most active and zealous constable, so we shall, I am sure, be pleased at his getting the reward."

The dissentients said nothing just then, for they were in too great anxiety to see Claude properly secured in prison to risk his escape by any dispute among themselves; but to themselves they entered a mental protest against the whole proceedings. And now the prisoner, when he found that he was going to be dragged away, and that the real Claude Duval would indubitably escape, got quite furious. He appeared to forget the kicks he had brought upon himself already,

and in a frantic manner he assaulted with his feet any one he could get at. Poor Mr. Ploddy got the worst of it, and actually howled again from the pain inflicted upon his shins. It was in vain that the attorney pulled the rope that was round the supposed culprit's neck—he kicked away.

"Oh, you don't know how to manage him," said Claude. "Here, Jack."

"Yes, sir."

"Just show the gentlemen how to make him sick of that."

"Yes, sir."

Jack again inflicted, with the heavy horseman's boot he wore, such a half dozen kicks upon the frantic prisoner that he paused from sheer exhaustion, and was as quiet as a lamb.

"That's the way, gentlemen," said Jack.

"Dear me," said Ploddy, "I—I should very much like to try it myself. Take that—upon my life—and that—it's quite refreshing and delightful—and that—to be kicking Claude Duval, the famous highwayman, in this way. Who would have thought now that I, Ploddy, parish constable of St. John's, Hampstead, should, after all, be the man to kick Claude Duval. I always thought he was a coward."

"Did you?" said Claude.

"Oh, yes indeed; I know it."

"Then you don't kick him half hard enough; if he be a coward, you should give him such a one as that."

As he spoke, Claude saluted Mr. Ploddy with a kick that sent him sprawling some half dozen yards off in the road.

"Murder—murder! Fire! Oh—oh. Goodness gracious! Oh, murder!" cried Ploddy, as he rolled over upon the road.

"Well, really," said Claude, in a tone of commiseration, "I did not think you were so tender, or I should not have touched you at all. Never mind, though."

Claude mounted as he spoke, and the constable getting up and wiping the tears from his eyes, said—

"Won't I have you up for this, Major what's your name, that's all. Won't I."

"Nonsense," said Claude, "I'll claim the reward if you do."

"Oh, it's only a joke," put in the lawyer, who, the moment he heard any talk of claiming the reward, got in a fright. "It was only a joke."

"A joke," blubbered the constable, "a joke! Only you try it, sir. I'm d—d if I don't have it out upon somebody. It's all along o' you, Claude Duval. Take that, and that."

While Mr. Ploddy was revenging himself upon the sham Claude Duval, the real one, with Jack at his heels, quietly travelled off. They went on for a mile without speaking, and then Claude looked round at Jack and laughed. Jack caught the infection and laughed likewise, and then he said—

"An easy way of earning a fifty-pound note, Claude."

"Very, but the devil won't last long. Let us off and away. We will put up on the Western Road, somewhere that we know to be safe, and then to-night I will begin my operations upon Ealing Common. Now, mark me, Jack, the 'Times newspaper' will have an account of my capture to-morrow."

"Yes," said Jack, "and they will write themselves a letter to say that it is all owing to what they have said upon the subject, from time to time."

"Of course, Jack. It would be something like them, if they were to claim the reward too."

Jack laughed, and they both galloped on for another mile, when they suddenly came out into the Edgeware Road. Crossing that well-known thoroughfare, they went about half a mile to the north, and then turned down a beautiful green lane on their left, that led to Willesden and to Neasdon, two of the prettiest villages round London. At that time, the few villa residences that now dot the green lanes leading to those places were not in existence, and the place had a thoroughly rural aspect indeed. The only sounds that came upon their ears consisted of the lowing of cattle in the extensive meadows on either side of the lane,



and the tinkle of sheep bells. A little stream, too, kept up a soft and pretty murmuring as it ran under the roots of the elms and the ivy to their left. Occasionally, too, the soft sweet note of some bird, calling to its mate, would strike upon the ear in a gush of melody.

"This is beautiful!" said Claude.

"It is," said Jack. "Ah, if I could but, for the remainder of my existence, creep away from the world into some quiet spot, far away in the country, and only hear such sounds, and only see such sights as these——"

"You would be happy, Jack?"

"As happy as I could hope to be."

"Do it, then—do it—I will provide you with the means, Jack, and it will be a place for me to retire to, occasionally."

"No—no, Claude, I cannot leave you—I cannot—and I will not, so say no more about it; and here we are at Willesden, with its pretty old Norman church. What a fair scene this is, Claude."

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## CHAPTER CXXII

### THE BOARDING SCHOOL.

As JACK spoke, they both emerged from a narrow lane into the heart of the little village of Willesden, just within sight of the church. Claude paused to look at it.

"Yes, Jack," he said. "It is a venerable structure indeed."

"I have often regarded it," continued Jack, "under very different feelings than the present. Sometimes, in good truth, I hardly know myself, when I look back upon the picture of what I once was, and contrast it with what I am now."

"Retrospection, Jack," said Claude, "is at the best but an unprofitable speculation. Let it be for us to look forward. The past is too full of shadows for either of us to get anything but the heart-ache to strive to pierce the gloom."

"True—true."

"And now, Jack, do you know the way to the Western Road?"

"Yes, perfectly. Here is a lane that will lead to a little place called Harlesdon Green, and from there we can easily get upon a high road that will bring us out near Ealing Common."

"Good. Let us push on, Jack."

They turned their horses' heads down the lane Jack spoke of, and soon left Willesden behind them, much to the chagrin of an innkeeper, who from his door had been watching them, and hoping that they would make a halt at his house of "good entertainment for man and beast," as the sign signified. The lane was one of those pretty thoroughfares which are so abundant in the rural districts of England, and which with their luxuriant hedge roses and large elm trees present so beautiful a picture of verdant loveliness. They pursued it for some distance in silence. Claude spoke at length—

"Jack, how stands the Exchequer?"

"In other words, Claude, how much money have I?"

"Exactly."

"Then I am sorry to say," said Jack, "my stock is getting very low."

"Humph! and my pocket is low. We must transact some business, Jack, for it won't do to run short in so essential a particular."

"Hold," said Jack, laughing. "Upon my word, I quite forgot our friend the lawyer's fifty-pound note. That had slipped my memory, Claude. But it is rather a cumbrous article here, in the country, to get changed."

"It is. What have we here?"

"A toll-bar, I think. Yes. It stops this lane, which otherwise would lead folks into the Harrow Road toll-free."

"I have an aversion to this species of impost," said Claude, "and don't intend to pay. We shall, perhaps, have a little adventure here. Come on, Jack."

A man with a white apron made his appearance, and stood by the gate.

"My friend," said Claude, "can you oblige us with change for a fifty-pound note?"

The man looked angry, for toll keepers, probably from a considerable amount of jeering, and what is vulgarly called chaffing, which they have to endure in the course of their vocation, are an irascible race. He muttered something, in which the principal word was certainly "gammon," and then roughly added—

"Threepence a piece, and this here gate clears nothing"

"Really!" said Claude. "How obliging you are."

The man slammed the gate shut with an air as though he would have said "Get past that if you can!" and then, thrusting his hands into two little pockets that were in his apron, he whistled from sheer aggravation, and crouched into the little sentry-box of a house, in which he defied the cold with a fire that occupied a fourth of its area.

"The gate may clear nothing," said Claude. "But that is no reason, Jack, why we should not clear the gate—so here goes."

One touch to his horse was sufficient, and over he went, clearing the obstruction in gallant style. Jack was a good horseman, and followed upon the instant. The toll-man just flew out in time to see that his gate was not quite high enough, and our friends left him staring, and swearing, and exclaiming—

"There's sixpence clean gone. Threepence for me and threepence for master, as I always divides it, and there's only been a donkey through all this blessed day."

The road now wound up a hill, and when they reached the summit they had a very fine view of the surrounding country, and of Willesden and Neasdon, by turning a glance in the direction from whence they had come. Ealing Common, then much more of a wild and desolate place than at present, was distinctly visible in the distance, and a tortuous looking road led to it.

"You see the route?" said Jack.

"Perfectly. Do you observe a carriage, Jack, coming along that road to the left, there, among the trees?"

"I do—I do. And a handsome turn-out it is."

"Yes, but yet there is an air of mystery about it. Don't you see that the servants have no liveries, or they have coats on them, with an evident design to hide them. Let us watch where the coachman goes to."

The carriage drove up to the door of an inn that was about a quarter of a mile from where Claude and Jack were, and the horses' heads were deliberately turned in the direction of the Western Road.

"Suppose we ride up," said Claude, "and take a look at those folks. They may afford us some sport for all we know to the contrary, and if they are going in our direction they may have some smaller change about them than we have, which may come in handy just at the present juncture. Do you see anything against the proposition, Jack?"

"Nothing. Business is business."

At a quiet trot they both made their way to the inn, where the carriage was in waiting, and they were not many minutes in reaching it. The vehicle itself was empty, and the footman and coachman were regaling themselves with something warm in rather a hasty manner, as though they expected to be interrupted every moment. Jack now assumed the character of Claude's servant, and held the bridle while Claude alighted, and with a careless air strolled into the inn.

"This way to the coffee-room, sir," said a waiter.

Claude followed him, and was led into a large room, at one of the windows of which were two persons in deep and earnest conversation. One was a pale-faced

man with a peculiar obliquity of vision ; the other was taller, and his countenance bespoke dissipation early and late. Claude ordered some brandy, and the two men just glanced at him as he sat down at a considerable distance from them. They had a bottle of wine before them, and a couple of glasses. It was quite evident to Claude that they lowered their tone after his entrance, because the manner of both



DEEDS, FETCHED BY A LAWYER, RESTORED TO THE OLD FARMER BY CLAUDE.

of them was constrained rather, and Claude, in order to put them at their ease, took up a newspaper, with which he entirely covered his face from their observation, and which he affected to read. This seemed to give them more confidence, and he heard one say, with tolerable distinctness—

“Oh, it is only some traveller.”

“Exactly, my lord,” said the other ; “and—and as your lordship was saying—”

"As I was saying, nothing can be easier. You have the letter, and you cannot possibly find any difficulty in getting her away from the school."

"I should think not, my lord."

"The house is in a lonely situation upon the common. We can dine here, or take a drive somewhere else until nightfall, and then, of course, I will take good care that the carriage is close at hand."

"It shall all be done to your lordship's satisfaction."

"I am sure of that when you are entrusted with anything. I never saw a girl in all my life that I was so anxious to take to the villa; upon my word, she is the most charming piquant little creature that you can imagine."

"Your lordship's taste is unquestionable, and I sincerely hope she will, for a time, adorn your lordship's villa. Repton House, I think is the name?"

"Yes, Repton House, and the girl's name is Florence Darvel, so you can have no sort of difficulty. Only, for the love of all that is gracious, avoid that encumbrance of mine, Jane Lee."

"I will, my lord. It is a pity that your lordship's illegitimate daughter, Jane Lee is at the same school."

"A thousand pities: and yet, if I had not called once there, to be sure that she was alive—for I would not trust the mother's word—I should not have seen Florence. I did hope to find that Jane was not in existence, and then I should have got out of the settlement I was silly enough to make upon her when the mother was with me; but when I did see her, the likeness to her mother was too unmistakable."

"And to your lordship?"

"Well—well, she is like me. Confound her."

"Does your lordship know anything of the friends of Florence Darvel?"

"Friends! Relations, I suppose you mean, Clickney?"

"He!—he! Your lordship is so—so sarcastic."

"Well, who, in the name of wonder and truth-telling, ever heard of relations being friends, I should like to know? But, to answer your questions, I think—that is, I know she is the daughter of some artist, or poor gentleman of some sort or another. But that don't signify a bit. She is beautiful and attractive to me, so I put in my claim to her, and as I have money and influence, why I defy them. Drink, Clickney."

"Exactly so.—Thank you, my lord. Shall I have the honour of filling your lordship's glass? As I often say, if your lordship, with your immense possessions, and hereditary name and title, cannot enjoy yourself, it would be a hard case indeed; and if people in the middle, or, I may say, the lower ranks of life, have, by any charming accident, handsome daughters, they ought to feel that it is one of the peculiar blessings of the British constitution that there is an aristocracy to spend the taxes, and to take them off their hands."

There was a slight touch of irony in all this, but so very slight that it might have escaped the perceptions of one much keener than the noble lord to whom the words were addressed.

"You are a sensible fellow, Clickney," said his lordship, "and I have always said so. You suit me precisely. You have no vulgar scruples, and you are amazingly discreet."

"Every man, my lord, in this world, has his price."

"And your's?"

"In your lordship's favour, and £800 per annum."

"Besides various little perquisites in the way of expenses, and so on, eh, Clickney?"

"Exactly, my lord."

"Well, you earn your money, and I will say that you do me good service for it. But come, the horses are scarcely breathed. Suppose we take a drive of a few miles in the country, and then dine somewhere quietly."

"I am, of course, quite at your lordship's service. Shall I order the carriage to be got ready?"

"Yes—yes."

Clickney left the room, and Claude put down the paper from before his face. Over one edge of it he had taken an accurate look at his unknown lordship and Mr. Clickney, and he felt that he should know them both again under any circumstances. That he should hear anything more of importance by staying, he did not at all expect, so he rose and left the room without taking the smallest notice of his lordship; and having paid for what he had had, he walked to the door, where Jack was anxiously waiting for him, and mounted at once.

"Any news?" said Jack.

"A little."

"Ah, I thought by the stay you were making that you was learning something interesting to us. What is it, Claude?"

"Why, Jack, I rather think that there are materials for an adventure to-night if we choose to carry it out. Listen to me, and I will tell you all that I overheard in the inn."

Claude then related to Jack the little significant dialogue that he had overheard in the inn, between his unknown lordship and the gentleman who rejoiced in the somewhat singular name of Clickney, and he concluded by saying—

"What think you of all this, Jack? Shall we allow all this projected evil to take its course?"

"No—no. It is the abduction of a young lady from boarding-school, by a wretch who can have no such thing as human feeling in his composition."

"Well, we will stop him, and make him pay likewise for the attempt. I think I can give his lordship a lesson that will not be altogether thrown away upon him. But now let us ride on until the shades of evening; I dare say we shall find some friendly shelter."

## CHAPTER CXXII.

### A HEARTY WELCOME AND SNUG RETREAT.

CLAUDE DUVAL was too well known upon the Western Road to find any difficulty in procuring shelter in some safe place until the hour should come when he might think fit to sally out upon an enterprise. It was not one of the least singular features in the history of Claude, that, notwithstanding the really tempting rewards that were offered for his apprehension by the government, so very few persons, except those actually and absolutely engaged in the profession of the criminal law, should have at all made any effort for his capture. We must in reality attribute this fact to the romantic spirit which was discernible throughout all his adventures, and the lavish liberality with which he rewarded all who did him any service, and relieved any distress that was made known to him; but certain it is, that a strong feeling in his favour existed in the minds of many persons, and there were hundreds to whom the reward offered for him would have been quite a large fortune, but who no more thought of acquiring the luxuries of independence by such means, than of flying. Everywhere that his generosity had been felt, there was a place of refuge for him, so that upon that road, in particular, Claude could ride up to many a cottage, and find a most true and hearty welcome. So that, what with those who had loved him, and those who feared him, there was, after all, but a small class left who would go out of their way for the purpose of endeavouring to give him up to justice. A small ride of about twenty minutes in duration, now conducted both Claude and Jack to the verge of Ealing Common, and as the day was yet young, they purposed at once looking for some place of shelter.

"I think," said Claude, "that we shall not compromise any one by remaining a few hours under a friendly roof, for I fancy now that all direct clue to our whereabouts is lost."

"Certainly," said Jack, "we are not pursued, and when that is the case we are about as safe as we can expect to be."

"Follow me, then; I know a little farm house across the common, where my appearance will not be the most unwelcome in the world."

Claude took the advance, and Jack followed him closely across the ancient common. They went quickly, for their object was now to get securely housed for the remainder of the hours of daylight, so that they rather avoided meeting any one, than sought an encounter. The common once crossed, they came into a thickly wooded lane, a very few paces down which was a gate, at which Claude paused, saying—

"This leads to the friendly abode I mentioned."

Jack had to dismount to unfasten the gate, and then they both rode through it and took a path by the side of a meadow for some distance, until they came suddenly in view of an old farm-house with no end of thatch upon its roof. Early roses were scrambling about its porch, and the scent of the climatis came freshly and sweetly upon the breeze.

"A charming spot," said Jack.

"Yes. But those who inhabit it were near being deprived of it by the rascality of an attorney, who got possession of the deeds connected with the property, and then joined with some one in an attempt to eject the family holding it. By mere chance I stopped the rascal upon the Uxbridge Road, and took from him a large pocket-book which contained the papers in question, and from some careful enquiries I ascertained how valuable they were to the real owners of them, so one night, when there was such a storm upon the common that a house could scarcely stand against it, I sought this place."

"Did you tell them who you were?"

"Yes. I, after much difficulty, made myself heard amid the howling of the tempest, and an old man with white hair, and his spectacles in his hand, came to yon porch door."

"I suppose, sir, he said, you want shelter from the storm. Pray walk in and take the best we can afford you."

"No," said I. "But there are storms worse than the wind and rain create in this world. I have brought you a little present, and if any one asks you how you came by it, say boldly, that upon this night, at this hour, Claude Duval came to the door and handed to you these papers."

"Claude Duval!" cried the old man.

"I slipped the papers into his hands and left him standing beneath the porch, looking the picture of astonishment."

"And what was the result, Claude?"

"Why, when the cause came into court, the papers that proved the claim of the old man and his family were produced, and the story of their recovery was fairly told. The judge decided in favour of the occupants of the farm, and the attorney was by the Lord Chancellor struck off the rolls, for he had asserted that no such deeds existed, when all the while it was quite clear that he had them in his pocket book when I robbed him."

"And have you been here since?"

"Once only, when hard pressed, and then they hid me, and saved me from a hot pursuit, to escape from which I should have had to take many lives."

By the time Claude had related this little circumstance to Jack, they came so near to the house that a young child, who was playing close to the porch, saw them, and ran in to give the news that some one was coming. In the course of a few moments a young man came out, and immediately after him just such a white-headed old man as Claude had mentioned. Claude smiled as he called out to them—

"Well, here I am again, you see, come back to you like a bad penny."

They both ran up to him, and seizing him by the hands, each tried how much he could say in the way of a kindly welcome to him.

"You don't know," said the young man, "how glad we are to see you."

"And he never will know," said the old man, "for you know, John, that we can't find words to tell him."

"No, father, that we can't."

"Will you give me a few hours' shelter?" said Claude.

"Weeks, months, years, if you will stay with us," said the young man. "Don't we owe all we have to you? To be sure we do. Don't we, father?"

"Yes, John, of course we do. Where would have been the pretty little homestead in which you were born, John, if it had not have been for this kind friend?"

"You see," said Claude, "I have somebody with me. He is a dear friend of mine."

"Then he shall be, and indeed is, from this moment, a dear friend of ours," said the son.

"Yes, John," cried the old man. "Yes, take the horses, while I bring our guests in. This way; don't mind about going round to the path. You can't come by too near a way to this house."

There was something so kind and unsophisticated about the welcome of these people, that both Claude and Jack were quite affected by it, and the latter, as he looked around, said with a sigh—

"Ah, this is the sort of place I have always pictured to myself, I should like to pass the remainder of my life in."

"My dear, sir," said the old man, "you shall—shall he not, John?"

"Certainly, father."

Jack shook his head.

"I only wish I dared," he said. "But we will say no more upon that head just at present."

Before they could enter the house they were met by a young woman with an infant in her arms, and two young children close to her skirts. She was the wife of the young farmer, and well she knew how much she and all whom she loved, were indebted to the visitor who approached. Claude spoke to her with the ease and grace so familiar and so incidental to him, and he introduced Jack to her. In a few moments more they were all in the house, and the young man having returned from putting up the horses, took Claude aside, and said—

"Is there any present danger?"

"No. None that I am at all aware of. I only want to stay here until sunset that is all."

"And—and is there no hope——"

"Hope of what?"

"That you will be able to leave this life, so full of risks, and embrace one which will be more congenial to your nature."

Claude shook his head mournfully.

"Alas!" he said, "you do not know all. If you did, even you would—but no matter. I can almost say with the man in the play—

"That way madness lies!"

So let us talk of anything else in all the world, but what I am and what I might have been, or what I still may be."

It was quite evident, by Claude's manner, that a more painful theme than his own position in life could not possibly be started; so it was at once dropped, and to note the kindness and the scrupulous attention with which he was treated by those people to whom he had been such a guardian angel, one would have thought him surely one of the most important personages society ever saw or was likely to see. All this was very pleasing to Jack, for such was his affection for Claude, that he would much rather any one said a kind thing to him, or did a kind action to him, than to himself. No wonder, then, that the hours passed off pleasantly enough at that beautiful rural abode. Alas! what is called improvement and speculation, has swept away from the immediate neighbourhood of the metropolis many of these sweet retreats, where genius as well as simplicity might find a

congenial home; and the lover of the picturesque and the beautiful must now travel much further from the giant city, before he can be said to have left behind him those things which are of man's creation, to look upon those things which are God's! The sun at length slowly dipped into the western horizon, and the soft beautiful shadows of evening crept over hill and tree, dell and flower. The songs of numberless birds filled the air with a sweet melody; and Claude, as he leant against an aged elm, with the family around him that he had snatched from destruction, could not help giving audible expression to the thought of—

“How many more of such sunsets as this am I doomed to see?”

Jack was close to him, and whispered in his ear—

“The young girl at the boarding-school. The villain—the road!”

“Right. I have duties. To horse, Jack—to horse, again. It is still for Claude Duval. Life on the road! It was written upon the page, in life's great volume, directed to me, when I came into this world of sadness and of beauty. My horse—my horse, Jack.”

### CHAPTER CXXIII.

#### A NOBLE LORD IN A HOBBLE.

It was upon one of those strange misty, mysterious-looking evenings, incidental to the English climate at all periods of the year, but much more particularly in the spring and the autumn, that Claude and Jack issued forth from beneath the friendly roof where they had been so hospitably entertained. In the air there was a dewy freshness, which, while it obscured the locality, was grateful enough to the feelings; and as Claude looked through the mist, he said to Jack—

“We must not wander far, or we shall lose those of whom we are in search.”

Before Jack could reply, a voice cried—

“Thank God! It's all right.”

“Who spoke?” said Claude.

“Only me, sir, whoever you are. It's only me. Nicodemus Clarke.”

Claude and Jack looked at each other with surprise, as well they might, for the name of Nicodemus Clarke was as new to them as anything could very well be.

“Yes, gentlemen,” continued the voice, “I hid in this hedge till I heard you were in search of some one, and then, of course, I knew that you must be on the same errand as I.”

“And what may that be?” said Claude, as a small stout man, after a struggle, succeeded in getting out of a hedge close at hand, and made his way up to them.

“Why, sir,” he said, “Ruben Halleybut and I were coming across the common, and we met a man selling brooms, who said to us, ‘If you want to make a good evening's work, you will wait about here, and nab the celebrated Claude Duval.’ Well, of course, I thought it odd, and so did Ruben, for you know, sir, no doubt, of the great rewards offered for Claude Duval, and we thought it a strange thing that a man who only sold brooms should give us such a chance, when he might get it himself; but, howsomedever, Ruben said to me—‘You stay here, Nicodemus, while I go to Hanwell, and rouse up the constabulary;’ so you see, that's where he has gone, and here am I.”

“Indeed!” said Claude. “Well, it's lucky you met me.”

“That's just my idea. I thought to myself—Nicodemus, it's a lucky thing you have met with some one respectable, for Ruben is a deuce of a while—excuse me, sir, for naming the deuce in your company.”

“Oh, don't think anything of that.”

“Well, sir, perhaps you won't object to stay till Reuben and the constabulary come back, sir, will you?”

“Certainly not, Mr. Nicodemus, but I am in possession of valuable information regarding Claude Duval, do you know.”



"Are you, really, sir?"

"Yes, and it is solely upon his account that I and my friend are upon the common to-night."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, your information, let it come from where it might, regarding Claude Duval, is correct."

"Really?"

"It is so, you may depend. But I happen to know that he will be here disguised, and for a particular object, too. It will not be long before a plain carriage will draw up on the heath, and in that carriage will be Claude Duval."

Mr. Nicodemus shook a little.

"So you have only to open the door," added Claude, "and seize him by the collar and make him your prisoner at once."

"Me, sir—me?"

"Certainly, you. Why not?"

"Lord bless you, sir, I wouldn't for all the world. Do I look like the sort of man to lay hold of a highwayman by the collar and say, 'Come along with me, if you please, and if you don't please, I'll make you.'"

Claude could hardly forbear a smile, for certainly the person talking with him was, to all appearance, as unlikely a person to do such a feat as he ever saw.

"Well then," said Claude, "I suppose your best and only plan will be to wait until the force you expect comes from Hanwell."

"Oh, sir, that's quite another thing, and if you and your servant will only stay with me in case of accidents, all may be well, sir. I am the beadle of Ealing Church."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir, and have been so now getting on for nine years; and though I say it myself, perhaps that should'n't, I will say that a more efficient beadle never put on coat or hat."

"There can be no doubt of that," said Claude. "Your discretion is evidently something immense."

"I believe you, sir. But you were saying something about this fellow, Claude Duval."

"I was. The fact is, I happen to know that he has come down here upon a very particular errand, and if he can ever be caught at all, it will be to-night, when he is rather off his guard. Since you wish it, I will stay with you until your friends come from the village of Hanwell, and then I will point out to you and to them how you may best take Claude Duval prisoner without danger; for what earthly good can come of risking valuable life or valuable limb in a contest with such a person. If taken, it ought to be with as much safety to all concerned as possible."

"My dear sir, I never in all my life heard a more true and better sentiment than that—in all my life."

"And particularly," added Claude, "I think persons in authority in parishes ought to be careful of themselves; for who knows what confusion and inconvenience might result from the death of any one of them?"

These sentiments came so home to the heart of Mr. Nicodemus, that he actually wiped a tear from his left eye, and spoke in a voice husky from emotion, saying—

"Upon my life, sir, you are a gentleman, you are indeed; and you speak for all the world, sir, like a printed book, you do. As you truly say, sir, authorities are the people that ought to be looked to."

"I always thought so," added Claude, drily.

"Ah, sir, if all the world was only like you."

"The world then would never get on," laughed Claude. "But my sincere advice to you and to your friends is, that when you find the carriage I spoke of to you, and feel convinced that it contains no other than the man you seek, you will fasten up the two doors of it, and drive it to Newgate."

"What an idea, sir. But—but—the coachman—is there a coachman?"

"Yes; and a footman too, for Claude Duval wishes to disguise himself well; so

I think you must pull the coachman off his box, and take him to the Hauwel lock-up, and the footman with him to keep him company."

"That's good," said Mr. Nicodemus. "It's Claude Duval we want, and not footmen or coachmen."

"Certainly. But you will remember and put your friends upon their guard likewise, concerning the fact that this coachman and footman we talk of are associats and accomplices of Claude Duval, not his dupes, and therefore they will say anything in the world, and lie in the most extraordinary manner, to try to get him off."

"In course, sir. In course."

"They will, no doubt, try to frighten you, and impose upon your credulity by telling you that you have made a mistake, and that it is some lord that you have taken."

"A lord! Ha! ha! A lord. The lord will be made to dance upon nothing at Tyburn, I rather think."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Oh, dear yes, and I'll go and see him turned off, and then at the last moment I'll cry—'Good bye, my lord!—ha! ha! Good bye, my lord.'"

Mr. Nicodemus thought this a joke of such an exquisite character that he laughed and coughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks, and Jack, who had dismounted, and kept close to him, was forced to give him two or three tremendous slaps upon the back to aid him in his recovery from a state of incipient strangulation.

"Don't—don't! Oh, I am better now.—You'll knock all the blessed breath out of my body, that you will, if you hit so hard as that. Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

"Friendly blows," said Jack.

"Devilish friendly."

"Well, well," said Claude. "Let us lose no time, for I rather think the carriage will be here presently."

At this intimation Mr. Nicodemus kept as close as he possibly could to Claude, for notwithstanding all that had been said, he thought there might be some danger which it would be quite as well to avoid, or at all events to be sure, by keeping in the immediate company of one who had professed such a reverence for parochial authorities in general, and beadles in particular.

"If you think you will be any safer," said Claude, "you can get up behind me. There is room."

"Humph!" said Mr. Nicodemus, "I don't think I was ever outside a horse in my life."

"Indeed."

"No, sir. So you see, not knowing much about it, I don't seem to like the idea exactly of getting up behind."

"But you forget that you will not be called upon to take any part in the management of the horse. All you will have to do is to hold fast by me, and as I will take care not to fall off, I don't very well see how you are to do so."

"Hark!" cried Jack.

"What is it?" said Claude.

"I hear the sound of wheels. He whom we seek comes!"

Claude listened, and Mr. Nicodemus turned as pale as death, and struggled on to Claude's horse.

## CHAPTER CXXIV.

### CAPTURE OF THE SECRETARY.

JACK was right. The sound of wheels upon a good gravelled road which intersected the common came in the course of half a minute quite plainly upon his ears. The beadle had managed, with some assistance from Claude, to scramble on to the back of his horse, and then he held fast as well as he was able.

"Bless us and save us, what an adventure this will be to talk of at the "Pig and Tweezers," of a Saturday night ; I think I see anybody holding up his hands and opening his eyes when I tell him how I sprung upon the horse."

"Not a doubt of it," said Claude. "Ah, I hear the tramp of horses' feet, I think. Listen."



CAPTURE OF THE SECRETARY BY SIXTEEN STRING JACK—ALARM OF THE BEADLE.

"Yes," said Jack, "and from the west too."

"Then it's the folks from Hanwell," said Nicodemus. "They ought to have been here before this. But better late than never, says I. Oh, I can hear them myself now. Well, suppose, sir, we go on and meet them?"

"That will do," said Claude, "and you can introduce me."

"With pleasure, sir—with pleasure. Only I haven't the happiness, sir, to know who you are."

"Oh, I'm Colonel Doo."

"Colonel Doo?"

"Yes. That's easily recollected, ain't it. D double O, Doo."

"Dear me!—Yes, sir, it's easily recollected, only you see, sir, it's rather an odd name. To be sure, we have a parishioner of the name of Done."

"I hope he will be of the party now coming to our assistance," said Claude.

As he uttered these words, Claude Duval just gave his horse a slight touch with his heel, and it made a bound forward that very nearly cast Mr. Nicodemus to the earth, and it did make him rise up so high and come down with such a bump upon the back of the saddle that he groaned again.

"Oh, gracious!"

"What's the matter?"

"Don't let him do that again, colonel, if you can possibly help it. I begin to find that I don't much like riding, do you know. Is he all right, sir?"

"All right? Yes, to be sure. That was only a little bit of play."

"Play, was it? Lor! I wonder what he'd have done if he'd thought of treating us to a jump in earnest?"

Claude had cantered off in the direction of the road to Hanwell, and in the course of a few minutes a loud voice cried—

"Stand!"

"Ah, that's Squadds, the butcher," said Nicodemus. "It's all right, Mr. Squadds. It's me and Colonel Doo."

"Ah! Nicodemus, is that you?"

"Yes. Come on. We shall nab him, lads. A-hem! It's all right now. Me and the colonel have laid our plans, and he's as good as caught, I can tell you."

An irregular assemblage of some fifteen or sixteen horse men now surrounded Claude and Jack, and by the dim night light (for twilight had fairly bidden good-bye to the common) Claude could see that some of the party had fowling-pieces and some old rusty blunderbusses, while one carried in as military a fashion as he could, a huge sword that had belonged to a trooper in some cavalry regiment, heaven only knows how long ago.

"Friends, all," said the beadle, "the thing is as good as done. I met the colonel and his servant on the common, and he says he will lend us a hand."

"Bravo!—Hurrah!"

"Hush!" said Claude. "Hush! It is strictly true that, having encountered Mr. Nicodemus upon the common, and hearing from him that he was upon an expedition for the capture of Claude Duval, I did say that, for so laudible a public object, I would lend my aid."

"Hear!—hear!" said a stout-looking personage, who was churchwarden of Hanwell, and accustomed to contribute just that much of oratory to the parish meetings. "Hear!—hear!"

"And more particularly," added Claude, "as I was in possession of, I believe, exclusive information upon the subject. I can inform you, gentlemen, that Claude Duval will be upon the common to-night."

"Hear!" said the churchwarden, faintly.

His friends and compatriots thought he said "here" instead of "hear," and they all gave a prodigious start.

"Murder!" cried the beadle. Some of the troop tried to escape, and for a few moments a degree of confusion prevailed, which was only quelled by Claude saying—

"For your own safety sakes, gentlemen, I hope you will be quiet. Any alarm may bring destruction upon some half dozen of you, at the very least."

This was an intimation that had quite a magical effect. They were all instantly as still as the grave, and Claude continued—

"I have a plan by which he may be captured without any loss of life among the highly-respectable company by which I have the honour to be surrounded."

"Hear! hear!" said the churchwarden, gathering courage.

"Yes, gentlemen, if you will all place yourselves under my guidance, and follow me, all will be well."

"We will! We will! Hear! Hear!"

"Hush!"

All was still again, and then Claude turned his horse's head in the direction where he knew the carriage of his lordship would be waiting the issue of the abominable scheme for getting the young lady from the boarding-school. It was as ardent a wish of Claude's to get hold of the secretary, as it was to punish his lordship for the plan of abduction, for well Claude knew that such men as he, who paid for the proceedings which were, if successful, to bring disgrace and affliction of the bitterest character upon unoffending persons, would be tolerably harmless if they could not find tools base enough for money to join them in the accomplishment of their bad ends. The whole of the troop of horsemen from Hanwell followed Claude and Jack as softly as they could make their horses step upon the verdant sod of the common, and in the course of a few minutes they saw the dim outline of a carriage. At the same moment Claude, who, from being so much "out o' night," was quite Indian-like in his sagacity when the sun was gone, saw a man creeping along close to a hedge.

"Jack?" said Claude.

"Here, sir."

"Catch that fellow."

"Ah, I had my eye upon him," said Jack, as he dashed forward, and with a vigorous push captured the secretary of my lord.

"Help! Help! What's this?"

"Another word above your breath and you are a dead man," said Claude, as Jack brought his prisoner before him.

"But—but—"

"Silence! Gentlemen, this is an important capture. This fellow it is who plays the part of Jackall to him whom we seek. Tie him up, Jack."

"One of the party held Jack's horse while he tied the secretary's hands and feet, so that, as regards the latter, he was nearly helpless, and as regards the former, he was entirely so."

"Mercy!" said the fellow, "are you going to murder me?"

"No," said Claude, "although you deserve it. Throw him into the green pond, Jack. You know it."

"Well, sir, I will soon pitch him in."

"But I shall be drowned. Oh, spare my life. If it is only six inches deep I shall be drowned—oh;—oh! have mercy upon a poor man with a large family. Mercy for my family."

"Any daughters?" said Claude.

"Yes. Oh! yes."

"Do they go to boarding school?"

This one simple question was sufficient to let the villanous secretary know at once the infamous scheme of himself and his master was known. He gave a hideous groan and would have fallen upon his knees to pray for that mercy to himself that he never had shown to anything human; but the cord, by the aid of which Jack had tied him, prevented him, and he could only speak.

"Do not take my life," he said. "Anything but my life."

"You hear this rascal, gentlemen?" said Claude. "Anything, he thinks, his villanies entitle him to but death."

"Oh, the rascal," said Nicodemus; "but we shall soon have his master now."

"Yes," said Claude. "But we must secure this fellow. Look out for a small tree, Jack, and tie him to it, so that we shall find him when we come back. His face to the tree, Jack."

Jack nodded, and at once dragged off the secretary, who was in such a horrible fright lest he should lose his life, that anything short of that was, by comparison, delightful.

## CHAPTER CXXV:

## NEWGATE PORCH.

"Now, gentlemen," said Claude. "Come on. Follow me."

It was quite clear that the reinforcement which the beadle had sent for to Hanwell looked upon Claude as quite a redoubtable personage now, and were quite willing that he should, at all events, take the lead in the attack that they supposed was about to be made upon the formidable highwayman.

"Yes, sir," said one;—"and that, by the bye, was the one who, by his frequently looking behind him, showed the greatest inclination to run away. Yes, sir, you follow—that is, I mean, you lead and we will follow, if you please, sir. I only hope we may catch him."

"There can be no doubt of it."

"You—you really think so, sir," stammered the churchwarden."

"Certainly, I do."

"Then I—I am almost afraid, do you know, that I am wanted at home. You must know, sir, that my wife is in a delicate situation, and if anything was to happen while I am away, you know, sir, there's no saying how one might blame oneself afterwards."

"Don't go," said Claude. "We may need your valuable assistance."

"Don't be afraid," said another.

This word "afraid" stuck in the throat of the churchwarden like the celebrated "Amen" of Macbeth, and fearing that he should never hear the last of his pusillanimity from his neighbours and kind friends, if he now made a precipitate retreat, he resigned himself to the glories and the chances of an enterprise, which he began to think he had commenced in an over hasty and unadvised manner. Both Claude and Jack were anxious to bring this affair to a speedy conclusion, therefore they went on quickly, peering into the darkness to discover the carriage of his lordship. Presently, in the obscurity doubly obscure cast by some trees along a portion of the common, they could just see the object they sought, and Claude turning to those who were following him, said—

"Now, gentlemen, look for yourselves. What do you see yonder?"

"A carriage."

"Well, in that carriage is your man."

A sudden retrograde movement sufficiently notified to the fact that this was in truth anything but pleasant intelligence, but Claude continued—

"The only way to capture him, without bloodshed, will be to fasten up the doors of the carriage, and then drive it to London."

"But how can that be done?"

"I and my servant will charge ourselves with that part of the affair, and if we deliver into your hands the carriage and its occupant, will you undertake to drive it to Newgate?"

"Yes—yes—yes."

"Wait a few moments, then.—Jack?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come with me."

Jack followed Claude; and when they got out of ear-shot of the good folks of Hanwell, Claude said to him—

"There will be no difficulty in fastening the carriage doors?"

"I can tie them," said Jack, "and they will then resist any ordinary attempt to open them from the inside, and the more so that the noble lord will not be aware of the nature of the obstruction to his egress."

"Very well. Come and do one door, while I hold a little parley with him at the other."

Claude dashed up to the carriage, and appearing at one of the windows so

suddenly, that, to the perceptions of the occupants of the vehicle, he seemed more like some apparition than a living man, he said—

“A word with you, sir.”

“Who are you? Help!”

“Silence, or you are a dead man. I will shoot you with as little feeling for the consequences or compunctious visitations, as I would a mad dog. Your only chance of safety lies in being silent and submissive.”

“Submissive to what?”

“To your fate.”

“That is rather a—a—wide explanation,” said his lordship, faintly. “Who are you?”

“That is of no consequence. But we know who you are.”

“Done!” said Jack, to intimate that he had fastened one of the doors of the carriage; and then Claude, while he did the other, added—

“You are the great highwayman, Claude Duval?”

“I!—I Claude Duval?”

“You don’t deny it. There’s a large reward offered for you, alive or dead, but we would rather take you alive.”

“This is folly or madness. I am not——”

“Hush! if you deny your identity, we shall take that as a positive proof that you mean to make some desperate attempt to escape, and then it will be our duty to shoot you, and take you in dead.”

“This comes of leaving my servants at the inn. Confound that secretary, where is he? I tell you, my good sir, I am not Claude Duval. You are most seriously mistaken, I assure you.”

Claude put his arm into the carriage and pressed the muzzle of a pistol to his lordship’s cheek, as he said—

“Repeat that, and you are a dead man.”

“Done,” said Jack, as he completed the fastening of the other door.

“Forward, friends,” said Claude to the party of horsemen, who had kept carefully aloof during the brief parley. “Forward. He surrenders, and will allow us to carry him in safety and peace to Newgate.”

At this gratifying intelligence, the horsemen advanced; and Claude, again clapping the pistol to the face of his lordship, said—

“If you do not, in a sufficiently loud voice to reach the ears of all present, acknowledge yourself to be what you are—namely, Claude Duval, the only thing I can do is to pull the trigger.”

There was a something in Claude’s tones, that were fearfully convincing, and in a voice, in which fear and rage struggled together, the noble occupant of the carriage said—

“I—I am Claude Duval.”

“You hear him, gentlemen?” said Claude.

“Yes—yes. Oh, yes. All’s right.”

“Very well; now I advise that you blow his brains out at once, if he should give you the smallest trouble as you go along. If he remains quiet, I am certainly of opinion that it will be better to lodge him in the hands of the authorities alive.”

Everybody, with loud demonstrations of satisfaction, concurred in this sentiment; and then, as they all could not but feel that there might be some danger in carrying the shooting of the supposed highwayman into effect, they were terribly anxious to impress upon his mind the propriety of perfect submission, and that could only be done by large talking of the offhand and determined manner in which they purposed putting him out of the world if he should exhibit a contrary disposition. No doubt his lordship thought himself surrounded by as rough desperadoes as the times could produce. One of the party mounted the coach-box, and then Claude said—

“Off with you. The cattle are good, and you will be at the gate of Newgate in half an hour.”

Away they all went, leaving Claude and Jack to undisturbed possession of Ealing Common.

"Well," said Jack, "this is ridiculous enough."

"It is," replied Claude. "But now, Jack, we ought, I think, to give them some sort of warning at the boarding-school, that an attempt was to be made to carry off one of the inmates."

"That is easily enough done. Hush!"

"What is the matter, Jack?"

"I am listening. I thought I heard the sound of footsteps."

"Ah! and so do I. Just hold the bridle of my horse, Jack, and I will go and reconnoitre."

"Be careful, Claude."

"I will—I will, you may be assured, Jack. Don't stir from this spot unless you hear my voice, or the sound of fire-arms."

Claude dismounted and crept along in a stooping posture, until he came to a stile which led into a preserve, and it was in that preserve that he could hear two men conversing. While he, Claude, is carefully, so as not to allow himself to be seen against the night sky, creeping through the lowest bars of the stile, we may briefly notice the noble lord's reception at the great metropolitan prison in the Old Bailey. His lordship's fears had been quite sufficiently awakened to induce him to wish to see the end of this adventure as a living man, rather than as a dead one; so after the carriage started he said not a word for some quarter of an hour or so. All that time, however, his rage was gathering strength, and slowly getting the better of his prudence.

"Is it to be, indeed," he thought, "that I, one of the Hereditary Legislators of England, born to wealth and honours, should be thwarted in such a little common place affair as running off with a poor man's daughter? Why are the daughters of common people sometimes pretty, if they are not to be made useful in adorning the dignified leisure of a noble aristocracy, I should like to know?"

This was quite a conclusive argument to his lordship's perceptions, and certainly if uttered among his own class, or possibly of an afternoon in the House of Lords, might have met with a "Hear! hear!" His lordship then tried one of the doors, but Jack was too great an adept at the tying of knots to render it a very easy matter to open one, and suddenly recollecting that at the back of the carriage there was one of those mysterious looking little windows, about the size of one's hand, he knelt upon the seat and tried to look through that upon the dark road. Then he tapped at it with a ring he had upon his finger, but the noise of the carriage wheels drowned all sounds of that character, and his lordship, if he meant to make himself heard, must manifestly think of some more affectual means. By feeling in his pockets he found a small penknife, and with that he broke the little window at the back of the carriage, and cried—

"Hilloa! Hilloa!"

"Once—twice," said somebody. Stand out of the way, Hoffendon, and don't be a fool."

"The devil!" said his lordship as he slipped off his seat and lay at the bottom of his carriage in an agony of fear.

"Thrice," said the voice, and then bang! went a blunderbuss, and half a dozen shots flew in at the back of the carriage. His lordship escaped uninjured, but the individual who had taken the coachman's seat was not so lucky, for one of the bullets with which the blunderbuss had been loaded, after penetrating the back of the carriage, and passing harmlessly over his lordship, went through one of the front windows, and lodged about an inch deep in the hind portions of the amateur coachman, who uttered a yell upon the occasion that might have been heard a mile off.

"Murder! murder! Oh, oh, oh!"

"Never mind," said he who had fired the blunderbuss. "It's only me."

"Oh, curse you! Why did you do that?"

"I have hit him!"



"Yes, you have. How can I sit and drive now, I should like to know, booby. What an idiot you are to be sure, Bailey."

The whole cavalcade now came to a stand, and Bailey, who was the individual with the blunderbuss, explained that he had seen the prisoner making an attempt to get out at the back of the coach, so without more ado, according to agreement and understanding, he had fired at him.

"And killed him?"

"Well," said Bailey, "I heard say there was six slugs in the blunderbuss."

"And I've got one of 'em," groaned the driver.

"Well, you needn't mind it," said Bailey. "You know it wasn't meant for you. God bless me, who are you, I wonder, that's so mighty particular about trifles?"

"Trifles, you scoundrel."

"Now, now, gentlemen," said the beadle, "don't quarrel. Let us go on. I dare say Claude Duval is dead now, and the best thing we can do, is to leave our friend Griggs at the first public house we come to, and get on to Newgate as fast as we can."

"Oh, curse you, Bailey," said the wounded man; "won't I serve you out for this some day. Oh dear, oh dear, I do think I shall faint clean away."

## CHAPTER CXXVI.

### A LITTLE MISTAKE.

ANOTHER of the party who possessed sufficient skill to guide the carriage to town, mounted the box by the side of the wounded man, and then, without thinking it to be at all necessary to look at the condition of the supposed highwayman occupying the interior of the vehicle, they started again. The little bit of experience of the aptitude of blunderbusses to do mischief, and not at all to respect the rights of an hereditary aristocracy, was not lost upon the noble lord in the carriage, and thinking that he was in a very safe place upon the carpet at the bottom of the vehicle, there he remained. A public house upon the Western Road was not such a rarity, even then, but that one was soon reached, and at the door of it the wounded Griggs was put down, with a promise that, notwithstanding his not actually going to Newgate with the prisoner, he should have his equal share of the large reward that would be distributed amongst them all. On went the carriage again, and at Tyburn Gate, he who now drove could not help, in the pride of his heart, saying to the toll-taker—

"We have got Claude Duval here."

"Claude Duval?"

"Yes. He's settled at last."

"Killed?"

"Yes. We had to do it. He wouldn't be quiet."

A look of deep concern crossed the man's face, as he said—

"You might have told me something else that would have pleased me better. Did he ever take anything from you?"

"No; but only consider the reward."

"Oh! ah! the reward. Well, every guinea of it to me would look the colour of blood. Go on; I won't take the toll of you. Nothing that ever belonged to a man that would kill for hire in such a way shall find a place in my hands."

The escort of the carriage said nothing, but passed on, and as they went down Oxford Street several of them spoke to each other in whispers, and one said—

"I like the idea of the money, but I don't half fancy being pointed at, as we all shall be, as the fellows that killed Claude Duval for the reward! That ain't pleasant, is it?"

"Not very; and—and I say, what a sight there may be in the court when we get to Newgate."

"A sight?"

"Yes, to be sure, all blood and squash, you know. Faugh! there's no saying how he may be mangled by the bullets from Bailey's confounded blunderbuss."

By degrees they all got talking in this strain, so that by the time they turned out of Snow Hill into the Old Bailey, they felt about as thoroughly uncomfortable as any dozen men could. Upon the principle, however, of post-boys coming into a town, they went up to the gate of Newgate with a dash, and one rung violently at the bell by the debtors' door.

"What now?" said a gruff voice through a grating.

"We have brought you a customer."

"Come, no nonsense. What is it?"

"Claude Duval!"

"What! another take in!—ha!—ha! Dead or alive?"

"Dead."

"Humph! Well, I won't say exactly that that's a do. A bullet will settle him as well as any one else, and the greatest fool in the world may send it on its errand. Did you do it?"

This was not very complimentary, but that was no time for anything in the shape of private quarrels to take place. The whole Hanwell party were agitated, and had dismounted from their horses. The wicket-gate of the old jail was opened, and four or five officers descended the steps. One tried to open the carriage door.

"What the deuce," he said, "if he is dead, have you tied him in for?"

"Oh, never mind that. You take him out, and give us a receipt for him, that's all. Hadn't you better get a sheet?"

"A what?"

"A sheet; cos, you see, we rather think he is all in bits."

A frightful groan, with something of a howl mixed with it, now came from the carriage, and the officers themselves retreated a step or two, while the whole of the Hanwell party rushed into the vestibule of the prison in the greatest fright imaginable.

"What, in the name of all that's troublesome," said one of the officers, "is the meaning of all this?"

"He ain't quite dead, that's all," faltered the beadle of Ealing. "He ain't dead, gentlemen. Take care of yourselves; he'll come out with a bounce."

"Stuff—stuff!"

"Well, my good sir, you open the door. I think, when we bring him to the gate of Newgate, and give him up, carriage and all, to the officers, we have done all that ought to be expected of decent men."

"Yes, yes," cried all the others. "We give him up."

"What is the meaning of all this, Jones?" said one of the officers to another.

"Lend me your knife to cut this string that ties the door fast. It was no fool that put it on."

"It's fast enough."

"Yes. But there it goes. Stand out of the way, and I'll fling open the door at once. If anybody comes out quick, pounce upon him and hold on. We will soon clap the darbies on him."

"All's right."

The moment was now one of intense excitement and curiosity to all present. The officers so dispersed themselves that it would have been next thing to impossible for any one to escape from the carriage by a sudden rush, while the Hanwell party, looking over their heads from the porch of Newgate, betrayed, by their looks of fiendish anxiety, how deeply they felt the awful character of the whole proceeding. Added to all this, the governor of the prison, who had been roused with the information that Claude Duval was brought dead to the gate, had just reached the vestibule with a night-lamp in his hand, and with eager eyes was watching the whole of the mysterious proceedings.

"Now—now," said one.

"Hush!" said another.

"Make way," said a third.

"What in the name of fate," said the governor, "is the meaning of all this?"

"It's Claude Duval, sir," cried half-a-dozen voices.

"And all in pieces," added the beadle of Ealing.



MISS HOLLOWAY AIDS CLAUDE AND CICELY IN ESCAPING FROM THE BOARDING SCHOOL.

"All in what?"

"In pieces, sir; it was Bailey's blunderbus as did it."

"Out with him," cried the governor. "Don't let us have any more of this nonsense. Out with him, my men, directly."

Thus urged, delay became insubordination, and the officers dragged the door of the carriage open, when, to their astonishment, there appeared upon the step, in

the act of getting out, a personage of an appearance as widely different from Claude Duval as anything could well be from another. Dismay, mingled with astonishment, sat upon every countenance. The governor dropped the light he carried, and the beadle of Ealing dropped his staff, letting the little gilt crown at the top of it come with an enormous dab upon the pavement.

"Police!" said his lordship. "Is there a constable here?"

"A constable?" cried a dozen voices.

"Yes, for I have some men to give into custody who have attempted my life, as well as forcing me with them to this place, wherever it is."

He looked about him as he spoke, and then the governor coming forward said—

"Ah, this is another of Claude Duval's tricks. Pray, sir, who are you?"

"A peer of the realm."

The governor gave his head a slight jerk as he added—

"Here's a pretty affair. Why, good God, how could you all be so stupid as to bring this gentleman here, mistaking him for Claude Duval?"

"We—we were told," stammered the beadle of Ealing.

"Told, by whom?"

"A very nice gentleman indeed, on Ealing Common, to bid us this was Claude Duval in the carriage, and helped to fasten it up, so we came right on to town with it."

"Oh, you dolts, I'd take my oath that that nice gentleman upon Ealing Common was no other than Claude Duval himself."

The Hanwell party uttered a simultaneous groan, and then Bailey whispered to another—

"I say, the best thing for us all to do is to be off at once, before they have seen enough of us here to identify us. The officers are looking at us all as if they had made up their minds to know us again if it were one hundred years hence."

They all found that they had made some egregious blunder, and the whispered advice to be off went from mouth to mouth, and then, as with one word, they turned their horses' heads from the door of the prison, and off they went as though there was some handsome premium for him who would be first out of sight of its old grey walls.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now that we have disposed of his lordship and his captors, we are enabled to return again to Claude, who it will be recollected had dismounted and left his horse in the care of Jack while he crossed a stile into a plantation verging upon the common, to listen to some whispered conversation that was going on between two men there. A feeling, which to himself he could not translate, seemed upon this occasion to impel Claude forward for the express purpose of listening to the conversation of these two men, and carefully treading upon the grass and pushing aside the thick growth of underwood from his path as he went, he soon gained a convenient spot in the deep shadow of an alder tree, from which he could catch every word that was uttered by them. It would appear that one of the men was arguing with the other respecting some circumstance which he felt much more confident concerning, than did his companion.

"You were always a timid slinking genius," said the one in a tone of mingled threatening and irony. "Upon my word, I wonder how I have continued to keep you about me so long."

"Why, Mr. Sachory, I rather think," said the other, "I have been at times a little useful to you."

"It is well you said a *little*," responded the other.

"Ah, well—well, we can't all expect to be so clever or so bold as you, you know, sir."

"Bah!"

"Yes. Bah! sounds very well, but it don't alter the case a bit. I do think I am afraid, and that's the fact—I can't help it. Perhaps it's foolish, perhaps it ain't, but afraid I am."

"And always will be."

"No, sir, not always. You know very well that in any quiet bit of roguery, that only wanted lying, and a good face on the matter, and in which there was no danger to life or limb, you have always been able to depend upon Sam Midge."

The other uttered an exclamation of contempt.

"But in this affair," continued Sam, "I must confess I am rather out of my element. Every man can do some things, but he can't do all things. Did I ever scruple about an oath or any little piece of perjury, in the way of the profession?"

"No—no."

"Well, then, don't get into a bluster, and be saying 'bah!' because I can't like this sort of thing, which I say again is out of my line."

"But consider the reward. I have promised you no less a sum than £500 for yourself."

"I have considered it. What do you suppose, sir, brings me here if I had not, I should like to know? He! he! he!"

Sam chuckled, as if he thought he had said rather a clever thing; and after the pause of about half a minute, the other added in a calmer and more friendly voice—

"Well, Sam, we ought not to expect impossibilities. You are rather a fool, I admit; but yet you can do something well enough, and this, perhaps, as you say, is rather out of your line."

"It is."

"Well, well. The reward makes it well worth trying, you know. I wonder where the deuce the chaise is?"

"Ah, that Bob is always behind."

"Confound him. Now, Sam, I do hope that you will have face enough for this business."

"Face enough! Oh, if it's only that, sir, that's wanted, I shall be able to go through with it famously, I can assure you. All I'm afraid of, is the consequence if that highwayman fellow should find it all out, you see."

"Pho!—pho! How can he? You know that there would be no end of squabbling about the reward, if more than ourselves were to be engaged in his death."

"Yes, his death. Put him out of his troubles, sir, and then I shall be out of mine, but not before."

"He shall die, you may depend. Fortunately, the reward is payable whether he be taken to the authorities alive or dead, and as such is the case, I certainly prefer taking him dead."

"So do I, sir—so do I."

"Well, then, Sam, all you have to do is to take the letter to the house, and get the young woman off into the coach, and then we will send for him, and if she can but be got to write to him, come he will."

"Good."

"And then he shall not be five minutes in the house before a bullet finds a place in his skull."

"Good again," said Sam; "and then my £500 is certain."

"Certain as if you had the amount in your pocket. Ah, Sam, I suppose you will leave your old master then?"

"Rather," said Sam.

"What on earth, thought Claude, "can these two rascals be talking about?"

"Well," continued he who was the employer of the other, "well, if I don't break that boy's head for not bringing the chaise sooner. You know the school well, I suppose, Sam?"

"Oh, yes. There's no dog."

"Ah!" thought Claude, "it is another attempt upon the school, is it?—What on earth can these rascals be planning and plotting now, I wonder? Confound them, I will thwart them yet."

He considered for a few moments as to what would be the best plan of procedure; and then he thought that he could not do better than actually go to the school at once, and boldly ask to see its proprietress, and put her upon her guard regarding the danger that threatened her establishment, for although he had not heard anything sufficiently explicit from the two men to know which young lady was threatened, yet, of course, that could not materially matter, since the care of the mistress of the establishment could be directed to all. He lingered yet a little longer, with the faint hope of getting more accurate intelligence from the men; but they continued conversing in the same style, so that it would have been useless for him to wait longer, and as for anything in the shape of retribution upon them for their projected villany, he felt that that could easily be accomplished after he had taken steps to warn the schoolmistress of the nature of the danger upon her establishment, and cautioned her to take such steps as she might to guard those in her care.

## CHAPTER CXXVII.

### THE YOUNG LADIES' ACADEMY.

THERE was one thing, however, that did puzzle Claude amazingly, and that was, how his capture could be in any possible way contingent upon the success of those two men in getting a young lady from the school; and yet they both spoke as if that was a consequence necessarily arising from it, and by no means an extraordinary accident. As he, Claude, went back to where he had left Jack with the horses, he turned this part of the affair over in his mind, but without being able to come to any conclusion concerning it. He was roused from the kind of reverie into which that puzzle plunged him, by Jack calling in a menacing voice—

“Who goes there?”

“’Tis I, Jack,” said Claude. “’Tis I. I thought you knew my footsteps.”

“It sounded strange to me. You were walking much slower than usual.”

“I was in deep thought.”

“Anything amiss, Claude?” asked Jack, in a tone of anxiety.

“I will tell you all I have heard, and you can draw your own conclusion.”

CAUde then related to Jack the substance of the conversation that he had overheard between the two men, and when he had concluded he added—

“Now, Jack, there is some mystery here, which I confess my utter inability to unravel.”

“It is a mystery indeed, Claude, which transcends my imagination. But what do you intend doing?”

“In the first place, the proprietress of the school ought to be fully warned, upon no pretence to part with one of her charges.”

“Yes, Claude. But there may be much danger to you, looking around this spot, much more than either of us suspect. I would strongly advise that you ride off at once, and house yourself at your friend’s farm again, while I stay to finish this adventure.”

“No, Jack. No.”

“Nay, the danger to you is a hundred-fold more than what it is to me!”

“Yes, Jack, that is true, but I cannot help feeling a something, which you may call folly, or superstition, as you please, which urges me to pursue this adventure personally; I know not how it is, but a strange feeling of satisfaction is at my heart to-night. I feel as though some great joy was impending over me; and as though Heaven, in its great goodness towards one, even so erring as I am, had looked to my happiness especially.”

“You do surprise me, Claude.”

“Not more than I surprise myself. But to you, Jack, I have no concealment, and as I have hesitated not to reflect upon you much of my repinings and melan-

choly feelings, I feel that I ought to tell you when the light of a new beam of joy irradiates my heart."

"You are right, Claude."

"I was sure you would say so. But now let us both come to the school, and we will, at all events, put those whose duty it is to be careful of the trust reposed in them, upon their guard. They must take care of their lambs, for wolves are abroad."

Claude had mounted his horse, and now both he and Jack made their way to the boarding school. This school, which, during the occurrences of that night occupied so prominent a place in the thoughts and speculations of every one, was held in what had once been a mansion of great splendour for its period, but which, having become unfashionable, had left the hands of the family that owned it, and was taken for, perhaps, the only commercial purpose it was at all adapted for, namely, a school. There were a pair of massive iron gates at its entrance, and the old sculptured ones of the family, originally owning the place, still were to be seen in bold relief upon the pediments. Beyond the gates was a carriage drive, which, pursued either to the right or to the left, alike would lead to the house, which itself was one of those old red-brick buildings of which some of the still remaining mansions of the nobility in and about London are tolerably fair specimens. The heavy iron handle of a bell, which was at the top of the gates, hung on the right of them, and it was to this that Claude appealed when he and Jack reached the place. The peal was not a very loud one, for Claude did not wish that any one but the inmates of the house should hear it, and he began to think that the reason it was paid no attention to, was, that he had not rung loud enough, but Jack was of a different opinion.

"We are apt to forget one thing," he said, "which in this case especially ought to be taken into account."

"What is that, Jack?"

"The hour, Claude. To us, all hours of the night are alike, and we are so accustomed to travelling on business by the light of the stars, that we are apt to forget the habits and the predilections of what are called the regular portion of the community."

"That is true. What is the time, Jack?"

"About two."

"No wonder, then, that we are denied admittance to a young ladies' boarding-school. What shall we do?"

"It is absolutely necessary that we get admittance here. And I think it an equally clear conclusion, that we shall never accomplish that by ringing. Now, I will open the gate if you have no objection, and we will close it behind us again."

"Do you think you can?"

"Oh, yes; easily. These large locks offer no difficulties whatever. I shall manage this one, no doubt, easily."

"Do it then, Jack."

Jack dismounted, and while Claude held his horse by the bridle, he took from his pocket a picklock, and in the course of a few moments forced back the bolt of the gate lock.

"Done," he said, as the ponderous gate yielded to a touch; "come on, Claude. We will find some convenient place to shelter our horses, and then we can go on foot to the house, or, if you like it better, I will wait under these chestnut trees in charge of the cattle."

"I think, Jack, that will be better."

"Very well, only be as short a time gone as you can, Claude, for after a little, when I am not with you, I get full of all sorts of foolish fears, and so weak upon my own imagination, that I am as wretched until I see you, as though there was a strong probability that I should never do so again."

"Be calm and confident, Jack, I will come back directly I have performed my mission, and you know I cannot come to much risk among the young ladies."

"I don't know anything of the sort," said Jack, with a faint laugh. "Young ladies are very dangerous personages."

Claude had dismounted, and smiling at Jack's fears, he made his way up the well gravelled carriage road towards the house. The distance was short, but when he reached the house he did not appear to be much nearer his object than before, for the outer-door was firmly closed, and only a faint light was to be seen along the second floor in what he supposed was the dormitory of the young ladies. Claude was rather puzzled to know what to do. After some consideration, however, he said to himself—

"The absolute necessity of the case authorises me to dispense with ceremony. The mistress of the establishment and her servants must be made aware of the danger that is at hand, and which is none the less dangerous, that it is to be a piece of craft, instead of violence. I will and must ring them up."

With this determination, Claude looked about for a bell, and finally found one. There was an old fashioned knocker, too, upon the door, and for a moment or two he hesitated whether he should not knock instead of ring, but he finally determined upon the bell.

"The sound of a knocker," he said, "is very alarming in the night, and as I wish to perform my mission as quietly as possible, the bell shall be the medium of my communication with the inmates of this house."

Claude rung and rung, gently too,—for, after all, intractable a thing as a bell may seem to be, yet a gentle and friendly ring may be given as well as a gentle and friendly knock at a door. He then waited for about five minutes, but not the slightest notice was taken of his application for admission, and he began to fear that it was "no use knocking at the door," and it was equally as inefficacious toring at all.

"I must not be balked by a trifling difficulty," said Claude; so he rang again, louder than before.

This time the application was not quite so ineffectual, for a quantity of cold water came down from an upper window, and would have completely drenched Claude, had he not adroitly escaped by jamming himself close up against the outer door. A female voice then said—

"Who's there, and what do you want?"

"To reply to the last question first," said Claude, "and negatively—I do not want a shower bath."

"Who are you?"

"One about as much sinned against as sinning. It matters little who I am or what the world calls me. Let it suffice that I came here as a friend."

"We have no friends," said the voice;—down went the window.

"A strange notion," thought Claude. "I will ring again."

Tingle! tingle! went the bell; and then he heard from some back window a watchman's rattle spring.

"How fool-sh," he said, "that they will not come and see what I want. I must and will arouse them in some way."

He retired from the door, and looked up at the window, and it was well he did so, for suddenly some large fire-arm was discharged through the door from the inner side, and would undoubtedly have killed Claude if he had been in the way of the bullets that came crashing through the panels of the door.

"Take that," said a voice.

Then a chorus of screams came from the second floor, where Claude had seen the faint light, and where he had no doubt the young ladies, who were so guarded by cold water, rattles, and fire-arms, slept.

"I will be quiet," thought Claude. "They will then fancy they have killed some one, and probably come out."

He kept out of the way of the door, for he did not know what feeling might possibly prompt a second discharge of the gun; but he was not so far off as to hear a little dialogue that took place in the passage.

"Oh, Miss Lee!" said a voice, "how could you?"



"Mercy me! I don't know. But I didn't think it would go off at that end."

"But that is the thin end, and you know Mr. Delancey, the dancing master, always said the thin end."

"Oh—oh! I thought he said the thick. Indeed I did. What a noise it did make, to be sure. Oh, my nerves—my nerves."

"But what—suppose somebody's killed?"

"I can't help it. Indeed I can't help it, Miss Bundlecumup, if there be."

"But a fellow creature?"

"No, mum; don't call a fellow creature some housebreaker. An individual, if you please, mum."

"Well—but what shall we do?"

"Nothing, mum. There's a Providence above us, and we had much better leave whoever is outside to it. Providence, you know, mum, is up at all hours, and it will look after whoever is outside, if he should be shot."

This was rather a cold-blooded philosophy, and Claude resolved that he would see how far it would go, so he uttered so horrid a groan that it reached the ears of all in the passage. It was echoed by a cry of surprise, and then some one said—

"Oh, I shall faint away dead! What was that?"

"Nothing, mum, nothing. Only the night wind."

Claude groaned again, and then he heard something that made a clatter upon the stone flooring of the hall thrown down, which he had no doubt was the gun, and a scuffling of feet proclaimed that the whole party that had been there assembled had taken to flight.

"Confound their fears, muttered Claude: "what shall I do?"

He took another long survey of the building, and then he thought he would examine the back of it; and he accordingly made his way through the garden until he reached what was by far the most inviting aspect of the house, inasmuch as it looked into a garden full of fruits and flowers.

## CHAPTER CXXVIII.

### CLAUDE'S ADVENTURE IN THE SCHOOL.

A YOUNG moon was just peeping up from the horizon, and cast a pale mellow light upon the beautiful vegetation of the garden and upon the windows of the old house. Some tall trees were rendered beautiful as though their foliage was of silver tissue, and the deep black shadows cast into some of the hollows of the building, gave the whole place a much more picturesque appearance than it could pretend to under the flaunting eye of day.

"A pleasant spot, truly," said Claude.

Not for long, however, did he continue to gaze upon the beauties of the garden and of the building. He was upon other thoughts intent, the principal of which was to find some mode of getting into the building, and so forcing its inmates to feel and to recognise that he came upon a friendly errand. After a time he observed a tree, the branches of which grew so close to some of the windows of the house, that he considered he might easily effect an entrance by its aid.

"I will try," he said. "Any farther efforts on my part to procure an admittance by the ordinary modes of ingress might ead in my death, for they are not exceedingly scrupulous in the use of fire-arms, so, as in I must and will get, I can only avail myself of the means placed at my disposal."

The tree had branches very low to the ground, so that the climbing part of the affair was by no means difficult, and in the course of a few moments, Claude stood upon one of the window-sills at the back of the house. A touch sufficed to

convince him that this window was open, or rather that it was not fastened. He raised it, and sprang lightly into the room, to which it communicated. All was pitch dark within, and for some few moments Claude was in considerable doubt as to what sort of room he had thus got into. By degrees, however, his eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, and he could see dimly about him. He found that he was in a long narrow room in which there was a miscellaneous assortment of goods of all descriptions, that made it look more like some second or third rate broker's shop than anything else, and from which he could deduce that he was in the spare or lumber room of the establishment. Of course, it would not suit his views to remain in such a place as that, and, accordingly, after cautiously walking about it, and ascertaining that there was but one door to it, he emerged into a narrow passage. In this passage, where Claude Duval now found himself, a number of cloaks and bonnets were hung, and there were some rout seats along one of the walls. What could be the object of those seats, or where the passage might lead to, was to him matters of mystery, but he slowly and carefully pursued it, treading as gently as foot could fall in his progress. After going about thirty feet, he found that the passage terminated in a baize door, which was quite destitute of lock, latch, or other fastening. It merely had a small handle by which it might be opened. Claude hesitated, and listened, as well he might, for he could not have the smallest idea as to where this door might lead him, but when he came to consider that his motive for thus invading the privacy of that house was a good one, he felt a degree of boldness that enabled him to proceed. When we speak of boldness, as connected with Claude Duval, we do not, by any means, allude to that physical courage which enabled him to dare all obstacles, and to overcome them in the remarkable manner which we have often seen to be the case during the progress of this narrative of his achievements, but that moral courage which enables a man to do what he feels would be unjustifiable were it not that he had some reason, which, in its nature pretty sufficiently upheld him in the action. In this instance, Claude was upon no marauding expedition—he aimed at no man's purse, nor any maiden's fears; what he came for was, to give warning of danger, and those persons who had in the front of the house received him in so uncourteous a fashion had to thank the indomitable resolution, that in the pursuit of good or of evil, would not be turned aside by difficulties, that he, Claude, did not leave the boarding school to its fate. Gently he pulled back the baize-covered door. It made not the slightest sound upon its hinges, but to his surprise, instead of finding that it opened into a room, he saw, only two yards from it, another door, the upper part of which was wholly of glass, and through which gleamed a pale light. To pause, and hold his very breath for a moment, lest he should give any alarm, where he would not wish to do so, was to Claude the wish and will of a moment. All was still, and then, just as he was about to move a step forward, he looked through the glass door, and he heard a voice say—

“Oh, but Emma, what was it?”

“I don't know. Let's all go to sleep,” said another. “Perhaps it was Miss Juker's beau that she met on the common.”

“Indeed, Miss Frimling, you are quite wrong,” cried another, “you know you would be very glad to have a beau yourself.”

“I? I?”

“Yes you; and as for that, didn't you say the postman was good-looking?”

“Oh, gracious!” cried half a dozen voices at once.

Claude advanced a step, and peeped through the glass door, and he found as he had begun to suspect, that he was an unobserved spectator of the dormitory of the establishment. The room was a spacious one, and upon the chimney-piece a night light was burning, which just cast sufficient illumination around it to prevent the apartment being in positive darkness. The young ladies had of course been alarmed by the noise of the discharge of the gun, and were busy forming conjectures as to the cause of it.

“I know it was Miss Williams,” said one, “that fired the gun. You know, all of you, that she is very ill-tempered.”

"Oh, very, very!"

"But it might have been some man coming to rob the house," said another.

"Well, but suppose it wasn't, but only somebody coming to serenade us."

"Oh my," cried the whole in chorus.

"Some Captain of the Guards," continued the young lady who had so success-



fully started the idea of the serenade, "and who has seen us all walking on 'the common, and fallen desperately in love with all of us."

"Very likely. Nothing more likely!" cried all the others. "He could not do otherwise, and oh, if he be good-looking?"

"With loves of mustachoes," added another.

"And curly hair."

"And such whiskers!"

"This won't do," thought Claude, "it's only a waste of time, besides a very unfair thing for me to remain here."

"Oh, what," said one, "if it were Claude Duval?"

A general scream came from the whole lot, and then they all said how terrified they should be, and yet how delighted.

"I have heard," said one, "that he always dances a minuet with any young lady he meets, and kisses her three times."

"Oh gracious, I should tell him to don't. But don't I wish he'd come in, and frighten Miss Briggs, the old fright."

"Ha, ha, ha!—ha, ha, ha!"

"So, ladies, said a harsh female voice, suddenly, as a door slammed, "this is the way you amuse yourselves, instead of going to sleep as you ought to do?"

Silence now reigned in the dormitory, unbroken save by the half suppressed titters of some of the younger pupils; and Miss Briggs, for it was none other than that lady herself, continued—

"Really, young ladies, I am exceedingly obliged at finding that I am so far honoured as to be made a subject of your humorous remarks in my absence. Is that you laughing, Miss Tomlins?"

"No, madam—He! he!"

"Perhaps, Miss Tomlins, four of Watt's hymns learnt by heart to-morrow before dinner will not be quite so laughable a matter as the occurrences of to-night."

"Oh, dear!"

"What did you say, Miss Lucombe?"

"Nothing, madam."

"Very well, Miss Lucombe, you will be so good, to-morrow, to learn a page of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary by heart, and repeat it with your feet in the stocks and the backboard on your shoulders."

This sentence struck dismay into the hearts of the culprits, and not one made the ghost of a remark. They found that Miss Briggs had a frightful facility in pitching upon any offender, and that her punishments certainly increased in intensity as she went on, without regard to the fact of whether the offences were greater or smaller.

"Bother the old woman!" said Claude to himself.

Miss Briggs having thus pitched right down upon two of the culprits in a metaphorical point of view, waited until she found by the stillness in the dormitory that she had struck terror into the whole flock, and then in a stately manner she moved off, but before she left the room, she said—

"And, young ladies, as you have all been very seriously to blame—for no young lady, who is a real young lady, could possibly be awake at this time of the night—I shall give you all nothing but bread and treacle for dinner to-morrow."

An unusual groan came from the dormitory, under cover of which Miss Briggs made her exit.

"Mieu!" said Claude, executing a capital imitation of the cry of a cat.

The young ladies all burst into a peal of laughter.

"It's the cat," said one. "Puss! puss! puss!"

"Mieu!" said Claude again. "Listen to me, Mieu!"

At the idea of the cat suddenly saying "Listen to me!" the young ladies were petrified with astonishment, and some of them uttered little short screams of dismay.

"Listen to me," said Claude again in a curious squeaking voice. "Mieu! you shan't have bread and treacle. I'll speak to Miss Briggs and get you all off, that I will. Good night, dears. Bless you all. Go to sleep."

Astonishment kept all the young ladies silent, and then an unknown dread took possession of them all, and every head was popped under the bedclothes, while Claude stepped gently away, and finding near at hand a staircase, descended it with the hope of meeting with Miss Briggs, or some other authority of the seminary.

At the foot of the staircase, Claude found that there was the identical room from which the gun had been fired that had produced such an amount of consternation among the young ladies of the establishment. A hastily lighted candle was upon a sideboard in this hall, and likewise from a doorway, which was partially open, there streamed a light, and the sound of voices came upon Claude's attentive ear.

"Yes," he heard some one say, "I will do it. I could not, Miss Briggs, go to rest again to-night with the thought upon my mind that a human being might be lying upon the very threshold of the house, wounded, and in want of help."

"But it may be a robber."

"Robber or no robber, God made him, and we have sacred duties to perform."

"Well, Miss Holloway," said Miss Briggs, "I must say, that for a junior governess, which you will be so good as to recollect you are, you certainly have some very strange notions."

"I am quite aware, madam," said Miss Holloway, "that a junior teacher in this establishment ought to be a mere machine, without feeling or sensation, beyond what is just sufficient to enable her to perform her duties."

"Indeed, Miss Holloway."

"Yes, madam, but not having attained to that pitch of philosophy, I shall open the front door, and see if any one be hurt."

"And so we may have all our throats cut through you. I declare, if a man were to cross the threshold of this house at this time of night, I would not give a pin for my life. I should just at once say to him——"

"What, madam?" said Claude, stepping into the room; "what would you say to him? Pray go on, I will hear it at once, to save you the trouble of repetition."

Miss Briggs fell off her chair to the floor, where she sat in a state of incipient hysterics. Miss Holloway looked very pale, but she spoke with tolerable firmness, as she said—

"What is the meaning of this intrusion? What want you here?"

"Not to create the least alarm," said Claude. "I come upon an errand which, when explained, will, I think, warrant, or at all events, excuse my presence."

These words were spoken in so gentle a tone of voice, and with such a suavity of manner, that even Miss Briggs, after clutching her throat several times convulsively, partially recovered.

"Who are you?" she said.

"A gentleman, madam, I hope."

"I am sure of it," said Miss Holloway. "Speak, sir."

"I come to warn you that an attempt will be made, by means of a forged letter to get some young lady from this establishment to-night. I regret that in my anxiety to bring this news my motives were mistaken."

"Mistaken!" cried Miss Briggs.

"Yes, madam. Surely the discharge of a gun at me through the street door before I was permitted to explain myself, was rather a serious and a hasty mistake."

"But you are not hurt?" said Miss Holloway.

"No," said Claude, smiling, "I am rather lucky under such circumstances, and certainly have escaped without injury."

"Thank Heaven! Oh, Miss Briggs, you see now what might have happened from precipitancy."

"I don't know that," said Miss Briggs, gathering herself up from the floor; "I don't know that."

"But you shall know it, my dear madam," said Claude, "before we part. It will be my duty to convince you."

"But how can I be convinced? In the first place, how did you get into the house?"

"Permit me, madam, to keep that little secret to myself for the present, as I don't think you would exactly like to take the same method, so it must be a matter of but little interest to you."

"Murder! Murder!" cried an elderly lady, in a flannel dressing gown, at this moment bursting into the room. "What's it all about? Murder! Murder!"

"It can't be worse, madam, than murder," said Claude. "Allow me to hand you a seat."

"Who are you? who are you?" cried the old lady.

"Hush!" said Claude.

A smart ring at the bell by the outer door came plainly upon the ears of the whole party, and before any one could speak, it was sharply repeated.

## CHAPTER CXXIX.

### RETRIBUTION UPON EVIL DOERS.

"You hear," said Claude.

The whole party was as silent as the grave.

"You hear," repeated Claude.

"Gracious! what is it?"

"Just what I tell you. A villain has some object—a base one, no doubt—in getting from the protection of your roof one of the young ladies who reside here. I am here to prevent him. Doubtless after this little explanation, I shall, at least, have the privilege of being considered for the time as being a friend."

"But how do we know?" said the old lady.

"Nay, madam, you will know. Ha!"

The bell was rung again smartly.

"This must be attended to," said Miss Holloway. "If this gentleman will so far oblige as to go to the door."

"Dear me," said Miss Briggs, "some folks find out who is a gentleman, I think, mighty quick."

"Yes, madam," said Claude. "It requires a lady to make that discovery with any degree of certainty and despatch."

He slightly bowed to Miss Holloway to give point to the compliment, and Miss Briggs, with a toss of her head, sailed into the passage, as though she fully intended to answer the bell, but her courage failed her, and she came back again, saying—

"I don't see why the servants should not open the door in preference to a stranger doing so."

"That is quite optional with you, ladies all," said Claude. "But I make the offer to do so, if you will permit me. If you, miss—(turning to Miss Holloway)—and this other lady—(turning to the old lady)—whose face much reminds me of the celebrated Court beauty, the Countess of Salisbury, will permit me, I will answer the door."

"With all my heart," said Miss Holloway.

"And with all mine," said the old lady; and then she added to Miss Holloway—"I think he's the handsomest and politest man I ever saw in all my life."

Miss Briggs, thus finding herself in a minority of one, said nothing, and Claude at once left the room, and reached the street door just as the bell was rung again. It was well secured, but as there was a light in the hall, he found no difficulty in drawing back all the bolts, and removing the chains. It would appear as though the person without heard this process going on, for no more ringing took place, and when finally Claude opened the door wide, keeping behind it himself, a voice said—

"Is this the school?"

"Yes, sir," said Claude, capitally imitating a female voice.

"Oh, very well."

A man immediately stepped into the passage, and as soon as he was far enough

in to permit its being done, Claude closed the door again, and commenced deliberately doing up all the fastenings as they had been done before. This was a proceeding, particularly as it was accompanied by the sight of a man instead of a woman, which gave some sort of a shock to the visitor, and he said quickly—

“Oh, I am not going to stay.”

“Very likely,” said Claude, “but we always shut up.”

“Oh—ah! It’s a mere custom.”

“Exactly. It is not very likely we are going to keep you in a young ladies’ seminary. Walk in. This way.”

The man, who was respectably enough attired, and who no doubt was the attorney who had had so interesting a conversation with his clerk in the plantation, followed Claude with some degree of trepidation in his countenance into the parlour. The three ladies—we must in common courtesy call Miss Briggs a lady—looked surprised, and Claude, as he closed the door, said in a clear voice—

“This gentleman has some business with you, ladies; I think he is a lawyer by his looks.”

The attorney started.

“Now, sir,” added Claude, “be as explanatory as you can, if you please, and as brief as possible, for at this hour we are none of us inclined to occupy too much time.”

A faint suspicion that all was not right seemed to come over the mind of the attorney, and yet when he took a second thought, he asked himself how it was possible that any one could by any human possibility have found out his intentions, and he spoke with some degree of boldness, as he said—

“A sick young lady is staying here.”

“Well, s.r.,” said the old lady who had been so flattered by Claude telling her she was like the countess. Well sir?”

“Perhaps,” said Miss Holloway, “perhaps you will mention the young lady by name, of whom you come in quest?”

“Oh, certainly,” he said, “the young lady is named Macqueen, and is a relation to my old friend, Dr. Macqueen, in whose behalf I came here.”

“Is that correct?” said Claude.

“It is,” replied Miss Holloway. “It is so far correct, but it is very strange that Dr. Macqueen should send a message to his niece, as we believe the young lady to be, at such a time of the night as this.”

“He is very ill,” said the attorney.

“Indeed?”

“Oh, yes; and has been for some days.”

“How strange, then, that he should write to us yesterday to ask if the young lady wanted anything, and to let him know of her state of health from day to day.”

“Ah, how like him,” said the attorney.

“Like him, sir?”

“Yes, he is the last man to confess indisposition until it really becomes too serious to conceal, and now that he is himself fully impressed with a belief that he is dying, he of course at almost the last moment wishes to see his niece, to whom he is most tenderly attached.”

“And where does he reside?” said Claude.

“At Winchester.”

Claude staggered back, and had to hold by a chain for support, as that name Winchester rung in his ears like a death knell. What a host of painful recollections did it not bring to his mind. How gaunt and terrible arose that old cathedral before his imagination, with all the scene of blood that had therein been created to the detriment of his happiness in all time to come.”

“Horror! horror!” he gasped.

“You are ill,” said Miss Holloway.

“Gracious Heavens! What’s the matter with the politest man in the world,” said the old lady.

"Ahem!" said Miss Briggs, "of course it means something."

"Yes, madam," said Claude, "it means that although you are destitute of feeling, all are not in such a condition. This was but a passing pang, ladies, which I could not wholly repress. It has gone now, and as I was before, I am your humble servant."

"Humph!" said the lawyer.

"Well, sir," said Miss Holloway, to the attorney, as she now and then cast a compassionate look at Claude, who she saw was suffering, although she knew not from what cause. Well sir, and admitting that Miss Macqueen is here, what do you wish to say to her. I may just incidentally mention, that in her state of health this is a very improper hour at which to disturb her."

"Nothing," said the attorney, "but the extreme urgency of the case would justify it."

"Then what do you propose?"

"That this letter from her uncle should be handed to her; and then, of course, I will wait her answer. If it be what I expect it will be, she will accompany me without delay, in a chaise that I have near at hand, until the Winchester mail passes, in which we can proceed."

"Impossible, sir."

"Why so, madam?"

"Such a journey, in the young lady's state of health, would be fatal to her."

"Perhaps you will allow me to decide, madam?"

"Give me the letter."

The letter was with the most polite air in the world handed to Miss Holloway, who, the moment she cast her eyes upon it, said—

"This is not Dr. Macqueens's handwriting."

"No, poor gentleman. Paralysis prevents him from moving his right hand. I wrote that at his dictation. Alas! that so truly great and good a man should not be long for this world."

"Alas, indeed. Well, sir, Miss Marqueen, who is scarcely able to walk without assistance, shall see the letter, and it will be for her own judgment, to decide in this painful emergency, as to what is best to be done."

"And I will wait outside—"

"No," said Claude, "inside, if you please."

"But—but—"

"I will take no denial, sir. Do you think, now, for one moment, that these ladies would allow so dear a friend of their dear friend, Dr. Macqueen, to remain outside?"

The attorney bit his lips.

"As you please," he said. "I am far—very far—from being insensible to these little kind attentions, believe me, ladies; and although your tame tiger here, who, I suppose, is a footman in disguise, may not have exactly the manners of genteel society, yet if he serve you well, I may well forgive him."

"How kind," said Claude. "Mutual forgiveness, I think, sir, would be the most agreeable thing in this case to you."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing in the world that I will not stand to, believe me."

Miss Holloway had left the room with the letter to Miss Macqueen, the sick young lady, and during her absence Miss Briggs was anxious to do what her small malice might be able to suggest to annoy Claude. Handing a seat to the attorney, she said—

"Pray be seated, sir. I do not like to see a gentleman not treated courteously."

"Thank you, madam."

"As for common people"—here she darted a killing look at Claude, who only laughed—"as for common people, they are of no consequence, and can be left standing."

"You could not possibly utter a more true sentiment, madam," said Claude, "and that is the reason why I have not offered you a seat before."



Miss Briggs looked pins and needles, but before this small mass of words could proceed any further, Miss Holloway came back, looking very pale, and with the open letter in her hand which she had taken to the sick Miss Macqueen. The attorney started from the seat with which he had been accommodated by the despicable affected courtesy of Miss Briggs, and looked anxiously at Miss Holloway, who said in a voice of emotion—

“She will attend you, sir.”

The attorney looked triumphant, but Claude stepped forward, and in a deep impassioned voice, said—

“No. This must not be. I have the very strongest and best of reasons to believe that there is some gross deception in this matter, although what it exactly is, I confess I am, up to the present time, rather puzzled to know.”

The attorney would have interrupted him, but Claude, in a voice that echoed through the room, said—

“Peace, sir! If you would consult your own safety you will be pleased to hear me out. Be warned in time, or the footman in disguise, as you were pleased to call me, will read you a lesson that you will not forget to your dying day.”

The attorney shrunk back aghast.

“Call a constable,” said Miss Briggs.

“Presently, madam,” said Claude. “There is time enough. I will take care of all that. I say I have reason to suspect that some foul plot is in progress, and I have come into this house for the protection of its inmates, and please God I will protect them.”

“Sir, will it please you,” said Miss Holloway, “to—to read—this letter, and yet, I hardly know—”

“You feel that you are probably taking an unadvised step by asking me to do so.”

“I do.”

“Then do not hand it to me, I pray you. I will try by some other means to unmask villainy.”

“Nay, then you shall read it, sir. As the friend of Miss Macqueen, I throw myself upon your honour.”

She handed the open letter to Claude, whose face as he read it became of an ashy paleness. His limbs trembled—his hands convulsively clutched the paper, and when he had concluded it, he uttered the exclamation of—

“Great God!”

The letter which had produced such unwonted effects upon Claude Duval, ran as follows—

Winchester.

“MY DEAR MADAM.—Pray resign yourself for awhile to the protection of the gentleman who will be the bearer of this letter. I am very ill indeed, and much wish to see you before I die. I hope you are better, as my most ardent wish now, from all that I have heard, is to place you once again in the hands of Claude Duval, your husband.—Believe me to be, my dear madam, yours faithfully,

JOHN MACQUEEN.”

Claude might well exhibit the strange symptoms he did, upon reading this to him most extraordinary and incomprehensible epistle. He staggered towards the door, and held by the back of a chair as in choking accents he spoke—

“For the love of all that is good and merciful, tell me—”

He could proceed no further, and Miss Holloway coming up to him with clasped hands, said—

“Oh, sir, say no more, I know all, and from that letter so do you; but remember that I confided to your honour.”

“God bless you!” cried Claude, “where—where is—is she?”

“You will not—you do not wish to see her?”

Claude sunk upon the chair close to which he was, and burst into tears.

“Cicely—Cicely!” he gasped, “my Cicely.”

“Your—your—Cicely!” cried Miss Holloway.

"Your Cicely!" echoed the attorney.

"Yes!" cried Claude, springing to his feet, "yes, my Cicely. Oh, joy! Oh, God, I would not give this moment to be made the emperor of the world, for now I am assured that by some miracle she yet lives."

"And—and you?" said Miss Holloway.

"I," he cried in a voice of thunder. "Who should I be, but Claude Duval!"

## CHAPTER CXXX.

### A MOMENT OF JOY.

THE mention of that well-known and much dreaded name had very different effects upon the persons present. The old lady looked as though she would faint. Miss Holloway quietly sat down and sobbed; and Miss Briggs, after finding she could not get out of the room without passing in what she considered too close proximity to Claude, made a futile attempt to get up the chimney, which only resulted in her getting her head and face all over soot: the attorney looked like a corpse; and when Miss Briggs, upon retiring from the chimney, flung herself upon him, and cried, "Oh, protect me," and covered his face with soot likewise, they looked a remarkably fine pair.

"Yes," added Claude, "I am Claude Duval."

"Fly—fly!" said Miss Holloway.

"But not alone—where is she?—where—oh where? I now begin to understand it all. She lives!—she lives! Take me to her. Tell me where once again I may look into those eyes, the brightness of which I thought quenched for ever. Where is she—my Cicely—my heart's best treasure?"

No one seemed able to move to help him, and he made towards the door and flinging it open rushed up the staircase, calling aloud as he went—

"Cicely—Cicely! 'Tis I—'tis I, Claude. Your own Claude. Speak to me. I would barter life for the joy of once again hearing you pronounce my name."

He reached a door which opposed his progress, to open it was the work of a moment. Then another came in his way, and that too was opened, when, without heeding where he was going to, he rushed at once into the young ladies' sleeping room, calling loudly—

"My love! my life! Come to these arms!"

Now there were just twenty-two young ladies in that large dormitory, and as they uttered two-and-twenty shrieks, the reader may imagine there was a tolerable uproar. Then all the twenty-two heads were put under the bed-clothes, but as curiosity to know what was going to happen next, could not be gratified by a countenance of that state of things, the twenty-two heads popped out again, as if by some species of machinery. Of course, the most interesting problem in the world was, regarding who the "Love" and the "Life" was.

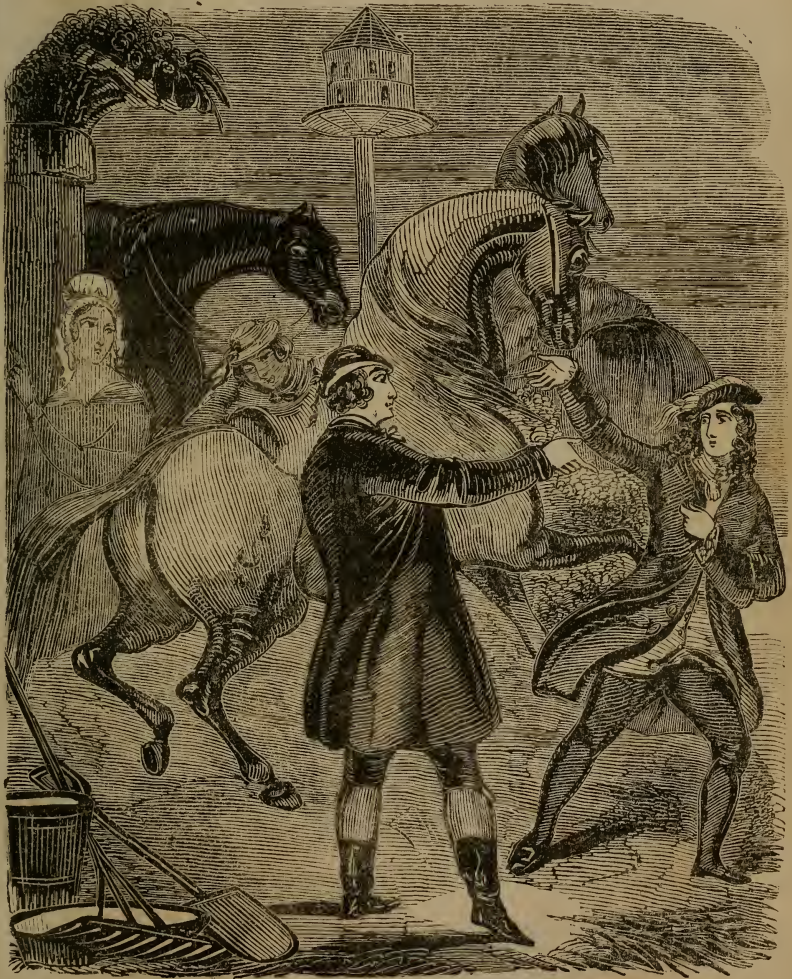
"Where is she?" cried Claude, looking about him.

"Not me," said one.

Twenty-two additional shrieks were raised, as they all thought that the intruder was only looking about him for a few moments to see which of the lot he would pounce upon, and declare to be the fair enslaver of his affections. Whether hopes or fears were most predominant, we cannot take upon ourselves to say, but the affair as regarded any personal consequences, was in a very few moments put an end to, and the young ladies were witnesses to a scene that opened their eyes considerably. It happened that at the further end of the dormitory there was a little door leading into a little chamber, that, by the kindness of Miss Holloway, had been given up to Cicely, for Cicely it was, who was at the school to all intents

and purposes. How she came there will shortly be explained. The little door was suddenly flung open, and certainly with far less show of weakness than might have been expected. It was excitement lent her strength. Cicely came forth to meet Claude Duval. She had heard his voice. In an instant she was in his arms.

“ Claude ! Claude ! ”



THE HALT AT THE FARM-HOUSE.

“ Cicely ! My Cicely ! ”

This was all that they for some time could say to each other, but the language of love was eloquence itself, as Claude pressed numberless kisses on her lip.

“ Oh, Cicely, ” he at length found breath and heart to say. “ Tell me, dearest and best, if this be a dream or reality ? ”

“ Real. All real, Claude. ”

"And you are well—quite well?"

"Ah, no. I am faint and weak. The wound is slow in healing, but this joyful meeting will do more than all surgeons, ay, more than time itself, to restore me to what I was again."

"Blessings on this joyous chance. Oh, how have I deserved such happiness?"

"And you are well, Claude?"

"Well and happy. My Cicely, your eyes sparkle as of old, and there is a something too of the old colour on your cheeks. Ah, dear one, if some angel, but one short hour since, had told me I should see this sight, I might well have been pardoned for doubting the messenger from Heaven!"

Again he kissed her lips, and one of the boarders, who was in a distant corner, ejaculated—

"How nice!"

In an instant the twenty-two heads, with twenty-two faint screams, were hidden under the bed-clothes, from which some retreat about half-a-dozen voices declared how ashamed they were of a Miss Brown, such being the name of the young lady who had given utterance to the candid opinion about the niceness. Claude and Cicely, who, in the excess of their own joy had to tell, the truth, quite forgotten that there were any spectators present, now looked around them, and Cicely feeling that some explanation was required, said—

"Ladies, this is my husband."

"Lor, Miss Macqueen," said one, "you don't say so?"

"Good looking, too," said another.

"Come away, Claude," said Cicely; "we will not part again. These young ladies have been all very—very kind to me since my residence here, the reasons for which I will impart to you at greater leisure."

Claude advanced to the middle of the room, and with a smile upon his face, he said, as he placed his hand gracefully upon his breast—

"Ladies, I wish I knew in what words to express to you the deep feeling of gratitude that now swells my heart towards you all. God bless and preserve all your pretty faces. I think I had better kiss you all round."

Twenty-two very faint screams indeed ensued upon this proposition being made, and one young lady—it was that terrible Miss Brown—said—

"Tell us who you are?"

"I am afraid you will be shocked to hear."

"No—no—no," cried all the twenty-two voices.

"Well, then, ladies," added he, "I am Claude Duval, of whom you have no doubt heard, and if you choose to capture me, you will share a very handsome reward among you."

At this moment Miss Briggs made her appearance in the room, with a countenance looking like a newly opened cask of vinegar.

"Well, young ladies," she said, "if you are young ladies, which I begin very much to doubt, I am truly astonished to see, and to hear you all, in your night-dresses, and in bed too, speaking to a man. It's monstrous—monstrous!"

"We couldn't help it," cried one.

"We are covered up," said another, "and most of our heads have been under the clothes."

"He hasn't kissed us yet," said a third.

"Besides," said Miss Brown, "he's very nice-looking."

"Yes, yes," said all the twenty-two.

"And we can see him much better now you have brought your light, Miss Briggs," added one, in a bantering tone. "What do you think of him, mem?"

A shrill peal of laughter followed this sally, and Miss Briggs cried—

"If I only precisely knew the young lady who said that, I would drag her out of bed at once and make a dreadful example of her. As it is, sir, you will be pleased to walk out of this house at once; and pray, do you know anything of the key of the front door? for the gentleman below can't wait any longer for Miss

Macqueen, and if she don't feel disposed to go with him, he is quite willing to go without her."

"I have the key in my pocket," said Claude. I took care to see that the door might be made fast in the inside, and suspecting a scoundrel, who is down stairs, might wish to leave the house before he had my permission so to do, I took the precaution of preventing him."

"But, sir——"

"Nay, madam, be calm; I will come down and speak to that person very shortly. Cicely, do you think you could bear the fatigue of a ride on horse-back for a few miles?"

"Oh, yes, yes. With you, Claude, anywhere."

"Upon my word," said Miss Briggs, "this is very pretty—very pretty indeed, sir."

"If you allude to these young ladies, madam," said Claude, "I certainly subscribe to your opinion. They are very pretty indeed, as you say; I wish that my regard for truth would permit me to pass the same compliment upon you."

The twenty-two young ladies all laughed outright at this, so much did they admire it; and Miss Brown actually sat up in bed.

"I will now, Cicely, leave you. Get ready," whispered Claude, "and come down stairs to the parlour as quickly as you possibly can; Jack is in the immediate vicinity of this place waiting for us."

"Yes, Claude, yes."

"Do not fret yourself by any undue haste. All is well."

He then turned to the young ladies, and said again—

"God bless you all. Good night; I shall never forget you all as long as I live, and I hope, if you ever hear of me, that you will put the most gentle construction upon all the sayings and doings of Claude Dunal."

With this he moved to the door, which the terrified Briggs held open for him, and made the best of his way down the stairs to the parlour, where there were waiting those who were not a little anxious, but from different motives, to know what was going on above. When Claude reached the parlour he found it still occupied by the attorney, Miss Holloway, and the old lady, whom he had succeeded in prepossessing in his favour by a well-timed compliment. He at once addressed himself to the attorney.

"Now, sir," he said, "explain yourself."

There was a something—an indescribable something, and yet a something to be felt, seen, and trembled at about Claude's manner as he pronounced these words, that made the lawyer tremble, and turn a shade paler than he was before.

"I am listening," added Claude.

"What—what do you mean, sir?"

"I mean to ask you what brought you here, I mean to give you one chance of telling the truth. Do you understand me now?"

It was as plain as the nose on his face to the lawyer that Claude saw through the whole transaction, and in this way wished him, the lawyer, to confess it. He shook for a few moments, as one might suppose a prisoner at the bar to do before he says—"Guilty, my lord," and don't very clearly know whether the fond confession will procure a mitigation of his sentence or not.

"Speak!" cried Claude, still more impatiently. "Speak!"

It was at this moment that a thundering knock came at the outer door of the house, and awakened echoes in every portion of the building by its tremendous and continued reverberations.

## CHAPTER CXXXI.

## THE RACE THROUGH BALING.

THIS knock seemed as if it had fallen upon the heart of every one present. The attorney sprang behind a chair. Miss Briggs gave a short scream, Miss Holloway made two steps towards Claude, as though she would have said "You can and will protect me," while the old lady swooned outright.

Even Claude himself could not but start to hear that loud appeal to the knocker. A feeling, however, that there might be personal danger—and, oh, how dear to him now, was personal safety! now that he had once more found a tie to bind him to life again—came over Claude; and for all he knew, some imprudent domestic might open the door to those without, and produce much mischief. With this feeling strong upon him, he flew to the hall, and there found that he was only just in time to prevent a tall scraggy servant from attempting the fastenings. Then he recollected that he still had the key, without which the door could not be opened safely, in his pocket, and he merely said—

"Begone. Touch the door at your peril."

The servant shrunk back dismayed, and the knock was at the moment repeated with, if anything in the shape of a difference, more force than before. Claude felt the necessity of coming to a parley with those without, lest they should get sufficiently impatient to adopt other means of entrance. He accordingly advanced to the door and rapped at it with his knuckles on the inside panel, calling in a loud voice—

"Who is there?"

"Open the door," said a voice, "or we will have it down in a few moments."

"But who are you?"

"That's no matter. Open the door."

"My mistress says, that as this is a young ladies' school, she can't think of letting the door be opened at this time of night. I'm the gardener, you must know, and am bound to protect the premises. Only tell me who you are, and what you want, and I'll go and wake up missus and tell her at once, and if she says, then open the door, Joseph, I'll open it."

A whispered consultation now took place upon those outside, and at last another voice than that which had previously spoken, said—

"Tell your mistress that we are officers of the police, and that it is for the protection of her and her house that we come."

"Oh, if that's it, gentlemen," said Claude, "I'll go and have her woken up, and tell her at once, that I will. Only you wait quiet a few moments—I'll come back as quick as I can. Is there thieves about, gentlemen?"

"Yes—yes."

"Very well. Oh, what a twitter I am in to be sure."

"Confound you—be quick, will you?"

"Yes, gentlemen—yes."

Claude hoped that by all this delay he should have given Cicely time to get ready to come down to the parlour and meet him, but she, poor thing, what with the weakness she was still suffering from, and the agitation consequent upon Claude's sudden and unexpected arrival at the school, was really unable to make that expedition she would have wished, and she did not come down. Claude made his way into the parlour again, where he found affairs just the same as when he left. Turning to the lawyer, he said—

"We shall meet again, sir, I have something much more important on hand just now than the taking any revenge upon you for your share in to-night's transaction."

The attorney breathed more freely as he thought to himself—

"If you catch me again in such a fix as this, I give you leave to do what you like."

Miss Holloway ventured an inquiry concerning the persons at the door, and Claude said—

“It is better that you should know as little of this night’s proceedings as possible, and that you should hold as little converse with me as may be. If I could get out by the back of this house it would be well, but I do not ask you, miss, to compromise yourself by aiding me so to do.”

These words were accompanied by a look, the translation of which was—  
“Pray throw all the facilities you can in the way of my leaving by the back of the house with Cicely, but do not seem to do so, for this lawyer is playing the spy now with all the cunning in his power, and besides you will never hear the last of it from Miss Briggs. Miss Holloway quite understood this, and she said coldly—

“You have declared yourself to be Claude Duval, the well-known highwayman, and therefore I cannot aid you.”

She then left the room. Claude felt satisfied that he should now find every facility for escape by the back of the house that Miss Holloway could throw in his way, and he looked most anxiously for the appearance of Cicely, for he felt that the patience of the officers at the door must very soon be completely exhausted. While all this, then, was proceeding below, Cicely had rushed back into her little chamber, and hastily opening a trunk that she had been accommodated with, by the kindness of Dr. Macqucen at Winchester, she took from it the male attire that she had worn upon the occasion of receiving her wound in the old cathedral. Her idea was, that by dressing herself in that costume, she would make it much easier for Claude to get away with her, and she accordingly began, in a very hurried manner, to put on the various articles of clothing. No doubt she was much longer thus attiring herself than she would have been in the apparel belonging to her sex, and which she was accustomed to, but at last she did succeed in completing roughly her toilette, and then she ran hastily from the room into the young ladies’ dormitory, that being the only way by which she could readily reach the lower part of the house. Now it at the moment, and in the excitement of all that had happened upon that eventful night, struck Cicely that the young ladies would not be at all prepared to see her in male attire, and when a general scream saluted her as she made her hurried appearance, she was perfectly astonished. Feeling, however, that there was no time for any delays or explanations, she merely said—

“Ladies, I thank you all for your kindness to me, and now bid you adieu—and you, Miss Herbert, in particular, I——”

“Murder!” cried Miss Herbert, as Cicely approached her bed.

“I will only give you one kiss, my dear girl, and then say farewell, perhaps forever, for you have been very kind to me.”

“No, I haven’t,” said Miss Herbert. “No, I haven’t.”

Cicely was in too great a state of agitation herself to notice particularly this strange manner of Miss Herbert’s, but rushing up to her, she clasped her in her arms, and kissed her, adding—

“God bless you—good bye all!”

She then opened the door, and made the best of her way down the staircase to the parlour.

“Well, Miss Herbert,” said one of the young ladies, “so you have been actually kissed?”

“And in bed, too,” said another.

“But that handsome fellow that came in here before,” said a third, “said he would kiss us all round, but he didn’t.”

“Oh, for shame, Miss Walker!”

“Well, but——”

A general storm of indignation at Miss Walker now saved poor Miss Herbert from the consequences of any further remarks upon the kissing she was obliged to put up with, and we will leave the young ladies to settle their disputes as best they can, while we again proceed to the parlour below. Claude’s anxiety for the appearance of Cicely was immense, and he was standing upon the threshold of the

parlour-door, which enabled him to command a view of the staircase at the moment that she came hastily down. Before she could reach the hall, the officers who had waited outside the door got beyond all ordinary patience, and knocked again violently at the door. The sudden shock caused Cicely almost to fall; but Claude, who knew her well in her disguise, flew forward and supported her in his arms.

"Dearest and best!" he cried, "we must fly from here as quickly as possible. Do you feel your strength equal to riding?"

"Oh! yes—yes, Claude. But who is it that demands admittance here so rudely?"

"Enemies whom we will baffle yet."

"Heaven protect us!"

"Amen! Come this way, Cicely. This leads to the back of the house, does it not?"

"It does—it does, Claude!"

"One moment and I am with you."

He left Cicely an instant alone, while he went to the door of the parlour, and extracting the key from the inside, he placed it in the lock on the outside, and in a moment had locked in the attorney, Miss Briggs, and the old lady, who was still in a state of syncope.

"There," said Claude, "you are very good company for each other, and I don't think that the whole of you put together would have energy sufficient to break down the door, so you will remain prisoners until some one else does it for you."

He threw the key down in the hall in an obscure corner, and then clasping Cicely round the waist with his left arm, he said—

"Let those stop us who dare."

Bang!—bang!—bang! came heavy blows upon the front door, which the officers now had made up their minds to burst open, and, strong as it was, it would not probably be able to hold out long against men who would go so systematically to work against it as they would. Claude and Cicely hurried along the hall, and dashing open a pair of folding doors that divided it into two equal parts, they came to that half of it that might be said to belong more particularly to the back entrance, which was nearly as large and as available as the front. A slim female figure darted from a side room, carrying a small hand lamp.

"Help," cried Cicely, "we are lost."

"No, no," said Claude, "it is a friend. It is a young lady residing here, who will befriend us."

"Yes, it is I," said Miss Holloway. "But is this really you, Cicely, as your voice would have me to believe?"

"Oh yes, yes; do not wonder at this strange disguise. Imperious circumstances forced it on me once before, and now it may aid us greatly. Can you, and will you indeed aid us, dear Miss Holloway?"

"I will, and I think I can. Did I not promise to do so, when shortly after you came to this house you confided to me your sad story?"

"Yes, oh yes, and from my heart I thanked you."

"This lady, then," said Claude, "knows all?"

"She does."

"And pities us?"

"From my soul I do," said Miss Holloway. "But do not mistake me, I pity you for that you failed in leaving the mode of life that you have been so well known in; I pity you that impediments so insurmountable were thrown in the way of your leaving England; but I have no morbid, and I think wicked sympathy, with what you were, and I hope are not now—a highwayman."

"We will not quarrel, my dear young lady," said Claude, "about the manner or the particular feelings with which you will do us a great kindness."

"God reward you," said Cicely.

"This way," said Miss Holloway, "this way. Forgive me, if even at such a



moment as this, for the sake of my own feelings, I was forced to say what I have said ; you will not find me the less a friend for my frankness."

"That I feel certain of," said Claude.

Miss Holloway had two keys in her hand, a large one and a small one ; with the former she opened the house door that led into the large garden at the back, and just as she did so, a loud crash at the front door proclaimed that the officers had succeeded in breaking it open ; under cover of that crash, Miss Holloway slammed shut the back-door.

"Take this key," she said to Claude, "quick—follow me!"

She fled on before them in the dim night light, for she had left the little lamp she had been carrying in a niche in the hall, and Claude still more than half supporting Cicely, rapidly pursued her. After traversing several garden paths, Miss Holloway struck off to the left into one that led to a small door in the wall. There she paused as she said—

"The key you have fits it. Fly at once."

"Oh, how can we thank you," said Cicely, while Claude was busy unlocking the door.

"By your immediate departure," replied Miss Holloway.

"I will not say thank you," said Claude, "for I could say no less for the most trivial service. What you have done for us will sink deeply into both our hearts. Adieu."

Miss Holloway moved her hand, and Claude and Cicely passed through a small door in the wall. At that moment there arose in the garden, quite close to the house, a loud shouting of voices, and one above the rest cried—

"This way, this way ; I know he has escaped at the back. Remember the reward. This way, men, this way."

"Ah!" said Claude, "so close are they on our track."

"And we are lost," said Cicely.

"Not so, dear one, not so. We are in danger, but far, I hope, from lost. Let those who are weary of this world interrupt me now."

He carefully locked the door on the outside and placed the key in his pocket ; then taking a pistol in his right hand, while with his left he still supported Cicely, who was little able to endure fatigue, he walked slowly on.

"If I could but find Jack," he said.

"Where is he, Claude?"

"Close at hand. The discharge of a pistol would bring him to me, but it would likewise act as a direction to our foes. We must look for him, the distance is short."

"Ha! ha!" cried a voice, "there he goes!"

Claude turned to where the voice came from, and there, perched upon the garden wall, and tolerably plainly to be seen against rather a whitish patch of sky, was the attorney who had been locked in the parlour.

"There they go. Come on, come on. Recollect you get the reward if he is taken alive or dead."

Claude levelled his pistol, there was a bright flash, and with a shriek the attorney fell into the garden.

"There's your share of it, at all events," said Claude, "without any wording or quarrelling about the amount. How do you like it?"

## CHAPTER CXXXII.

### A NEW FRIEND.

"GRACIOUS Heaven, have you killed him?" said Cicely.

"I should not wonder. A couple of slugs are rather hard of digestion, even to a lawyer ; I should not have fired at him but for the latter part of his speech."

"Oh, God!"

"On, on, Cicely, there is no time for regrets. Recollect that these men would

consider no death too cruel to put me to, for the sake of the gold that they would divide as the price of my murder!"

"You are right, Claude, you are right. On their own heads be the consequences. It was only my woman's nature that for a moment shrunk aghast at death in any shape, and inflicted by any one."

"Say no more, Cicely; I know well, and can fully appreciate all that you must feel. On, on."

"Yes, Claude, yes. Hush!"

A whistle, clear, shrill, and distinct, came upon their ears.

"What is that?"

"Jack. It is Jack's whistle."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Hold!" said a voice, and a man sprung upon Claude, and grappled him by the throat. "Whoever you are, you are my prisoner. Offer the least resistance, and I'll soon put a stop to it."

"Indeed," said Claude, "who may you be? Keep clear, Cicely, keep clear if you love me and value my safety."

"Come, come, my friend, this won't do. I'll clap a pair of darbies on you in a twinkling. I'm an officer."

"Really," said Claude.

"Yes, my name is Foster."

"Then, Mr. Foster, I sincerely advise you as a friend to take your hands off me, for though I can say with Hamlet, that I am not splenetic or rash, yet I don't approve of this sort of thing, or put up with it long. Be warned."

"Oh, I dare say, you think you are a fine fellow."

The officer, who had been placed at the back of the house as a kind of scout or sentinel, actually had not the smallest idea of who he had got hold of, but commenced grappling with Claude to throw him. Upon this Claude seized him with a grasp of iron, and after they had swayed to and fro for a few moments, Claude flung him right over his shoulder on to his head. The officer lay without sense or motion, and then a voice cried in friendly accents—

"Claude, Claude!"

"Jack!" said Claude. "This way."

In another moment Jack with the two horses made his appearance, but when he saw a third person he paused and said—

"A prisoner or a friend, Claude?"

"An old friend, Jack, it is Cicely."

"Cicely! Cicely!"

"Yes, Jack. The wounded, not the killed Cicely; she is restored to me once again. Oh, Jack, I am surrounded by dangers, but I am so very—very happy."

"And I am bewildered," said Jack. "This is a dream!"

"No dream, Jack. If it were, I for one should wish to awaken from it."

"And I for another," said Jack.

"Now, Cicely," added Claude, "now, my Cicely, mount, and we will be off at once. At least we will give our foes a gallop for it."

He easily lifted Cicely, and then sprung up behind her himself; Jack mounted at the same moment, but before they could stir from the spot, a rattling discharge of pistols ensued, and Claude felt sensible that some bullets had passed in most dangerous proximity to him and to Cicely.

"Speak—speak, dear one," said Claude.

"Yes, Claude, yes."

"Are you unhurt?"

"Perfectly."

"Jack, is all right?"

"Right, Claude, right."

"Fire this from where the flashes came, and fire low."

Both Claude and Jack discharged a pistol in the direction he mentioned, and then, before the officers—for no doubt they who fired were officers—had time to load

again, Claude and Jack were off and away over the heath. Jack kept very close to Claude, so close that he could speak to him easily, and he now said with considerable concern of manner—

“Have you a fixed destination, Claude, or are you merely riding on at random to distance your pursuers?”



TURPIN, CLAUDE, AND PARTY, SURROUNDED BY THEIR PURSUERS IN A FOREST DELL.

“Not that, Jack; I want to give them a good race, and then make a detour to the left, and come upon the heath again. The safest place in the world now for Cicely is that farm-house in which you and I have experienced so hospitable a reception. There for a time, until her health is perfectly established, I know she will be safe.”

“She will, Claude, if——”

"If what, Jack?"

"If she be a being of flesh and blood."

"Why, Jack, how can you doubt that. Is Cicely the first person in the world, who, after a conflict, has been left for dead, and then only found out to be dangerously wounded, and eventually fully recovered? That, Jack, is the whole substantial history of the case. Of course there are a thousand little minor details which both you and I will be delighted to hear from the lips of Cicely, but that she is here is a great fact, Jack, that I would not exchange for all my hopes here and hereafter."

"I am satisfied," said Jack, "and well pleased too. Hark, Claude, do you hear that?"

"Yes, the sound of horses' feet upon the common. We shall be hotly pursued, but our horses are fresh, and we are desperate, so come on, Jack. Woe to him who shall have the fortune to come up with us in this race."

"There is much danger," said Cicely faintly.

"Not so much to us as to our enemies, Cicely. Cheer up, dearest; you speak very low."

"Ah, Claude, I am not so strong as I would fain have made you and myself believe. The wound was a very cruel one."

"He who inflicted it has gone to his account."

"Alas! alas! I fear that I shall be a clog upon your exertions to escape those enemies, that are even now pressing like blood-hounds on your track."

"No, Cicely, no. It is you who will give me strength, endurance, and that species of desperation that regards all dangers as so many incentives to overcome them. You are safe—quite safe."

He held Cicely round the waist with his left arm, while with the right he grasped the bridle and guided the horse. Jack now kept about twice a horse's length behind, in order the better to listen to the foe, and to give Claude notice of his progress, and so on they dashed to Ealing. The little common was soon traversed, and they entered the village, then a much more rural spot than it is now. It only consisted of a few cottages, and to the left of the road of a large white-fronted house that had been a favourite residence of the Duchess of Marlborough, but which was burnt to the ground some years ago. At that time not a soul was stirring in the little irregular street of the village, and Claude dashed on until he came to the junction of roads, one of which leads to Hanwell, and the other right on through some straggling outskirts of the village to what is now called Ealing Park.

"To the left!" cried Claude. "To the left, Jack."

"Yes—yes. They are coming on, Claude. Ah! what is that?"

"Stadd!" cried a horseman, emerging from the Hanwell Road, followed by some half dozen more well-mounted men. "Stand where you are or we fire."

"Fire away," said Claude.

As he spoke he suddenly wheeled his horse round, and took a few steps in the direction from which he had come. One pistol only was discharged at random. Claude had still a loaded double-barrelled pistol handy, but he did not wish to fire it at random. He had escaped the shot, but before he could resume his course again, one of the horsemen quickly advanced and laid hold of Cicely by the arm.

"Surrender!" he said. "You are overmatched, although you do ride double. Surrender, I say."

"Not yet," said Claude, as with a blow of the stock of the pistol he held in his hand, he struck the man from his horse. "Forward, Jack, forward!"

Claude's horse was a little alarmed at what was going on, and made a furious plunge forward. If Claude had not been the accomplished horseman he was, that plunge would have unseated him, but as it was, it only had the effect of giving him a slight start of his foes, and at once allowing the horse a free rein, off he went like the wind. Jack kept within a few paces of him, and what was strange enough was, that the horse of the man whom Claude had knocked down, kept them company, rushing on by the side of Claude's horse as if it much enjoyed

the new society into which it had got. The horsemen who had been pursuing Claude across the heath, now effected a junction with those who had so inopportunistically made their appearance from the Hanwell Road, and with a tacit understanding that they were all on the same errand, they joined in the chase with abundance of good will. The superiority of both Claude's and Jack's steeds, aided no doubt by a certain amount of tact in riding, which long practice and abundant experience, under all conditions and circumstances, had given them, was soon apparent, and if the chase had to be continued right on, without either party having any help or aid with fresh cattle, no doubt could for a moment have been entertained of the result—the pursuers, horses must have broken down. Such, however, was not the case, for in such a neighbourhood the probability was that fresh parties would join the chase as it went on, so that Claude ran the risk of finding new enemies in his path at intervals, without himself having any new means of evading them, or of contesting with them. It was in this way that some of the most celebrated knights of the road, notwithstanding the manner in which they were mounted, were run down, as it were. But it will be remembered that Claude had no sort of intention of continuing an even race of such a description. His object was to turn to the left, and get back to the common as quickly as possible, if he could but shake off his pursuers for a sufficient time to practise the plan. Jack kept him steadily in view. He knew that Claude's acquaintance with the neighbourhood was tolerably exact, and he was pleased to see him take suddenly to a lane to the left, the umbrageous foliage of which rendered it quite invisible to any one at that hour who had no previous knowledge of its existence.

“Claude,” said Jack. “One moment!”

“What is it?”

“Send the spare horse that is by your side, along the road. Who knows but the clatter of his hoofs may deceive the enemy?”

“A good thought. Do it, Jack. I will breathe my horse a moment and wait for you.”

Jack led the steed of the fallen man a few paces up the road, and then giving it a switch with his riding whip, he started off at a hard gallop. In another moment he was back to Claude.

“Let us walk the horses until we find we have occasion to put them to their mettle again,” said Claude. “If this succeeds, we can take our way leisurely enough to Ealing Common.”

The horses were now put to a fast walking pace, so that their feet made the least possible noise upon the soft ground of the verdant lane they were traversing beneath huge overhanging trees.

## CHAPTER CXXXIII.

### A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

IT would appear that, notwithstanding the great difference between the tread of one horse and of three, the party in pursuit of Claude and Jack was puzzled when it reached the corner of the lane. A halt took place, and then, after some conjectures and hypotheses had been started, one said—

“I don't think there can be any difficulty about it. The fact is, we know that Claude Duval had a companion, and they have separated, in order to puzzle us.”

“What shall we do, sir?”

“Why the only thing we can do is to follow the example. One half of our number must go down this lane, and the other half pursue the road, and don't let us waste time about it.”

This arrangement was quickly concluded. There was no choice in the matter, for no one could have the smallest idea as to which of the routes the important

personage they wished to capture had taken, so they had equal chances. It did so happen, however, that one of the boldest officers that the police of London could boast of, headed the party that went down the lane. They had not proceeded far before Claude heard them, and he spoke to Jack at once—

“They come, Jack. We must once more try the mettle of our steeds.”

“Do you think, Claude, if we were to draw up among the trees, there is any likelihood of their passing us?”

“No, Jack, no. If they don't hear the horses' feet they will soon guess that something of the sort is being tried on, and you may depend they would not come down this lane at all if they did not feel pretty sure that one or both of us were here.”

“Come on then, Claude.”

“Are your pistols ready?”

“Quite, Claude, quite.”

They at once dashed forward, and then the sound of their horses' feet came clearly enough upon the ears of their pursuers, and acted as a powerful incentive to their speed.

“And all this,” said Cicely, “is for me. Oh, Claude, I shall begin to think that I am your evil genius.”

“Evil genius, Cicely. Oh, no. You are the only good genius I have ever met with since I discarded the counsels of my poor sister, who did her utmost when quite a girl to make me different from what I now am. Ah, I did not listen to May then. Jack, keep in the middle of the lane. There is an ugly ditch on the near side.”

“Claude—Claude!”

“What is it—what has happened?”

“Who—who is that character?”

The voice of Jack it was that asked the question, but there was so much dread of a superstitious character mingled with it's tones that they were, in truth, hardly recognisable. Claude was upon the point of asking him to what he alluded, when to his astonishment, upon turning his eyes to the right, he saw within a few paces of him, a mounted man galloping rather close under the trees, but keeping up with him as easily as though the pace were nothing. Notwithstanding that the night was by no means what might fairly be called a light one, yet, from having been accustomed to it for some hours now, Claude could see sufficiently well to enable him to note with tolerable accuracy the stranger's appearance. He was a plainly-dressed man, with a horseman's half-cloak on. His hat was pulled rather close down over his forehead, and he wore high boots that shone in the dim light as though some sort of metallic case was upon the tops of them. The horse he rode was small and of great strength. It was, or by that light it looked to be, coal black, and the action of the creature, although going at such great speed, was so easy and so graceful, that had not Claude's situation induced him to keep a wary eye upon this man, his whole attention would have devolved with delight upon the steed.

“Claude! Claude!” again cried Jack, “for the love of Heaven, speak to it.”

“Hilloa!” said Claude. “You can pass on, sir.”

The stranger made no reply, and Claude himself could not help at the moment feeling something akin to the superstitious terrors of Jack creeping over his mind as he looked at that solemn man and horse gliding along by his side like the wind. The horse, too, although the pace he went at was one that might have warranted as much, did not make the smallest sound indicative of distress or of exertion; but like a thing of air, on it flew, keeping neck to neck with his own good steed, which at times dashed the foam from its mouth. Jack had greatly contributed to this strange feeling by calling the strange horseman “it,” as though he could come to no other conclusion than that the appearance was something not mortal. But this was a state of things that could not go on, and Claude, whatever might be his momentary feelings or sensations, was not a man likely to yield beyond the passing

moment to any superstitious fears. He felt the necessity of forcing the stranger to something like communication, and therefore, he said, in a clear voice—

“If you are a friend, say so. If an enemy, I defy you.”

“Do you expect to find friends by the hedge-side, Claude Duval?” said the stranger, in a clear voice.

“Ah, you know me!”

“Why, by report, but not at all personally. Hope we shall be better acquainted though. They are hard upon your back.”

“Your friends, I suppose?”

“Nonsense; I never aspired to the luxury of having a friend; but you certainly have Jack there. How are you, Jack?”

“Good God!” groaned Jack.

“Ha! ha! Jack, you were one too many for the gallows, you were. May we all have such luck!”

“In plain language,” cried Claude, passionately, “who the devil are you? You say you have known me well by report, and if you have, you have heard among other trifles that I am not a man to be played with. Speak at once to the purpose, and say who you are, and what, in the name of all that’s abominable, do you want with me?”

“Humph!” said the stranger, with the most provoking indifference of tone and manner.

This was much more than such flesh and blood as Claude Duval was capable of bearing, and suddenly wheeling round his horses’ head in the direction of the stranger, he raised his hand, but ere he could grapple with the man who had so angered him, he too wheeled his horse round, so that he was out of reach, and he said—

“Is this the way to save yourself, Claude Duval? Is it wise to get into a brawl with the first stranger you meet?”

“The consequences be upon your own head!” cried Claude.

“Nay, they will fall upon yours—hush! If you remain here, and count twenty slowly, your pursuers will be upon you. Now, take my advice.”

“Your advice?”

“Yes, wiser folks have taken it before to-day. Don’t be angry, but trot after me until I tell you to stop. Then we can give them a volley when they are within pistol-shot of us, which I think will discomfit them sufficiently to enable me to show you how to elude them altogether.”

“Dare I trust you?”

“That is a subject entirely for your own consideration, Claude Duval. If you say no, I am off again as silently as I came, and there is no harm done. If you say yes, you cannot say it too soon.”

“Yes,” cried Claude.

“Follow, then.”

At two bounds the stranger’s horse placed some thirty feet of ground between him and Claude, and then, at such a swift trot that few steeds could have come near it at a hand gallop, off they went. Claude had made up his mind to trust to the mysterious stranger, and Jack said not a word. Cicely, too, was silent, and so they pursued their way, while upon the night air came the furious beating of the horses’ hoofs of those who pursued them. Suddenly the stranger paused.

“Halt!”

Claude immediately drew rein.

“The scoundrels want to kill you,” he said to Claude, “but we will foil them at that game. It shall be dangerous to set a price upon any man’s head in such a manner. Have you a pistol ready?”

“Yes.”

“Then blaze away when I say ‘Fire!’ and then, without any further troubling yourself, follow me.”

“I will.”

“Fire!”

Bang! went the three pistols, 'or Jack fired likewise. A scene of confusion ensued, during which Claude and Jack followed their new friend through a gate into a farm-yard. The gate was closed again on the moment by some unseen agency, and the stranger, in a low voice, said—

"Hush! Not a word, as you value your lives. Leave another to speak for you now."

## CHAPTER CXXXIV.

### A CURIOUS REVELATION.

BOTH Claude and Jack found themselves not a little puzzled by the whole of this procedure. It was so entirely out of the common way, that they could form no rational conjecture concerning it. Cicely, no doubt, was not the least surprised of the party. No doubt she was the most alarmed, not for her own sake, but for the sake of those who were so dear to her. We say those, because we feel that by this time no one could appreciate more fully than she (Cicely) did the noble devotion of Jack to Claude, and the value of those services which were partly the services of honest affection.

"Claude," she whispered, "what will be the end of all this?"

"No matter, Cicely," he replied, "so that in its progress there is so much joy."

"Joy?"

"Yes. Are you not with me?"

A silent pressure of the hand was the only reply that Cicely could give to this sentiment, uttered at a moment of such great danger, that it sufficiently showed how very dear she was to him. It would appear that the unknown friend who had brought them into the farm-yard overheard them talking, for he admonished them to silence by a startling—

"Hush!"

They were immediately profoundly still, for they felt how little, if any right they now had, after accepting of his guidance, to endanger probably his safety, by disputing his wishes in any particular.

It was soon manifest that, notwithstanding the rather uncomfortable repulse that the officers had met with, they did not intend to relinquish the pursuit easily. The sound of their horses' feet sounded sharply on the road.

"Follow!" said Claude's new friend.

By the dim light they saw him make for a large barn, a little to the right of the entrance to the farm-yard. By the fluster of garments of some one who stood there, they could see that some female was lending as much assistance as she could to the party. This female, whoever she was, opened the barn door, and in another moment they all rode in, and the door was closed. The darkness now in the barn was most intense. Indeed, it was that kind of darkness that novelists declare may be felt; but as we never found any place quite so dark as that, and as we are writing a veracious history, and not a novel, we can only say that the darkness in the barn was such that you could not see your hand before your face.

"Do not any of you speak again," said their new friend. "Leave all to me, and the best that can be done shall be done."

"We have faith," said Claude.

The barn-door was opened a short distance and then rapidly closed again. This was merely done for the purpose of allowing the stranger to pass out. Claude and his party were, however, so near the high-road; that, if anything in the shape of a parley should take place, they could not fail of hearing every word of it. The situation was decidedly an uncomfortable one. They heard the sound of horses' feet suddenly cease, and then a voice cried in imperative accents—

"Halt! Hilloa! House here."



"Ees," said some one, "what wur it?"

"Have you seen anybody pass here, my friend?" said the same voice that had had cried "halt!"

"Ees," replied the other, "three men on 'osses. They went on fast enow, and nearly rode over me, 'cos, you see, I went to see what kind o' night it was."

"And they went on?"

"Ees."

"Thank you—Come on, comrades, we shall soon have them. They can't be far a head of us, now. How do you get on with your wound, Davies—can you ride farther?"

"Oh yes—yes."

Away they went as hard as they could tear, helter skelter, and Claude began to think the danger was past, but in this he was soon undeceived, for a loud strange voice cried suddenly—

"What is all this about? I heard somebody—padlock the gate, boy, and this 'un; and call Gregory; I'm sure some one's on the farm. Fetch me my gun—Stay, no.—Call Gregory, I'll get the gun!"

There was a scuffling of feet, and then the barn-door was opened again and Claude's new friend popped in his head, saying—

"The officers have passed now."

"Then," said Claude, "I suppose we had better be off?"

"No.—No."

"Think you not?"

"No. The officers upon not finding you, or any traces of you, a little further on, may retrace their steps again, and then a meeting would be perhaps something more than troublesome."

"What do you advise?"

"That you stay here. The man who keeps this farm is no friend, and probably might be mischievous, so he must be duped as to the character of his guests. We will pass ourselves upon him for the officers. Come out of the barn. He will return directly."

"But you have a friend here," said Claude.

"Yes. The gate was opened by such. That friend, however, is not the master of the house."

The little party now emerged from the barn, and then the new friend of Claude Duval called out in a loud voice—

"Hilloa! hilloa! Whose place is this? Is any one here? In the king's name, I demaand assistance. Hilloa! hilloa!"

Lights flashed across the yard, and then the farmer, who had been for his gun, called out—

"What's all this racket about? Who be ye? I'll make a hole in thy carcass, danged if I don't."

"Then you shall be hung on your own gate-post, my friend."

"Eh?"

"Hung on your own gate-post, I said. We are officers of police, and if you make a fool of yourself, by any resistance to us, you will soon hear of it from the County Magistracy."

"Why did thee not say that afore," added the man, in a very mild sort of tone. "How be I to know? If so be, as you be officers, I'm sure I don't want to interfere. Bring a light, Gregory, and show the gentlemen into the house."

"Come on," whispered Claude's new and mysterious acquaintance to him. "Come on, our only chance is to deceive this old curmudgeon, and if the officers should come back, we can, I think, stand a siege in this place for some time."

Claude trotted his horse along the yard until they came to the porch of the farm-house, which was one of those ancient looking structures that are fast disappearing from the face of the land. A half-wild looking boy stood there with a lanthorn in his hand, and by his side was the farmer, an old crabbed-looking

man, with dirty grey hair, and a face scored and puckered up into such a number of wrinkles, that it looked like some wonderfully intricate piece of network.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "walk in. What be the matter?"

"We are after the celebrated highwayman, Claude Duval," said the stranger.

"Dang it, don't I wish you could nab he."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Oh, I hate he."

"I will get you," said Claude, as he dismounted, and carefully helped Cicely from the saddle, "to be so good as to tell us the reason of that hatred, Mr. Farmer."

"Oh, yes, I'll tell a—But—but—who——"

He was looking curiously at Cicely, and Claude felt it was quite necessary to say something to account for her delicate and debilitated appearance.

"This is a young gentleman," he said, "who was attacked by Claude Duval, and got hurt. We found him on the road, and, being bound to give him all the help we could, I put him on my horse."

"Ah!" said the farmer, shaking his head, "what a wagabone that highwayman fellow is. But there's an odd report about to-night, I can tell you."

"An odd report? What mean you?"

"Why, one of my men, who has come from Southall Market, says that Dick Turpin——"

"Dick Turpin, the highwayman?" cried Claude.

"The very man. That he was seen last night in the neighbourhood on his black mare."

"I thought he never came so near London," said Claude.

"Sometimes," said Jack. "Don't you recollect his robbing Colonel Wood, near Croydon?"

"Oh, yes—yes. I heard of that."

"Gregory—Gregory. Take the osses," said the farmer.

A great hulking countryman approached, rubbing his eyes—for he had been, to his manifest discomfiture, awakened from a sound sleep, in a barn close at hand, the straw from which was sticking in a very picturesque way all about his hair and face.

"Ees, master, ees."

"Our stay here will be so short," said Claude's new friend, "that we will not trouble any one with our horses. Our friend here will look to them."

"Yes," said Jack, seeing that he was appealed to. "Yes, I prefer waiting here with the horses, and if this Mr. Gregory will bring some hay and a little water, it is all we shall want for the cattle."

"Oh, yes—yes!" cried the farmer, who was delighted at the idea that a feed of corn for each of the horses was not required. "Oh, yes—yes, all's right. That will do. You attend to he, Gregory."

"Ees, master. Ees."

Claude, with Cicely upon his arm, and their new friend following close behind, entered the farm-house. The knowledge that Jack remained behind with the horses, was a great thing towards the feeling of security that was so essential to their comfortable stay for any time in the farm-house, and so they all went into a room that was called the best parlour, and a couple of candles were lighted.

"Now, what will you have?" said the farmer.

"First of all," said Claude's new acquaintance, "who is in the house besides yourself and Gregory, and the boy?"

"Only my deaf housekeeper, Mrs. Williams, and she's a-bed long ago, she be."

"Well, tell this gentleman why you hate Claude Duval."

"Why, you see, he stopped me one night, and took £10 from me, and gave 'em to an old man as I'd turned away from my farm, cos why, he was past all sort of work, and what use was he to me? I never could catch the old man arterwards, or wouldn't I a persecuted him—ah, wouldn't I."

A shrill whistle at this moment sounded from without.

"That's Jack's whistle," said Claude.

"Ah! Then they are returning."

"I'll go and see," said the farmer, "I'll——"

"No, my friend," said the stranger, "you will not trouble yourself to do any such thing.—Permit me——"



SURPRISE OF CLAUDE'S PURSUERS ON FINDING THE OFFICER SHOT BY DICK TURPIN.

"What—what——"

The stranger took a rope from his pocket and began to tie the farmer's hands behind him, and as he did so, he said—

"This gentleman that you see there, in the boots, is Claude Duval. The gentleman there in the shoes is a friend of his. The gentleman outside is another, and we mean to hold your farm to-night against all comers."

"And who be you?" said the farmer, his teeth chattering with terror as he spoke.

"I'm Tom Smith."

The farmer looked about him with a bewildered air; and when Tom Smith, as he chose to call himself, opened suddenly the lid of one of the old-fashioned window seats, which were made of about the size of large trunks, and said—

"Oblige me by stepping in here—"

\* He gave a howl of terror. Tom Smith took a pistol from his pocket and coolly shook the priming. Before, then, he could proceed further in his pretended proposition of shooting him, the farmer sprung into the window-box with the greatest agility.

## CHAPTER CXXXIV.

### SOUTHALL FAIR.

WHILE this little piece of comedy was going on, Claude and Cicely looked on with deep interest, and at its conclusion Claude said—

"What do you propose?"

"Listen to me," said Smith. "The fact is, that in a neighbourhood like this, and with a sick person, your only chance in the world is to throw the officers off the scent—to take to flight, encumbered as you are, will not do. Besides, if you were to stop to fight them, you could not kill enough of them to ensure your safety. I think, therefore, the best way will be to hold out here for a time, until we can send them off on a wrong scent, or play them some trick that may show itself as we go on. You hear that the house, now we have stowed away the farmer, is nearly untenanted, so what is to hinder us from taking possession of it, and playing the part of owners of it? I have one friend on the premises who will help us."

"I like the plan," said Claude; "however, it will afford my young friend, here, an opportunity to lie down a little."

"Certainly."

Another sharp whistle from without showed that Jack felt that there was cause for alarm.

"Go," said Smith to Claude. "Go, and let the cattle be put in stable, and bring your friend here."

"I will."

"Oh, Claude, will you leave me?" said Cicely, in a low voice. "Will you let me be out of your sight again, now that we have, after so many dangers, met?"

"Do you mistrust me?" said Smith.

"Oh, no—no. But——"

"If you did, it is only natural that you should do so. Wait one moment."

He went to the door and called aloud. "Ann!—Ann!" and a young woman, with some degree of alarm depicted on her countenance, made her appearance.

"Ann," said Smith, "this lady wishes to rest a little. Do not be alarmed. A lady she is."

"You know the secret?" said Claude.

"No further than that this is a lady you have with you, that is all. And now you can ask Ann, who is the only female in this house, except the old deaf house-keeper, if I can be trusted."

"Oh, yes—yes," said Ann, anticipating the question. "I, and all who are dear to me have much need to bless you, sir."

"Are you satisfied, Cicely?" said Claude. "There is truth in those tones, is there not?"

"Yes, Claude. Go—go."

Claude at once left the room to go and speak to Jack, and Cicely, in company

with Ann, proceeded up stairs, but not before Tom Smith had given Ann some whispered instructions, to which she replied—

“Oh, yes, certainly, Mr. Dome. Certainly, sir, in a few minutes.”

“Don’t hurry,” said Tom Smith, who was, we see, named Dome by Ann.

When Claude got outside, he found Jack in no little trepidation to see him.

“I thought,” he said, “you would never come out, Claude. Don’t you hear the officers coming up the lane?”

Claude listened, and heard both the sound of voices, and the tramp of horses’ feet.

“Yes, Jack,” he replied. “But our safety is here.” He then told him what had been determined upon within the house, and after a few moments’ thought. Jack said—

“Well, it may be all for the best, Claude, I hope it is. At all events, rest is of importance to Cicely.”

“It is, Jack, and I thank you kindly for thinking of her at such a moment as this. As soon as you have put up the horses, come inside.”

“I will.”

Claude returned to the parlour, and was just in time to see Tom Smith equipping himself in a pair of top-boots and a smockfrock. Ann had brought down stairs several of those garments, and that indeed was what he, Smith, had whispered to her to do.

“Do as I am doing,” said Smith. “We must make our appearance, as far as we can, correspond with our professions.”

Claude saw the importance of putting some such a disguise over his regular apparel, and he immediately equipped himself. Jack then came in and was induced to do the same, so that they all three wore the appearance of respectable husbandmen.

“Now,” said Tom Smith, “we will be three brothers. I am Tom. You, Claude, will be Jack, and your friend here, Bill.”

“Let me be Jack,” said Jack, “for I shall then not forget my name, since it is the one I am used to.”

“Very well,” said Claude, “then I will be Bill; and as this is all your plan, Mr. Tom, we will, if you please, leave the whole management of it to you. Only tell us what we are to say, and how we are to play our parts.”

“Circumstances only can guide us,” said Smith. “At any time the horses can be saddled, and we can, I think, be off, but I hope we shall be able to do that and leave our enemies in not a very good condition to follow us. Ann! Ann!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Is there anything to drink in the house?”

“Oh, yes, sir, some fine old ale.”

“Good. If they resist that, they are wonderful officers indeed.”

“Then you mean to ask them in?” said Claude.

“Yes, and my great hope is, that baffled, and tired, and hurt, as they are, they will not scruple to accept the polite invitation.”

“Hush!” said Jack.

They all listened, and heard a loud knocking at the gate leading into the yard, and a voice shouting—

“House!—House!—Hilloa!—Is anybody up here?”

“I’ll go,” said Smith. “You two can stroll out quietly afterwards, and see how things are getting on.”

With this Smith, or Tom, as it will be more convenient to call him in the scene which is about to ensue, went from the room, and Jack approached Claude, and said in a whisper—

“Do you trust him?”

“Yes, Jack, fully.”

“Then I am satisfied.”

“But remember, Jack, if you hear me say I wonder if the moon is yet up, you will understand that as a hint to get our horses out.”

"Good—and Cicely?"

"I will take care to ascertain where she is, now at once. Ah, here is the young girl. Can you tell me in what room the lady is? I am her husband, Ann."

"If you will follow me, sir, I will show you."

Claude did so, and found that Cicely was lying down to rest in the room directly overhead, so that she could easily enough be communicated with. He kissed her cheek, saying—

"Dear Cicely, be under no alarm. All will be well."

"You say so, Claude," she replied, "and you will be near me, so all is well."

Feeling then that his presence down stairs might be required, he tore himself away, and descended the stairs. Jack was rather impatiently waiting for him.

"They are talking outside," he said, "but I did not like to go without you, Claude. Come at once, and let us hear what it is all about. This is rather a ticklish position I take it."

"A little so, Jack."

They both left the house, and upon reaching the court-yard they found Tom upon the point of opening the gate to about a dozen mounted men, who were without in the lane.

"Well, gentlemen," they heard Tom say, "you can make sure of him I should think to-morrow. He can't be far off."

"I don't know that," replied one of the horsemen. "Foiled we are, and there is no such thing as saying nay to that; but where he may be by to-morrow morning, I won't pretend to say."

"But at all events, we cannot do better than turn in for an hour or two to feed the horses and rest. There's rain coming on," said another, "don't you feel it?"

"And are we really to give it up as a bad job?" said a third.

"No, no, Jenkins," said the first speaker, "let Reed and Thompson keep watch in the lane: we will not wait long. It's quite clear that for some particular object or another, Duval is hankering about this neighbourhood, but it would be sheer folly of us to go galloping, perhaps in the very contrary direction to which he has taken."

"Will you come in then, gentlemen?" said Tom.

"Yes. Yes."

"The gate was swung open, and ten men on horseback came in, while the two underlings who were mentioned, kept watch in the lane, not over-well pleased, no doubt, to be exposed to the pelting of the rain, which was beginning to fall rather sharply, while the others of the party went into the farm house."

"Open the door, Bill," said Tom to Claude.

"Yes, Tom," said Claude.

"And Jack," added Tom, "get a drop of ale ready for these gentlemen, will you?"

"Yes, Tom."

"Are these your brothers?" said the principal officer.

"Yes, sir.—Gregory! Gregory! Gregory! I say!"

"Oh, don't give yourself so much trouble. Of course you will understand that we pay for whatever we have, as we are upon the public service, and get it refunded to us again by the clerk of the peace, you know, so let our horses be well fed, and give us the best you have in the house, Master Farmer."

"Certainly, sir, and I only hope you will catch Claude Duval to-morrow. This way, gentlemen.—Ah, it's a horrid thing to think that the highways are not safe. Suppose, now, I was coming home with the price of a score of sheep in my pocket, how unpleasant it would be to meet a fellow who would say 'stand and deliver.'"

"Very. Very."

While Tom carried on this discourse with the chief officer, Gregory, the farming man, who had heard himself called in such stentorian accents, made his appearance again from the barn, where he had vainly hoped to get a little more sleep. At the sight of Tom, instead of his mates, his mouth opened quite wide, and he said—

"A man!—Who be ye?"

"Come, stupid," said Tom, "take these horses and give them a feed each, and a good one too."

"Eh!—Lor!—Who be ye?"

"Why really, Gregory," said Ann, stepping forward, with her apron over her head to protect her from the rain, "really, Gregory, you will have to go back to the mad-house again—you don't seem to know your own mates."

"Mad—house—eh?"

"Poor fellow," said Tom to the chief officer, "he has been in a lunatic asylum once, and I fear will have to go in again, for at times, notwithstanding he was brought up with us, he don't know me or any of my brothers."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and then he generally speaks of some old man."

"Really!"

"Wher's the old man?" said Gregory. "I don't know ye, 'danged if I doos. Wher's the old man?"

"It's a pity," said Tom, "and enough to draw tears from a horse's hind leg; but the only thing that does him any good and brightens up his memory is this."

Tom as he spoke took from his pocket a coiled-up horse whip, and straightening it out, he gave Gregory a lash or two with it, that made him dance and roar like a bull.

"Do you know me now?" said Tom.

"Oh, ees—ees."

"Who am I—am I your master?"

"Ees, ees, maister,—oh, dang it dont, and——"

"And do you know my two brothers, Bill and Jack?"

"No—I'm dang'd if I doos."

Slash went the whip.

"Murder, oh—oh, myrder—Yes, I doos, Bill and Jack—and, yes, I knows anything now.—Oh, oh, oh.—Dang it if I ain't bewildered; and I shall have to say the Lord's prayer backwards or raise the devil and axe him to unbewitch I.—What will become of I?"

"You see what a poor fellow he is," said Tom.

"Oh, yes," replied the officer; "but what a cunning there is about mad folks, and the——"

"Oh, tremendous," said Tom, as he followed the officer into the house. "I and my brothers are going to Goodhall farm in the morning, if it is fine, so you see we are ready for the start."

Ann made herself quite busy and useful. Indeed but for her, Jack would have found no small difficulty in complying with Tom's orders about the ale, but she assisted him, and the table was soon respectably enough laid with a cold round of beef, a foaming tankard of ale, and some large wheaten loaves.

"Now, gentlemen," said Tom, "fall to; your cattle will be well looked to, but you'll excuse me going in and out, as I have some stock to get ready for the market."

"Don't mention it," said the chief officer, "we should be very sorry indeed to interrupt you in your business at all, and we are very much obliged to you for your very civil reception of us."

"Don't think of that, sir, it's no more than one ought to do to gentlemen who are trying to rid us of the greatest pests in the world, namely highwaymen."

"You are right. I tell you what it is, comrades," added the officers, when the door was closed upon Tom, "that farmer is a decidedly clever fellow, that he is."

"Yes," said Bill, who was pouring out the ale. "Yes, my brother Tom is reckoned a man of abilities."

The door opened, and Gregory popped in his head, and cried—

"I can't make it out, dang it. Wher's the old man?"

"Ah," said the chief officer, "you want it again do you, you poor mad fellow?"

"But wher's the old man?"

"Take that," said the chief officer, as he snatched up a stick and gave Gregory a blow on the back with it. "Do you want, you fool, the old man now?"

"No—no. Oh, dang it, no!"

"You own that I am Bill?" said Claude, snatching up another stick.

"And that I am Jack?" cried Jack, doubling his fists.

"Yes—yes. Dang it, ees."

Poor Gregory made a precipitate retreat upon this, and punching his own head with his clenched hands, he cried, as he took his way to the stable-yard—

"Dang it, I am mad—I am mad, and shall be in a Lunacy Sylum, as safe as bricks. I is mad; mad as a March hare, and no mistake."

## CHAPTER CXXXV.

### THE FIGHT ON SOUTHALL GREEN.

AFTER this, it did not seem very likely that Mr. Gregory would have much stomach for any further interference, since it brought with it such an amount of retribution. At any other time a sense of the ludicrous, in the whole transaction, would have made Claude laugh immoderately; but one thought of Cicely, above stairs, was more than sufficient to control any such impulse. The officers did ample justice to the strong ale, and the eatables that were placed before them, so that Claude felt at each draught they indulged in from the ale flagons, that he was, in a manner of speaking, getting rid of a danger, inasmuch as the larger quantity of that pleasant and seductive fluid they imbibed, the less would they be in a condition to exercise that amount of judgment and discretion that was requisite in the circumstances they were placed in. Tom, who took the lead in what was doing, urged them, by a great many jocular inducements, not to spare the ale, and they, like men who had got thirsty by hard riding, certainly paid an amount of attention to it that was extraordinary. After a speech which made the officers all laugh, Tom left the room, and in a few moments his voice could be heard outside, shouting in a careless sort of way—

"Bill—Bill. The dun cow has got among the turnips. Bill—Bill, just come out a minute."

"Your brother is calling you, I think," said one of the officers to Claude.

"Is he?"

"Yes. I heard him," said another.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, a moment then," added Claude, and he at once left the room, and made his way to the farm yard, where he found Tom Smith awaiting him.

"If anything is to be done," said Tom, "now is the time."

"Agreed," said Claude. "What do you propose?"

"First, to let all their horses go. Come with me."

Tom led the way through a stable to a small yard, along one side of which was a long manger, at which the horses of the officers were enjoying themselves, for Gregory had taken good care of them, and was there with a lanthorn.

"Gregory," said Tom.

"Ees, sir."

"You know me?"

Gregory gave his back a wriggle, as much as to indicate that he had a perfect recollection of him in one way, and then he added—

"Oh, ees—ees."

"Have you any way of getting into the meadows from here, Gregory, without going through the yard again, into the lane?"

"Ees, here's the little gate."

"Good, Open it, Gregory."



A gate was opened that led across a small ditch into the open fields, and far away in the dim obscurity of the night. It was just what Tom Smith wanted. He led the horses of the officers, one by one, through that gate, and with a lash to each of them with a heavy horsewhip which half-maddened them at the moment, he dismissed them into the open country, plunging and dashing on as though death were at their heels.

"That will do," said Claude.

"I think so, now let us get our own steeds all ready saddled and bridled, and we will be off. Where's Jack?"

"Waiting upon the officers."

"Well, he must be got out."

"And Cicely?"

"Who?"

"I have no secrets with you. She who is above stairs in male attire is my wife, Cicely."

"She must and shall be well cared for. But how to get her down, is the mystery. Ah, whom have we here?"

"It is I," said Ann.

"Then you have come in good time. Can you get the lady down here without passing through the supper room?"

"Oh, surely, sir. In a moment. There are three staircases to the old farm house, and she could get here two ways without going near the parlour."

"All's right then. Go for her at once."

Claude waited in a state of feverish anxiety until Cicely made her appearance; and the moment she did so, she clung to him, saying—

"Ah! we are once again together, and all is well."

Tom was placing the bits in the horses' mouths, for they had not been at all otherwise divested of their trappings, and in a few moments all was ready for a start, with the exception of getting Jack out of the supper-room. That, however, was not a matter of much difficulty, for the officers entertaining no suspicions, might just as well admit of an excuse for his absence as for Claude's. The latter accordingly went to the door, and called aloud—

"Jack! Brother Jack, come here a moment."

"Don't you hear you are called?" said the chief officer to Jack.

"Am I, though?"

"Yes, to be sure; your brother calls you. I dare say it's all about that d—d cow, that gives you no end of trouble. Ha!—ha!—ha!"

All the officers laughed as the principal one laughed at this sorry joke, and amid the explosion of merriment, Jack safely enough left the room, and hurried into the farm-yard.

"Claude?" he said.

"Yes, Jack, it is I. All's right. Follow me."

"Yes, Claude; yes. Shall we escape?"

"I think so."

"And Cicely—what of her? Is she safe and better? How has the fatigue affected her, Claude? We must look to her comfort and safety above all things, you know, Claude."

"I thank you, Jack, from my heart, for those words. All is well, I think and hope. This way—this way."

A few moments brought them to where the horses were, and then Tom Smith, as he would call himself, took Claude aside, and said—

"Which, in your judgment, will be the best, to go away by this little gate leading to the fields, or by the high-road?"

"I should prefer the road," replied Claude, "simply because I have Cicely with me, and we may meet with obstacles the field way, that the horse, doubly loaded, might not be able to surmount: but then, again, the field way is the safest."

"It is. There are but two enemies in that direction—I mean the road—and

if they use fire-arms, the report may alarm our ale-drinking friends before we wish that they should find out anything is amiss."

"True. And yet, if I could but get Cicely to Ealing Common, she is safe."

"Indeed!"

"Yes: I have a friend there who will afford her a shelter, and then my mind would be at ease, come what might."

"Would it be prudent, think you, to go direct to your destination?"

"Perhaps scarcely so."

"Not at all, I think. No doubt all that road is well watched, and although, if you have a friend there that you feel you can rely upon, I would, by all means, advise you to lodge Cicely with that friend. I beg of you to make a detour in your progress there for safety sake."

"You are right—you are right. I am not well acquainted with the country beyond Hanwell, but if you will be my guide, you will add much to the debt of gratitude we already owe you."

Claude's new friend, Tom Smith, willingly gave his assent to the proposition of becoming the guide of the party to Ealing Common. The next consideration—how to get Jack and Cicely away from the house, without creating any suspicion in the minds of the officers—was set about, and quickly arranged. At that moment, however, Ann was seen emerging from the house, leading Cicely by the hand. She was immediately taken in charge by Claude, who mounted his horse, and caused her to be placed behind him. The reader is aware that Jack was the last of the party below, who had been called out of the parlour on the frivolous pretence of looking after the cow, while attending to the comforts of the officers. After a short absence he reappeared amongst them; and on entering the room with a doleful countenance, he muttered—

"Contound the cow. You did well, my friends, to say she gave us no end of trouble. The beast is now trespassing on our neighbour's turnip-field, and you must excuse my absence while I get her out, as we like to do as we would be done by."

"Oh, certainly," said two of three of the officers at once; "don't mention it. Your kindness is so great, that we can readily excuse such a trifle as that. We are sorry, my friend, that you are compelled to leave us; but if you will procure us a little more of your sparkling old ale before you go, we shall be happy enough till we see you again."

After furnishing them with more ale, Jack placed his hat on his head, and quietly left the room. He soon joined the party in the yard, where his horse was in readiness for him. Having mounted, Tom Smith placed himself in front of the party, and said in a low tone—

"Silence!"

He listened for a moment, and not hearing a sound except the cooing of the disturbed pigeons, he led the way to the gate by which they had entered. The roadway to it they had littered with straw, to prevent the noise of the horses' feet; and in a few minutes they were once more fairly on the road, in the wake of their mysterious new friend, Tom Smith, in whom the reader will not have failed by this time in recognising as the notorious Dick Turpin. After progressing some distance, they turned into a by-lane leading in the direction of the Hanwell Road. Now the morning had made such progress, that in the open country all objects were distinctly visible, and the sky was of that dull leaden sort of colour peculiar to the early dawn before the sun has risen sufficiently to gild it with beauty; but in this lane, where were those in whose fortunes we are so deeply interested, the trees in many places met so completely overhead, that a darkness continued, which a mid-day sun could only convert into a dubious sort of twilight. Claude and his party were in one of those dark portions of the lane when thus questioned by the officers—

"Now, let us have a look at you!" said one of those men who had been left in the rain to keep watch and ward. He was closely followed by his companion.

"Look away," said Tom.

"We will trouble you to ride on to the next gap in the trees. This place is as dark as a dungeon."

"Very good," said Tom, "we will follow you."

A short canter brought them all to the gap in the trees which the officer had spoken of; and then he who had assumed the office of spokesman cast a scrutinising



SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF THE OLD CLERGYMAN BEFORE CLAUDE, TURPIN AND PARTY.

eye upon the party. It will be remembered that with the exception of Cicely they had each a smock frock and top-boots on.

"You may or may not be what you say," said the officer, "but it's my duty to—"

Before he could finish the sentence, a loud shout rent the air; and then a loud galloping of some approaching horses came clearly upon the ears of the whole party.

"My friend," said Tom, "we would gladly have given you the chance of getting out of this with whole bones; 'but needs must,' you know, 'when the devil drives.'"

He made a clutch at the officer's throat as he spoke, and got hold of a cloth cape he wore, which being rather old and rotten, came away in his hand in a moment.

"Not quite so fast," said the officer, and drawing a pistol from his holster, he fired at Tom.

"A close touch!" said Tom, as snatching a pistol from his breast-pocket, he fired at the officer. The other officer tried to make off in the direction of the Farm House; but Claude, by a dexterous turn of his horse, intercepted him, and struck him down with a blow inflicted with the butt-end of a pistol. He who had been fired at by Tom, was hanging down upon his horse's neck, and the animal, terrified at the report, set off at full gallop.

"Forward!" cried Tom.

Both Claude and Jack gave their steeds the rein, and off they went like the wind. Tom kept the lead easily, although he was behind at the first part of the start. His horse actually sprung past the others in two prodigious leaps, and then it kept its place as easily as though it was merely taking a pleasure canter. The lane was soon cleared, and then, Tom, waving his arm to intimate that they were to follow him, turned a little to the left, and soon emerged into the high road to Hanwell. Our friends were three quarters of a mile a-head, when the officers, who had been played such a trick at the Farm House, appeared at the end of the lane, and all mounted too. How they came to be in such an efficient state for action, is soon told. When Tom and his friends had left the place, the fears of Gregory in a great measure subsided, and he not being quite so stupid as he looked, repaired at once to the parlour, and popped his head in, just as one of the officers, being attracted to do so by some hideous groans, had lifted up the lid of the window seat, and discovered the farmer.

"Hilloa!" cried Gregory, as he saw his real master's head. "Here's the old man at last. Dang it maister, where have you been?"

This produced an explanation. The officers found they were duped, but Gregory, placing his finger to the side of his nose, said—

"The osses bean't gone."

"Not gone, why you have just told us they were all started by those highwaymen. What do you mean?"

"This'en, maister. They was started, but it was only into the close paddock. They can't get out. He! he! who's a wool now, I wonders?"

Gregory was right. In the darkness, Tom nor Claude had been able to see exactly where the officer's horses went; and so, in lieu of sending them right away into the open country, they had only turned them out into a small two-acre paddock. Thus it was, that in the course of ten minutes, the officers—although some of them were not in the soberest condition—were all mounted again, and had in a helter skelter sort of way, taken to the lane, with a hope of speedily overtaking the fugitives. But this was a matter much more easily wished and attempted than performed, considering all things.

## CHAPTER CXXXVI.

### THE CHASE AND ITS RESULTS.

Tom and his friends being, as we have said, about three quarters of a mile a-head of the officers, had very nearly reached Hanwell, while they were emerging from the outskirts of Ealing, so near together are those two pretty villages. Claude thought he might put a question to Tom.

"How far shall we pursue this road?" he said.

"Through Southall; and then, by the green lanes to the left, we can get round to Ealing again.

"That will do. What do you think of our friends, behind?"

"That they will remain behind, until we turn completely, as we shall do; and then they will be pursuing nothing, for we shall halt, I hope, while they continue their wild goose-chase upon the high road.

"I know not how to thank you."

"Pho! You may do as much, or more, for me some day."

"Are you, then, on the road?"

"Ha! ha! Well, sometimes I am. But is not this a fine bracing gallop. By Heavens, it does one's heart good to come over the country in this way. Out of the road, will you?"

This was said to a small market cart driver, who was plodding along to Southall Market, with a couple of pigs secured in the cart by a netting. Claude and Jack had room enough to pass on one side, and so would Tom, if he had moved to the other side, or paused a moment; but instead of doing either of those things, he said something to his horse, and in another moment the creature was over, cart, pigs, and all, and safely alighted upon the other side.

"Well done, my pet," said Tom, as he patted the neck of the noble creature he rode. "Well done, pet, though you have done better things than that."

"That horse," said Jack, "is the devil, or——"

"Or what?" said Claude.

"Never mind just now, Claude, we will speak of it another time; I have my own ideas about it. Push on. We are lagging behind, don't you see. If we keep up this pace another two miles our cattle will be quite knocked up."

"I fear it. But only look at our friend's horse. It has not turned a hair, and it looks as fresh as if it had just trotted out of a meadow."

The stranger's horse did indeed merit all the ecomiums that could possibly be passed upon it; and notwithstanding the speed at which it had gone, it certainly did not exhibit the smallest trace of distress. The village of Hanwell, with its pretty little picturesque church by the banks of the Brent river, was dashed through in a few moments, and they were upon the high road to Southall. It was just then that the first glimpse of real sunshine of that day began to gild the tree tops, just indeed as they were emerging from the valley of the Brent to the high ground on its western side. The view around was now very beautiful, but to men struggling for their lives, and pursued by a relentless foe, the calm unimpassioned beauties of nature appeal in vain. Obstacles in the shape of market-carts, and occasionally a waggon, now began to be in the way, for the market at Southall was a well-attended and popular one. To his dismay too—for Jack was, as we know, rather easily broken-spirited—he saw a flock of sheep about a quarter of a mile a-head. The mellifluous grunting of some pigs too, showed that some of that obstinate race were not far off. Still Tom upon his wonderful steed kept on; and as they neared the sheep, he cried—

"Keep to the right, and we shall pass them."

This was correct, for the man in charge of them was diligently collecting them upon the other side of the road. Claude got by, by a hair's breadth almost without injuring any of the creatures. He had an almost superstitious love of animals, had Claude, and would at any time have run some amount of personal risk to avoid injuring one. Fortunately, the pigs had not yet reached the high road, but were just coming into it from a lane, so that the officers would encounter them immediately, although the fugitives narrowly escaped them.

"All right," cried Tom. "We shall have time to draw rein at the George Inn at Southgate, and take a glass of something as well as breathing our cattle. Here we are."

There was a sudden turn in the road, and then all at once they dashed into the pretty High Street of Southall, and Tom, as he said he would, drew rein opposite to the George Inn. Preparations for the market were going on all round the place, and indeed much of the stock had already arrived, so that there was the

noise of a good deal of chaffering about the price of pigs, poultry, and cheese, going on already. The landlord of the George, hearing some horsemen pause at his door, came out with a smiling face; but the moment he saw Tom, he cried—

“Good God! You, and a market-day too!”

“Why not?” laughed Tom, “the more the merrier, you know. Let us each have a thimbleful of brandy.”

“And the horses?”

“We have not time. Nothing for them but the privilege of standing still for two minutes.”

“What’s that?” said Jack.

“Which? which?”

“Those horsemen coming in the other direction to which we came. Is there a hunt here?”

About a score of men in red coats came trotting a’long, and Tom said, with an air of discomfiture, which, however, quickly vanished—

“Yes, by George, the harriers do meet to-day. Now if those idiots should take it into their heads to run us down—Humph! Well, we should have to show some sport, and at all events, whoever came near me, should, in a sense that he would not like, be in at the death!”

“But something must be done,” said Jack.

“Of course it must. Here’s the brandy. I drink to our further acquaintance, gentlemen.”

“Can you,” added Jack, “be so calm at such a moment of danger? Oh, Claude this is the end.”

“Of what, Jack?”

“Of your and my career. I will die with you.”

“No, Jack, drink your brandy. Something seems to tell me that this is not the end. Tom, we are under your orders.”

“Come on.”

He who had called himself Tom, took the lead, and they followed him at a quick walk through the fair, for a fair it might almost be called, that populous market-day at Southall. In a few moments the little party, in the fate of which we are interested, was all but surrounded by the huntsmen. Their fate hung upon a thread. If they got clear of the men in red before the officers entered the High-street and spread the alarm, the odds were in their favour, for it was not likely that those who came out dressed for a day’s sport, would spoil it by turning aside for the purpose of lending their aid to police officers, although if Tom and his friends could be caught by the stretching out of a hand, it is possible enough caught they would have been. And now the greater number of the men in scarlet had been passed, and Tom was beginning to quicken his pace, when the officers came thundering into the market-place.

“Stop thieves! Highwaymen! Highwaymen!” they cried. “Stop them! There they go!”

“Now for it,” cried Tom. “Tally-ho!”

He touched his steed with his heel-spurs he had none—and it gave one of those terrific bounds that covered such an amazing stretch of ground, and then took to a gallop.

Claude and Jack likewise pushed their steeds to their utmost speed, and off they all were. The officers did not pause, but dashing on, upsetting pigs, poultry, stalls, and everything in their way in their eagerness, they kept on crying—

“Stop thief! Stop thief!”

Two or three of the huntsmen on the impulse of the moment turned their horses’ heads in the direction of the retreating party; but a second thought caused them laughingly to abandon the chase, and one said—

“Ten to four on the fellow with the black mare.”

“Done,” said another—“against who?”

“The field!”

"Done again! Ha! ha! ha! By Jove, he'll lead 'em a dance, Sir Harry, I think."

A quarter of a mile was passed over, when, directly in front of our party, from out of a lane to the right emerged five keepers or whippers-in, on horseback, accompanied by a score of pointers—for that was to be a day of hunting after various fashions.—These men were not of the class that had allowed the chase to go on without interference; and when they heard the still repeated cries from the officers, or rather, from one of them, who seemed to have a throat of iron, of "Stop the highwaymen!—Stop them!—Stop thieves!" they made a dash at the flying party. Tom stooped down to his saddle nearly, and catching the foremost of the men who tried to stop him by the knee, he dismounted him by a sleight-of-hand that appeared quite marvellous.

"Forward!" he shouted.

One man laid his hand upon the reins of Claude's horse, saying as he did so—  
"I'll trouble you to stop, my fine fellow."

"The trouble's a pleasure," said Claude, and with his right hand he grasped the man by the throat with such a vice-like pressure that his face got black. The two horses flew along neck and neck for a few seconds, and then when Claude let the man go, he fell to the ground in a state of insensibility. The other three keepers dashed after the fugitives. The dogs followed them howling and yelping, so that the confusion upon the road, and the dust that was kicked up, was something tremendous, as the rain had not been sufficient to lay it thoroughly. Tom now, who was somewhat in advance, slackened his speed slightly, until the others were abreast of him, and then he said to Claude—

"This won't do, Duval."

"I know it."

"The turning to the left which we must take is close at hand. We must turn and fire."

"Very well.—Jack, get your pistols ready."

"All right."

"Give me one," said Cicely."

"My brave girl!" said Claude, "but—no, no,—you, at least, shall be out of these contests."

"Are you all ready?" said Tom.

"Yes. Yes."

"Then wheel round, and fire low."

Tom, nor Jack, nor Claude, saw Cicely reach out one of her hands and take a pistol from the left-hand holster of Claude's saddle, but she did so. In another moment the three horses faced their foes, instead of dashing from them. Bang! went the four pistols as if they only made up one report. Two of the keepers were hit, and made such a howling that the very dogs were alarmed. One of the horses, too, was wounded and fell. The officers came on like an avalanche, and, unable to stop themselves, they dashed among the dogs. The wounded keepers and the half-maddened wounded horse, who in his struggles occupied nearly all the road, and over the most of them went sprawling man and horse, making such a scrambling and tumult as never was known. The two or three of the officers who were not mixed up in the melee drew off, and one cried aloud—

"For God's sake be off. I won't stir another step after you, Claude Duval. No, not if I live a hundred years."

"Nor I," said another.

"All I want to know," cried a third, "is, who that man or devil is, on the black mare?"

"Ah," said Tom, "would you like to know?"

"We would! we would!"

He lifted off his hat and showed a slightly bald head, and a singularly fine brow, as he said in a clear ringing voice—

"Folks that know me, and can take the liberty, call me DICK TURPIN!"

## CHAPTER CXXXVII.

## A MORNING'S ADVENTURE.

WHAT pen shall picture the consternation of the officers—professional and amateur—to whom this sudden and most unexpected announcement was made; and at the same time we may add, what language would be sufficiently strong to depict the astonishment of Claude Duval and his friend Jack. The vague and undefined rumour that no less a personage than Turpin, who had achieved by that time a reputation only second to Claude's, was in the neighbourhood, had certainly met Claude's ears, but that he had become his travelling companion he certainly had not suspected. Cicely, too, heard the announcement with conflicting feelings, for while she could not but admire the chivalrous spirit in which Dick Turpin had come to the aid of Claude, she feared much that his companionship would only tend to form another link in the chain of those seeming fascinations that held Claude to a career she could not but look upon with horror and loathing. However, that period of the absolute recognition of who and what their new acquaintance was, certainly did not present a favourable opportunity for reflection, as they were still in the greatest danger. Self-preservation was the dominant feeling in all their breasts, now, as they darted madly on.

"Forward! Forward!" cried Claude. "They will be on us soon. Forward!"

"Yes," added Turpin, "it's a case of the devil take the hindmost now. Push on, all of you."

They did not require much pressing to do this, for putting aside every other consideration, Claude would have been cut to the heart if Dick Turpin had been captured while fighting so gallantly for him. They put spurs to their horses, and galloped on like madmen. The officers were recovering from their pains, and a gentleman belonging to the hunting cavalcade, who although too much of a gentleman to join in the pursuit of the highwaymen without any personal provocation, nevertheless spoke his mind fully enough.

"If you are officers of the police," he said, "and let such a chance as the capture of two such men as Claude Duval and Dick Turpin slip through your fingers, you will deserve all the censure that can be heaped upon you."

"But what are we to do, sir?"

"After them!"

"Come on—come on! Oh, hear what this gentleman says, comrades. We must have them."

"Besides," added the gentleman, "they are but men, and their horses are but flesh and blood. If you keep up the chase, and get fresh cattle, as you easily can at every post town you come to, you must run them down at last."

There was sound reason in all this, and the officers, to the number of nine, at once commenced the pursuit again with the viciousness that promised by no means an easy relinquishment of it. The little rest they had had, no doubt did the officers' horses some good, for they went off at a good pace now, and if we may have an opinion, we think that the danger of Claude Duval and his friends was much greater from those nine determined and angry officers than it had been from all the disorderly rabble that had been opposed to them in the Market Place of the old village of Southall. Dick Turpin turned his horse's head when they reached a piece of high ground, and looked wistfully towards the village.

"Yes," he said. "Yes."

"What is it?" said Claude.

"It is as I thought. The boldest of our foes will keep upon our track, and, unencumbered by the others, they will get on much better. Now for a race. Oh, if it was but night."

"Yes," said Claude, "that would indeed befriend us."

"What will become of us?" said Cicely.

"Nothing particular," said Dick. "On—on—on!"



He gave the reins to his beautiful steed and swept onwards like the wind. It was soon to be perceived that the horses of Claude and Jack could not keep up with the pace of Turpin's Black Bess, and Claude in a loud voice called to him—  
 "Don't pull in for us. We owe you many thanks already. Push on, and let us hope that some day we may meet again."

"Woa, Bess. Gently, lass, gently."

He turned and cantered back to the little party.

"What did you say just now about meeting again, Duval?"

"I saw that we were a clog upon your speed, and I begged you to leave us the same time that I expressed a hope that we might meet again."

"Pho! I am never in a hurry to leave good company. Introduce me."

"This, then, is my wife."

Turpin whistled, and looked surprised. He then lifted his hat respectfully to Cicely, and no doubt observing her confusion, he turned to Jack, and said—

"This is—is——"

"Sixteen-string Jack."

"What! Sixteen-string Jack! Oh, another—another."

"No. The only Sixteen-string Jack. The original."

"Who was hanged at Tyburn," added Jack, "Anno Domini seventeen——"

"Stop," said Dick Turpin. "Don't be joking till we get a rest. Come on. Don't you hear the horses' hoofs skurrying the road behind us, as if a lot of mad persons were at work?"

This was not at all an inapt simile as regarded the sounds that came upon the ears of those who were flying for life itself, and although Claude would have wished, even at such a moment as that, to disabuse the mind of Dick Turpin of the idea that they were joking with him, he felt that he was called upon to give all his attention to his horse. They had by no means paused as they carried on the little conversation we have recorded, but yet, as it had proceeded, the speed of the cattle had considerably slackened, and consequently they had some ground to make up again, to place the same distance between them and their pursuers, that had been but a few moments before. For now the space of about a quarter of an hour, they proceeded without exchanging a word, and it was quite evident that Turpin was accommodating the speed of his horse to the powers of the animals bestrode by our friends. But yet the pace at which they all went was highly respectable. They had not got far beyond some cross-roads when a carriage was seen advancing towards them, and at the rate they were going, although the carriage travelled but slowly, they seemed to near it with great speed indeed.

"Business," said Dick Turpin, as he drew rein. "Business, my friends, is business."

"What is it?" said Claude.

"Ride on. I'll overtake you. Times have been bad lately, and I really cannot allow a chance of earning a trifle to go by me. Ride on, I pray you. I will soon be by your side.

Claude dashed onward, and Jack followed him, while Turpin, suddenly wheeling round to the side of the road, took a pistol from his pocket, and without a word, deliberately took aim at the coachman, who began bobbing his head from side to side, as though, by that means, he might puzzle the shot.

"Murder!—murder!" he cried; and then he drew up, and rolled off the box into the road.

The horses began to kick and plunge. Turpin dashed up to them, and in a few moments, with a knife he took from a small sheath in his bosom, cut the traces, and the cattle went off, down the road to Southall, at a gallop. All this was done with such tremendous rapidity, that the occupants of the carriage had not really had time to know that anything was amiss. It was only the cry of "Murder!" from the coachman that let them know he was not paying some toll merely, and then the glass was let down, and a head popped out.

"What's all this?" said the owner of the head, a stout, passionate-looking, elderly man.

"Ah! sir, it's dangerous to do that," said Turpin, as he fired a pistol so close to the enquirer's ear, that the head popped in again with the most frightful rapidity.

"Good God!" said an affected voice, "what is it, uncle? Oh, dear!—oh, dear! is there any danger?"

Turpin was by the window of the carriage in an instant, and placing his hand upon the sill of it, he said, in a calm voice—

"Money, watches, and jewellery, gentlemen, and be quick, if you please, for my time is limited."

"Well, of all the impudence," said the elder gentleman of the two, "of all the impudence that ever I met with, this is the——"

"Yes—yes," said Dick, "we know all that, and you can talk about it at your leisure. Your money, watches, rings, and so on, is all I want at present. Quick—quick."

"But, my dear sir," said the younger of the two, who was dressed in the extreme of fashion. "My dear sir, screw me up if I can understand—aw—aw. You see our property is our property—aw—aw——"

"Then you will have it," said Dick, as he took a pistol from his pocket, and thrust the barrel right into the open mouth of the exquisite, whose complexion immediately turned of a dirty yellow.

"No—no," said the old man. "Here!—here!"

As he spoke, he handed to Dick his purse and his watch.

"Your ring," said Turpin.

"If you must have it you must, but it is a mourning one, and I prize it."

"Keep it, sir."

"Thank you. Richard, give your watch and purse. We might have fallen into worse hands than his."

"A great deal," said Turpin. "You might have gone to law, and been robbed that way, in a protracted manner, and not allowed the privilege of any grumbling, while I rob you off-hand; and when I am gone, or even now, if you like, you may d—n me to your heart's content. Come, Richard, be quick."

Richard, however, was so completely overcome by the pistol having been placed in his mouth, that, although upon the old gentleman so handsomely surrendering at discretion, Dick had immediately withdrawn it, he could only sit shaking and chattering his teeth together like castanets, and positively had not power to take his purse from his pocket, or his watch from his fob. The old gentleman was obliged to take both from him, and hand them to Dick.

"Well, Richard," said Turpin, "I think you will never make a hero; but if you like to recover your own and your uncle's property, I'll fight you for it, if you will get out."

Richard's teeth only chattered together more energetically, and Dick, waving his hand to the old gentleman, said—

"Adieu, sir; you will remember Dick Turpin."

"The devil!" said the old gentleman; "it's you, is it?"

"Exactly," said Dick. "Ah!"

At this moment a turn in the road brought the nine officers in sight, and at the appearance of the carriage and Dick, they raised a loud shout, which he replied by a quiet smile, as he patted the neck of his horse.

"Ah, Bess," he said, "my lass, shall we show them how to do it?"

Even as the words left his mouth, the gallant creature darted forward with a bound that would have speedily unhorsed any less practised rider than he who spoke them, and then off she set, at a speed that made anything in the shape of pursuit look hopeless indeed. The officers reached the carriage, and saw at a glance what had happened. They did not stop to say a word in the way of sympathy to those who were thus robbed, and left in the middle of the road without horses, but plunging on, they still hoped to be enabled in the long run to come down upon the fugitives, who, alive or dead, would be to them the most valuable of prizes. The little episode between Dick Turpin and the occupants

of the carriage, had taken much less time in the reading than it has necessarily taken us to describe; but yet the lapse had been sufficient to enable Claude and Jack to get a long start of Turpin. It has become proverbial with us that "a stern chase is a long chase," and, notwithstanding the astonishing speed at which Dick travelled, and that too upon a good road, it was some time before the sound of his horse's feet came upon the ears of Claude.



THE FLIGHT FROM THE FARM-HOUSE.

"He comes," said Jack. "Do you hear?"

"Yes—yes. Let us draw rein for him. Cicely, how fares it with you?"

"Well. Quite well, Claude, while you are safe."

"Alas! what a life this is for you."

"You are with me, Claude."

He could make no reply to this, but by a slight pressure of her hand, which

said much more than words could have done, and then Dick Turpin rode up to them.

"Well done," he said. "Push on."

"Our foes? Are they close?" said Claude.

"Not very, but there's a gravel-pit near here. I have hidden in it twice, and without looking down it, my pursuers have ridden on, fancying me still upon the upper road."

"Will you chance it again?"

"Yes. If they do see us, we are not much the worse off, for they can only get at us by going round by the road-way, while we can scramble out of the pit by a path I know, and still have a good mile the start of them."

"A mile," said Claude, "is as good as a hundred. Come on."

"There's one good thing, too; about these halts," added Dick. "They give the cattle breathing time. The game of these fellows, who are so hotly after us, will, no doubt, be to get fresh horses, and so run us down in time, but that they cannot do for six miles yet. This way."

"Where are we now?" said Claude, as he kept his horse's head close up to the neck of Black Bess:

"To the left, in Langley Marsh," said Turpin; "but by keeping as we are we shall get on the high road to Maidenhead. If they do baffle us at the gravel pit, we will strike for the Marsh."

"Do you know it?"

"Well."

They now reached a very singular bit of road. It was a cutting by the side of a precipitous kind of bank, upon the top of which the original road had evidently run, but no doubt, on account of its dangerous steepness, the lower road, as it was called, had been formed. Dick Turpin, to the surprise of Claude, took the upper one.

"This way," he said.

Claude and Jack followed him closely, and after proceeding about a hundred yards, he paused and dismounted.

"We must walk the cattle into the pit," he said. "We can easily get out of it mounted, if that is any consolation; but as I have a regard for my neck, considering it is the only one I have, I would rather go down this steep descent with my own feet beneath me than Black Bess's."

They all dismounted now, and Dick Turpin leading the way, while Cicely hung upon Claude's arm, they descended into one of the most singularly romantic places that they had ever beheld. At least, it was new to all but Dick Turpin, and he appeared quite familiar with its intricacies.

## CHAPTER CXXXVIII.

### THE MURDERER'S DEN.

WHEN Dick Turpin had spoken of a gravel pit, Claude had thought that he meant to introduce them into one of those disorderly-looking excavations where stones and sand formed the principal appearances. His surprise, therefore, at being conducted into a little woody glen, full of the most luxuriant vegetation, was great.

"Is this a gravel pit?" he said.

"Yes, an exhausted and long since deserted one," replied Dick Turpin. "I ought to have told you that."

"I am agreeably surprised. Is not this beautiful, Cicely?"

"It is indeed."

"But how comes it," said Jack, "that so much vegetation is to be found in a place that one would have thought a great foe to it?"

"Ah, my friend, is that you?" said Turpin. "Where did you say you were hanged?"

"You think that a jest," said Claude, who saw Jack give a shudder, and well knew how unwelcome a theme that was to him, "but I assure you it is no such thing. This is Sixteen-string Jack. Hanged he was, and then brought to life again by a Jew."

"You surprise me, indeed; and at some more fitting time, I should like much to know all the particulars. At present we have too much upon our hands to attend to anything that does not press."

"True—true."

Dick Turpin, with the look of one perfectly well acquainted with the place in which he was, led the way, and in the course of about three minutes, they were all at the lowest depth of the old deserted gravel-pit.

The rank and vile vegetation at the bottom of the pit was high enough to reach the girths of the horses, and here and there the animals smelt out a mouthful of sweet young grass, which they eagerly devoured, as no doubt it was deliciously cooling to their mouths.

"We can get no further," said Dick, "without ascending, and that we don't want to do yet."

"Certainly not. Then this place has not been worked for a long time?"

"Not for sixty years. It was only a vein of gravel, and was soon used up. The excavation was then left. Rains and winds germinated and scattered seeds into it, and now you see it is quite a little wood, and any one not accustomed to it would find no small difficulty in threading its many winding intricate paths."

"Not a doubt but they would."

"Moreover, here and there, there are deep holes, which have been carelessly left, and at the bottom of which there is in all weathers and seasons water, and into which any unwary explorer might fall with but a poor chance of getting out again."

"Hush!" said Jack.

"What is it?"—

"They come."

"Ah! so they do indeed," said Dick Turpin, after listening for a few moments; "now absolute silence is requisite, for any sound from below here goes up the sides of the excavation, and is heard more clearly above than below."

The hard gallop of the approaching officers now came plainly upon the ears of the little party. Not a word was spoken. The caution of Dick Turpin was by no means thrown away, for whatever risks they might have felt disposed to run themselves, they had certainly no right in the world to tamper with his safety."

"The attention of them all was strictly directed to listening if the horsemen stopped, or continued proceeding at their maddening pace upon the lower road. On, on they came, and the gallop of nine horses made no inconsiderable tumult. On—yes—on—on. They pass—no—they pause—a loud voice cries "halt."

"D—n them!" muttered Dick.

Claude spoke not a word.

"Halt!" again said the loud voice.

The horsemen paused. No longer could the sound of the fierce gallop be heard, but distinctly the laborious breathing of the horses came upon the ears of our adventurers, even so distant as they were from the road where the officers paused.

"I don't hear them," they heard a voice say. Then another, "Not so loud, Griffiths,—if walls have ears, holes and corners in woods may likewise."

After this the consultation of the officers was carried on in a tone of voice which forbade the slightest word of it from reaching the ears of those in the gravel pit, who would have certainly been better pleased to have heard the widdle of it. Dick Turpin placed his mouth close to Claude's ear as he said—

"Duval, this has been tried once too often."

"What? What?"

"Hiding here. They have been thrown off the scent before at this spot, and do you know it strikes me forcibly we shall have a run for it yet."

"I am sorry we kept not the road then."

"Hush, man, hush, you speak an octave too high ; whisper as low as you can. If we could have got the cattle to lie down it would have been better.—Bess will do it at a word, but it is too late now, much too late."

"What is to be done then ?"

"We must wait a little. We shall soon find what they are about. If they come down here—why, their fate be upon their own heads ; but if they fire upon us from above, I, for one, will not be made an animated target of."

"Nor I."

"Then we must make a rush for it. Keep your party ready to mount at a moment's notice."

"I will."

Bang ! went a pistol shot, and a rushing sound amid the branches of an alder-tree, close at hand, attested that the shot had come pretty near to the place of concealment of our party. Claude shifted his position so as completely to shield Cicely from any chance shot, and then he felt more satisfied. Claude was too intent upon shielding Cicely to notice that Jack took up a very similar position as regarded himself.

"Don't speak," again whispered Turpin. "They may not have seen us yet. We can be no judges down here of what sort of obstructions may be in the way of their seeing clearly into this dark excavation. The bough of a tree may screen us."

Claude and Jack both felt the truth of this, and were perfectly still as statues. Cicely trembled. In the course of a few moments another sharp crack proclaimed that a pistol shot was among them ; but this time it did not come so near as before. They all breathed more freely.

"It's nonsense," they heard a voice say. "Come on."

"Nonsense or not nonsense I am going no farther," said some one in reply.

"No farther ?"

"Not an inch. If you think you can find, and when found catch, you can do it. I am not in condition to go further, nor my horse either. Don't you hear him blowing ?"

"Who ?"

"My horse, stupid."

The conversation ceased abruptly at this point ; and Turpin once more inclining to Claude's ear, whispered,—

"Do you think that little conversation was genuine, or only intended to deceive us,—possibly to our destruction ?"

"I can hardly say."

"Nor I. I am in doubt. Let us listen for more."

Scarcely had he done speaking, when one of the previous voices again broke the silence, and the following conversation took place—

"And so you think it of no use to go further in the chase ?"

"Not a bit ; it's all gammon. They are off and far by this time ; at all events, I look upon it that there's an end to the whole matter."

"What will you do then ?"

"Go back to the 'George' at Sout'wall, and order a good dinner."

"Well, that ain't a bad idea. What say you all, gents, to it. Shall it be as Jones says, or shall we go on putting our heads into danger in looking after fellows who would just as soon put a bullet into us as eat a sandwich."

"Oh, let's be off," said a chorus of voices. "We have had quite enough of it. Better luck next time, that's all."

"Come along, then."

Apparently, off they all went at a trot, and while the sound of the horses' feet was still upon the air, Cicely spoke, saying—

"Oh, what a mercy this is."

Turpin shook his head.

"I don't mean to say that it is not a mercy, because that's all as it turns out ; but if any of you here imagine those fellows are gone, in my humble judgment you will make a great mistake."

"That is my opinion likewise," said Claude. "The attempt to hoodwink us was too transparent. But we may talk a little freely, for they are with their horses."

"Nay, we cannot be too cautious," said Turpin. "Do you think it unlikely that they have left one of their number to listen if any sound should come up from this place?"

This was a supposition which was too natural not to place a restraint upon every tongue. Claude and Turpin only continued to converse in very cautious whispers.

"And so," said the former, "you think they suspect we are here?"

"I think they know it."

"What do you advise, then?"

"Simply, that at present we remain where we are. I think, for the purpose of deceiving us, they will leave their horses some hundred yards or so away and come themselves on foot ; if so, we shall have a good advantage, for we can take to our steeds at any time, and be off."

"Confound them."

"Exactly, and if my pistols don't misfire—a thing they are not in the habit of doing—I will effectually confound some of them."

"I regret, though, that you should be much exposed to danger upon our account. There is no reward for you."

"Yes, but there will be some day. Come, come, Duval, unless such men as you and I make common cause when we do chance to meet, the Philistines will be too strong for us. If your young wife was in some place of safety, there would be no better fun going there for you, and I, and Jack; for Jack, you say, he is to cope with these fellows above."

"Alas, yes," said Claude, "I would give all the world were it mine to dispose of it, if I could feel that she was, as you say, safe."

"Never mind. I will go and reconnoitre the enemy. Just be as still as you can until I come back."

"Shall I hold your horse?"

"No, thank you. Let her be. Bess, lass, Bess."

Dick Turpin placed his hand upon the shoulder of Black Bess, and gradually pressing upon it, the animal yielded and lay quietly down upon the little grassy spot where they were all standing.

"She will not stir until my return," said Dick; "I won't be long gone, you may depend."

Cautiously, now he crept away from them, stooping so low that he was quite hidden by the tall brushwood that grew in such profusion and luxuriance at the bottom of the excavation.

"Oh, Claude, what will happen to you?" said Cicely.

"Nothing, dear one, nothing."

"Yes, but——"

"Nay, while you thus torment yourself with fears, you withdraw my attention from the means of safety. Hush!—what is that?"

"Only me," said Turpin.

"So soon returned?"

"Yes, the vagabonds are slipping quietly down into the excavation like Indians one after the other. We shall have something to do with them yet, I think. The fools, we fight for our lives, they only for money. Ha! ha!"

## CHAPTER CXXXIX.

## THE CITY MILITIA.

THE state of affairs were getting serious.

"Do you mean that they will actually venture to attack us?" whispered Claude to Turpin.

"Ay, do I, and from what I can hear, they have got something in the shape of a reinforcement, for there are two men with them, whom they address as gentleman of the city militia."

"The city militia?"

"Yes; but I don't think we need put ourselves much out of the way concerning them, for I never yet heard that they were any very redoubtable warriors. I think, however, with all deference to you, Duval, as I know the locality hereabouts perfectly, you should give me over the full command of our party."

"Take it in the name of all that's fortunate," said Claude; "you may depend upon our following your directions in all things."

"Very good. Then you will remember that there are eleven men after us, and we are but three."

"Four to fight," said Cicely. "It is little that I can perhaps do, but that little I feel myself called upon to do by every principle of sound justice."

"Good," added Turpin; "mount then all of you, but take care to stoop so low down in your saddles, that your heads are not higher than those of your horses. I am convinced by the manner of our foes, that in consequence of some intervening obstacles, most probably some boughs of trees, they cannot see us at present, and if we rise no higher than the cattle stand, we shall still preserve the same sort of advantage."

While Claude assisted Cicely to mount again, and whispered to her to be sure to stoop low in the saddle, Turpin spoke to his mare, saying—

"Now, Bess, up and stirring, lass."

As he said these words, he placed his hand again upon the creature, and it got up from the ground so softly and with such an amount of positive caution, that it was really difficult to suppose that the sagacious animal did not bring to bear upon the occasion an amount of reflection that was quite out of the question. It is difficult to say, though, where instinct and memory end, and mind begins.

"All right," whispered Turpin.

"Yes—yes."

"Then get your pistols ready; and when I say 'Fire!' take care that you do so, and fire low."

"We will.—Can you see the foe?" asked Claude.

"No. But hark!"

Claude listened intently; and he heard a crackling sound as if some dry fern was being broken up. It was the beat of the officer upon the grass and decayed leaves that strewed the pathway. They were looking to the capture, as they thought, of Claude Duval and his new ally, the well known Dick Turpin.

"Understand me," whispered Dick Turpin. "Keep your horses' heads to the right here; and the moment you have fired your pistols, give them the spur and the rein, and follow me."

"We will—we will."

It was really an anxious moment now, for none of the fugitives could exactly calculate either upon the mode of attack or the amount of valour and determination which would be brought to bear upon the affair by the officers, and likewise the two men mentioned as members of the City Militia, might be men of courage. It did not follow to the mind of Claude, that every soldier East of Temple Bar must be a Major Sturgeon. Duval could feel that Cicely trembled.

"Dear one," he said, "it is for you and you only that I feel deeply anxious.



Let me implore you, if anything should happen of me, to go to London at once, and find out Mark Brereton and May, and throw yourself upon their protection."

"No more, no more, Claude. Say no more in such a strain. I cannot, dare not, think of such contingences. You must not ask me to do so."

"But, Cicely——"

'No—no—no, I can truly say in answer to you,

"That way madness lies!"

I implore you to say no more, Claude."

Duval was silent; but if anything could have nerved him to throw aside all feelings of hesitation, in opposing those who came against him, or regret for the necessity, perhaps, of taking their lives, it certainly was the conviction that if he fell Cicely would be something worse than desolate. He closed his lips firmly, mumbling to himself—

"Let them come: it is their own selection."

And so, indeed, it was. If those officers sought, in a manner of speaking, to coin the blood of Claude Duval into gold, they had no right to expect that he should spare them, while they attempted to carry into effect such a process. But all time for reflection had now passed away.

"Steady!" said Turpin, in a low voice.

"Surrender in the king's name, or we will fire upon you!" cried one of the officers.

Probably they were alarmed at the profound stillness in that place, which they knew to be peopled by foes. No answer was returned. Turpin, from between his clenched teeth, uttered a low "Hush!"

"Once more, before we fire upon you," cried the voice again, "we call upon you to surrender! You must be killed if you are foolish enough to resist! Claude Duval, the game is up!"

"Fire low!" said Turpin.

Bang! went the pistols, as if all the triggers had been pulled by one finger, so simultaneous was the report. A shriek of pain mingled with the sound, and in another moment, obeying the furious injunctions of Turpin, they all darted to the right; but no sooner had they done so than a rattling discharge of pistols from the officers right into the spot they had occupied, convinced them how necessary it had been to leave it.

"Back again! cried Turpin. "Turn—turn! Back again!"

He was quickly obeyed; and then, in a voice that rang loud and clear in the pit, he shouted—

"Forward!"

They dashed after him. The route which Dick Turpin took might well have appaled any one who for the first time looked upon it; for, to all appearance, it seemed as if he had an intention of clambering right up the face of the excavation. Now as that was, at the very least, some 200 feet in depth, any one might well be excused for looking upon it with a feeling of dismay. But, as the reader may suppose, Turpin knew better what he was about than to make any such wild attempt. The fact was, that there had existed an old cart track, by which the ground had been brought from the lowest part of the pit to the surface, and although that cart track had become very much grown over by weeds, yet it was there, and it was in pursuit of its windings that Turpin went. By keeping a light hand upon the near rein of his steed, there was little danger of its slipping off the road-way. If it had, instant destruction must have been the consequence; for nothing could have saved a fall to the very bottom of the pit. The speed, too, at which they went, was something in their favour; for it prevented the cattle from looking at their own perilous position; and so pursuing the zig-zag and circuitous route of this long disused road, our party slowly worked its way towards the mouth of the deep excavation. Now, the officers were in what, in their own parlance, they would have called rather a fix. Two of their number had been killed outright by the pistol shots, and one was wounded. They saw their prey escaping,

and there they were in a gravel-pit without horses, by the aid of which to follow upon their track, if they could have, after what had happened, summoned courage enough with a reduced force to do so. The two military men backed out of the fray. They were both as pale as death; and one of them said—

“We have given all the time we can to the affair, and must go now.”

“Afraid by G—!” exclaimed one of the officers.

To this taunt the military men made no reply, but turning round, scrambled back again as quickly as they possibly could from the gravel-pit, with a profound hope of finding their horses, and being of an equally profound determination never again to interfere with highwaymen at bay.

“We have only one chance,” cried the boldest of the officers.

“And what’s that?” said another.

“Why to take up as good a position as we can here, and blaze away upon them. Who knows but we may hit our men yet, before they get out of the pit?”

This was certainly the very best thing for the accomplishment of their purpose that they could do; and as the others naturally fell into the opinion of him who chose, at such a moment, to take the lead, they all scrambled on to a little height, from which they could command a tolerable view of the fugitives amid the brush-wood, and commenced firing upon them. Six men, none of whom were at all disabled, could manage to keep up a tolerably brisk fire with a pair of pistols each; and it was only a wonder that our friends did not suffer immediately from the discharge. Those who are acquainted with pistol shooting, however, know how many trivial circumstances and accidents will be sufficient, at any time, to prevent the success of a shot, especially in a strange place, and when the objects fired at are in motion. Each of the officers had fired twice, and yet there were the horsemen gaining rapidly the mouth of the excavation.

“Confound them!” cried he who had taken the lead. “Can we not hit horse or man?”

“It seems not,” said another.

“Fire away! We can but try. Ah! there they are! By George they will give us the slip! Now is not that provoking?”

Even as he spoke, Dick Turpin, with his Black Bess, made one vigorous dash, and reached the summit of the excavation.

“Hurrah!” he cried. “Come on.”

The officers could hear the cheer.

“Fire upon him! Blaze away at the one on the top! There can’t be a better mark! D—n the fellow! has he sold himself to the devil for the privilege of being shot-proof?”

Dick Turpin was sufficiently in advance of his friends that, as he stood upon the brink of the chasm, playing to them the part of a guide-post, the whole of the officers had a shot at him, and the whole of them missed him.

“Now what a set of rascals,” he ejaculated, “to go blazing away at a man in that way! Why, Bess, if they had hit you, I’d go down among them, and sell my life for three or four of their’s!”

As he spoke, he took from a pocket that would only just hold it, a particularly long-barrelled pistol. He fixed his eyes upon the officer who had taken the lead among his comrades.

“So,” added Turpin, as he took deliberate aim at him, “you have fired at me twice, and you are, I suppose, what is called an active and enterprising officer. I will see if I cannot put an end to your activity and enterprise, my fine fellow.”

In another moment he fired. A cry reached his ears, and the officer was gone. The bullet had hit him in the chest, and he had fallen to the ground among the brushwood.

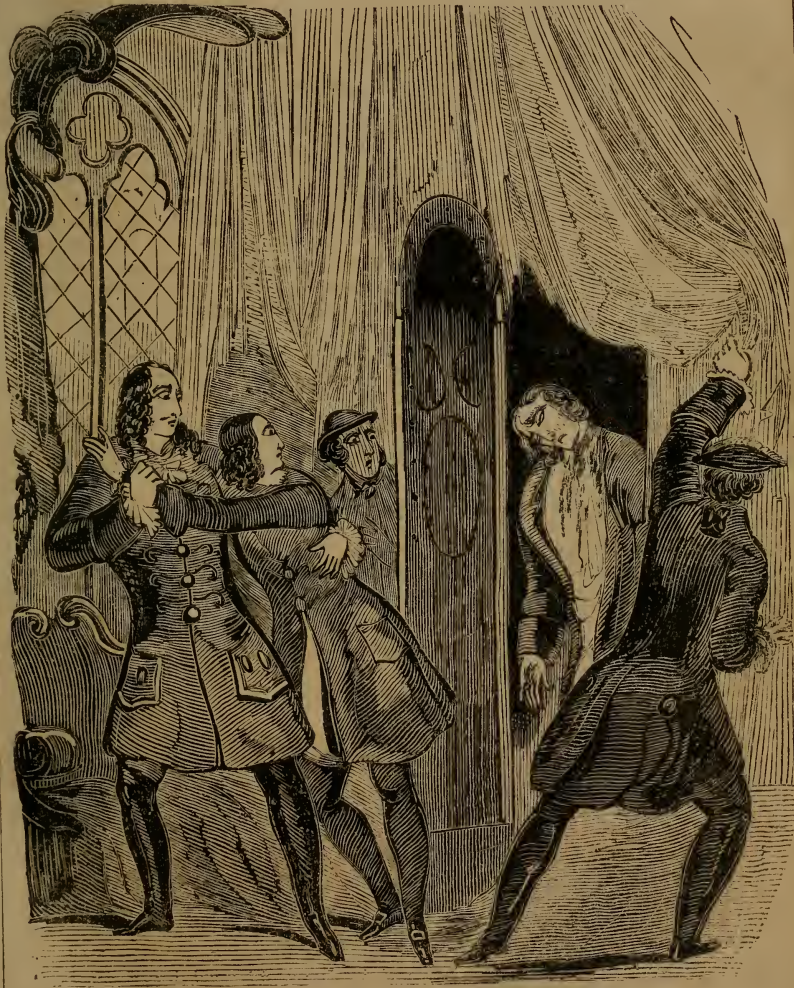
“Done at last!” he said. “Oh God!”

The others suspended the firing to look at him, as he lay there with such a look of horror upon his face, that for some few minutes they were struck dumb with horror

"Come away, there," said one, slightly recovering sufficiently to speak. "Oh, come away! This won't do!"

The dying man tossed his arms about, and spoke something that was quite inarticulate.

"Are you very bad, Mouldy?" gasped one.



JACK DISCOVERING THE MURDERED CORPSE IN BEDELLA HOUSE.

He tried to speak again, and the blood oozed from his mouth—flowing down his breast in an ensanguined stream. He seemed to be struggling to rise, and they thought they had better hold his head up a little, for fear he should be choked. His face was awful to look upon, and he who held him up partially shook, so that the dying man's agony was much increased thereby, if his life was protracted.

"Are you better?" said one.

"Oh God, no! There they come! There—there!"

"Where?"

"Don't you see? All with the ropes round their necks! Oh, it is too horrible!"

"Why, he is raving!"

"Hush!—hush! Down with the old man! Don't let that child escape!—There! Now—now! One smash! There go its brains! Tell?—who can tell? This will come upon me when I die, do you say? Ha!—ha! No—no—no!"

The dying man fought the air with his hands for a few moments, and then a gulph of blood come from his mouth, and his head fell forward upon his chest as though his neck had been suddenly broken. The officer was dead! No wonder his companions looked on with horror-struck wonder. No effort was made to stay the rapidly retreating fugitives. All spirit had gone from the hearts of the remaining officers, and with their dead, they remained in the gravel-pit, looking at each other with consternation upon every countenance. Surely the affair had turned out to be a very different one to what they had projected it should be. But not for long was this state of total inaction to continue with them. It so happened that the "gentlemen of the hunt," had by this time started a fox, and had got round to the meadows in the immediate neighbourhood of the gravel-pit. There they lost the scent, for the fox took refuge in some secret covert, close to the pit; and the horsemen, some fourteen or fifteen in number, who had, with the utmost enthusiasm followed the dogs, assembled to consult about what was best to be done next, close to where the officers had left their horses. They had hardly had time to make a remark to each other about their disappointment, when the two members of the City Light-Horse arrived, and hastily mounting their horses, cried—

"Oh, gentlemen, there's a horrid murder taking place in the gravel-pit, down yonder."

Then, without waiting for a word in reply, they darted off as hard as they could to town.

"What is the meaning of all this, gentlemen?" said one of the "hunt." "Let us trot on and inquire. If we have lost the fox, we may find some other game."

"I'll be bound," said another, "that it's those highwaymen we saw at Southall."

## CHAPTER CXL.

### THE LONE HUT.

DICK saw that he was recognised by the "gentlemen of the hunt," and lifting his hat a little from his head, he cried in a voice that was quite loud enough to go across the pit—

"Hark away, gentleman! If you are inclined for a race, come on. We have not a bit more the start of you than we mean to keep.—Tally-ho!"

He only paused long enough to see that his taunt had had the effect of inducing the huntsmen to come after him, and then turning to Claude, he said—

"They are not upon our track, but a stern chase is indeed a long one; so let them come. Now for it—off and away, at once, for we must throw away no chances."

"But they are quite close to us," said Cicely.

"In appearance yes, but not in reality."

"How so?"

"Why, we are upon one side of the gravel-pit, and they are upon the other. It is three quarters of a mile's ride to get round to this spot; and although it is not the odd quarter to come through the pit, I'll warrant, if they try that game, it will take them longer than it would to come round."

"Yes," said Claude, "we have as fair a start of them as we could desire. Calm yourself, Cicely, there is nothing to fear now, nor do I think there will be."

"You are right," said Duval; "all we have to do is to push on until we reach some shelter, and then double upon our foes."

"Can we do so on this road?"

"Yes, easily. Ah! what is that?—Woa, Bess!—Woa, mare!"

A brilliant flash of lightning had suddenly lit up the whole scene with such a lurid glare that, passing, as it seemed to do, immediately before the faces of the horses, it alarmed them all; and it was some few moments even before Turpin could succeed in calming the terror of his exquisitely trained steed.

"A storm," said Claude, as he looked up.

"Yes, it's coming."

"But where's the thunder?" said Jack.

The inquiry had scarcely passed the lips of Jack, when the thunder came with such a startling explosion that it seemed as though a hundred field-pieces had been discharged at once in mid air.

"That is terrible," said Cicely.

The horses swerved and shook; but by voice and hand their riders strove to console and manage them so that they galloped on through the now rapidly darkening air, as though they had wings.

"Our friends in scarlet," said Dick, "will get a wetting, which, I think, will cool their courage a little."

"It ought to do so," said Claude. "Ah! there it is again! What a flash that was."

The forked lightning had seemed now to pass exactly between them and some trees that were by the road-side; but such could either not have been its exact direction, or it must have swerved with wonderful velocity, for a loud crash, as though the very vault of heaven was rent assunder, succeeded, and an immense elm tree fell across the road, rent and shattered from its topmost branch to the very roots by the formidable fluid.

"Hold in! hold in!" said Claude, "till the thunder is over. It is coming now."

Mechanically they obeyed him; and it was well they did so, for what with the tremendous reverberations of the thunder, and the alarm previously occasioned by the lightning and the fall of the trees, the horses were beginning to be unmanageable. Claude's steed reared; and it was quite as much as he could do by dint of coaxing and main strength to keep the creature from tearing off at a wild mad gallop.

"Humph!" said Dick; "we are in for it now, I rather think."

"We are, indeed.—What shall we do?"

Pat! pat! came some large drops of rain.

"We shall get drenched," added Turpin. "Let us get into the meadows, and see if we can find a house."

"But, our persuaders?"

"Oh, you need think nothing of them, I fancy. You may take your oath they have all turned tail upon the storm, and are off to Southall, just as hard as they can put hoof to ground. What should they see in us that they should spoil their Jim-crack hunting finery in coming after us? Ah, here is a gap in the hedge. Come on, and let us trust to fortune for a shelter, somewhere."

The gap in the hedge, to which Dick Turpin alluded, was only just large enough to allow one horse to pass through it at a time; and then they all found themselves in a delightful, soft, and verdant meadow, skirting the road-side.

"Follow me," said Dick, "I see something like a homestead right out some distance."

Another flash of lightning, certainly not so brilliant as the former, and followed by a roar of thunder, that convinced Claude the storm was nearly overhead, accelerated their movements, for the natural result of this contention of the elements would be sure to be a fall of rain, that in Cicely's delicate state might do her

much injury. As they proceeded across the meadow, Claude spoke to her in a low voice—

“Cicely, this is, indeed, hard fortune for you ; but cheer up, dearest, and all shall yet be well.”

A mute—but, oh ! how eloquent—pressure of the hand was the only response. That slight touch was sufficient for Claude. It was such things that spoke to his heart, and told him how much he was beloved.

“Ah !” cried Turpin, suddenly, “I see the chimney pots.”

“Where—where ?” cried Claude.

Turpin drew up, and pointed in the direction of a clump of trees, at about a couple of hundred yards distance ; and there, sure enough, Claude saw some giant-looking, ornamental chimney-pots, lifting up their heads against the darkening sky.

“Alas !” said Cicely, who likewise saw them, “some lonely cottage would be a much more likely place in which we should find some shelter, than in such a home as, probably, lies imbosomed among those trees. What think you, Claude ?”

“I think with you, Cicely, that we shall find no welcome there.”

“We can but reconnoitre the place,” said Dick. “Do you know, it strikes me, that these chimney-pots belongs to Bedella House.”

“And what is that ?”

“A deserted mansion, supposed to be haunted. They say no one has slept a night in it since Queen Elizabeth ruled in England. But that to me is a very doubtful proposition, indeed.”

“It will afford us a shelter, if one can gain admittance,” said Claude, “against the weather, I suppose.”

“Certainly it will. Let us push on for it. I see we shall have to cross another meadow. I hope we shall find a gap in the hedge, or a gate, for our cattle, I don’t think, are in any humour for jumping just now, whatever they may be for a sharp run.”

They reached the confines of the first meadow from the high road, and it was only, after skirting the hedge for some distance, that they come to a small gate, made for the convenience of cattle, through which they passed. And now the rain, that had been, as it were, only threatening, began in a very unequivocal manner to descend. The worst of the storm clouds had, certainly, not broken over the spot upon which our adventurers were ; but at times there would come such a dash of water against them, that it would really seem as if some one had deliberately cast it in their faces. Cicely shrunk closer to Claude.

“This is pleasant, indeed,” said Dick Turpin, “and the worst of it is, it don’t at all seem inclined to get any better. Come on, we can but try our luck at the old mansion. A roof over one’s head, will be something to-day to boast of.”

“It will indeed,” said Claude.

They had passed through the small cattle gate, into the second meadow ; and as it was made narrower than the last, and they had but to cross it at its least dimensions, they soon reached an iron hurdle fence, which separated the actual grounds of the old house from the meadows. Jack dismounted, and quickly removed a couple of the hurdles, so that the horses could pass through with ease ; and then upon all sides they could see what had once been high culture, and abundant evidences of a carefully kept place. To be sure, the gravelled pathway was now almost completely overgrown by tall weeds, but still its ruinous course could be plainly enough traced ; and some flower-roots that had grown wild and gigantic—losing much of their beauty, while they gained so much strength and freedom—looked strange and new to the eyes of our friends.

“This way, I think,” said Claude.

“Yes, you are right,” said Dick. “That leads evidently to the house. Ah, more thunder ; did any one see the lightning ?”

No one had ; and from the character of the thunder it would seem as if the

storm was going off in an easterly direction. The rain, however, although it still pursued its fiful varying character, became more annoying each moment.

"What a strange old pile," said Claude, as they advanced a few yards further; and suddenly upon rounding some laurel bushes of most luxuriant growth, come in front of the house.

Cicely thought it beautiful. That it was of the Elizabethan order of architecture could be seen, and that was all; for the whole face of the building, without exception, was completely overgrown by ivy. The windows were blocked up by the beautiful creepers, the doors were covered over, and it was only some few of the chimney pots that had escaped being covered. From want of care, too, hundreds of young green shoots of the ivy stood out from the house, waving about like so many green arms, that might be supposed to be either welcoming or warning off a visitor, as the fancy of those that looked at them might choose to dictate.

"Well," said Jack, "I think this is worth coming to see."

"And so do I," said Cicely.

"It is curious enough," said Turpin; "but now let us try if any one lives here, which I fancy, after all the show of its desertion, must be the case."

He hit heavily with his riding-whip upon the sill of one of the windows of the house; echo alone returned any answer to his blows. The darkness now was, for the time of day, something absolutely appalling; and the birds flew scanning by with terror, sufficiently manifest by the irregular manner of their flight. The horse's snorted and pawed the ground with an impatient restlessness, while a strange moaning sound, from some gathering gale of wind, seldom heard upon shore, come mournfully and fitfully upon the ears of the little party, who stood apparently so fair a chance of being exposed to the

"Pelting of the pitiless storm,"

as shelter was denied them.

"I won't stand this," said Jack.

"Nor I," said Claude. "I will force an entrance."

"Ah, here is an old knocker," said Turpin. "By the lord they shall think a dozen London postmen are at the door."

The hard knocking of Turpin produced no effect whatever; although he repeated it twice.

"Well," said Claude, "what is to be done now?"

"I can hardly tell," replied Dick, "unless we can manage by our united force to break in one of the doors."

"I think we may do better than that," said Jack. "Skill to overcome an obstacle, I take it, is always better than force; and I have the means of opening, I am quite certain, some one door of this house, provided no one is within."

"Indeed. What makes you say some one door?"

"Why, whoever last left the house, may have bolted every door but the one he left by. That he must only have locked, and I have tools with me that no lock ever resisted yet."

"I," said Dick, "you are right. Now I should hardly have thought of that. But, come Master Jack, if you can make us free of Bedella House, do so as quickly as you can, or we shall be drenched in the rain, which you cannot fail to perceive is thickening each moment."

"Indeed," said Claude, "it is, now, no despicable kind of shower."

## CHAPTER CXLI.

### SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

CLAUDE was right enough as regarded the rain, for it began to come down with that perpendicularity which is incidental to the discharge of the contents of storm clouds. Jack, with a picklock in his hand that he knew well the use of, took his

way to what appeared to be the principal door of the house, thinking that such was the most likely one of which the persons last occupying had left.

"Ah, that will do," cried Dick. "We shall get shelter now."

"No," said Jack, as he tried the lock, "no—yes—stop, yes.—It yields. It is only rusty, I suppose from long disuse, that is all. There it goes; now if this has been the last door opened, there are no bolts to it."

As he spoke he gave a push to the door, but although it was evidently not made fast by any legitimate means, something impeded its opening; and then, before Jack could make a surmise upon the subject, a gruff and somewhat surly voice, cried—

"What's the row now? Who's there?"

"Hilloa!" cried Dick, "we have roused up somebody at last. Push it open, Jack. Push it open."

"Help me!"

Dick sprung at the door, and his strength united to Jack's forced the door open, to the distrait of a hulking ill-looking fellow in the hall, who had been striving to hold it shut, and who was fairly thrown down in the violence with which it was forced open.

"What do you mean by this?" he cried.

"Just what you see, my friend," said Dick.

"But this is not the way to come into an honest man's house, confound you all."

"If it be an honest man's house," replied Dick, "it cannot be your's, so you have no cause for grumbling, for if nature took the trouble, my friend, to write rogue on any one's face, she did upon your's. But, I suppose, you have been told that before, and if so, I beg to apologise for mentioning it to you."

The fellow who was dressed in a half-gamekeeper, half-ploughman sort of style, looked perfectly aghast at these words, as though in all his life no one had dared to be so impertinent to him.

"Come in—come in," cried Dick; "it's all right. Come in."

"Is it all right?" said the man.

"Yes, my friend. Quite so."

"Don't you make too sure of that."

The fellow advanced before Dick and barred the way, showing a frame of Herculean proportions, and a countenance of the most savage ferocity.

"I never say anything is all right," said Turpin, "unless I mean it; and now, bully, get out of the way."

"I won't."

"You won't?"

"I told you so; and if you don't be off, I'll soon make you."

Dick retreated a step; but it was only to get the fellow out from the doorway, and it had the effect, for the man supposing he had produced some effect from his threats, followed him closely and raised his arm. Dick, with a spring, closed upon him.

"Oh, that's it," said the fellow. "You want a fall, do you?"

"I have no objection if you can give me one."

"Haven't you? then look to your neck."

"Keep off, Claude," cried Dick, as he saw Duval was about to interfere; "keep off. Let him alone. I can manage. Get inside all of you out of the rain. I'll come directly."

"Will you? Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the brutal fellow, as he clasped Dick in his arms. "Ha! ha! That's a hug!"

"Is it?" said Dick; "and that's a fall."

In an instant the fellow's legs flew up from under him, and he fell upon his head with a violence that left him insensible upon the ground for a few moments.

"Ah!" said Dick, as he shook himself and drew a long breath; "I thought that I could show you a dodge in wrestling, unless you had been to a better school than was likely to have had you for a pupil."



During the time of this brief contest, our friends had all taken refuge in the hall of the house, and then Dick joined them. The discomfited bully rose to a sitting posture and rubbed his head. He uttered some awful oaths.

"Silence!" cried Dick. "I won't have any swearing here."

The fellow was silent. He seemed to have a thorough dread of Dick, and slowly rising, he staggered into the hall, saying—

"If it's shelter you want, I haven't got no objection. Come in."

"Thank you for nothing," said Dick; "we are in."

"I always wishes to make everybody comfortable," added the fellow; "I am sure, that I do."

"Oh, you are disposed to be civil now, are you? If you had taken the same thought some time ago, you would have spared making that hole in the gravel there, outside the door, with your thick head."

"Oh master, let by-gones be by-gones," said the fellow, with a rough attempt at good humour, which sat most awkwardly upon him; "I don't bear any malice."

"Very well," said Dick. "Light us a fire then somewhere, and we will pay you for your trouble."

"This way master. I lives here, and takes care of the old house. I've got a bit of a fire here in one of the rooms. This way, master, if you please. This way—this way—to the small parlour—a-hem!"

The man brawled out these words so loud that Dick, said to him—

"What are you making all that noise about? We are none of us destitute of the sense of hearing, thank God."

"Did I speak loud, master?"

"Did you? To be sure you did."

"Ah, it's only one of my little funny ways, master, that's all. If you comes to know me, I'm full on 'em."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, master. This way if you pleases."

Claude took the opportunity of the fellow being a little in advance to wisper quietly to Dick Turpin.

"We had better be fully upon our guard with this fellow. I am quite convinced that he has confederates in the house, and that his loud talking was merely to give them a hint to keep out of the way while we went to the room he speaks of."

"I am of the same opinion."

"I thought you would be. Let us be careful."

"Yes, and keep close together."

The man suddenly turned, and said—

"You will excuse my being all of a muddle here, gentlemen, as I live all by myself, you see; and there ain't no woman folks in the place to put it a bit to rights, you see. This is the room, master, if you please."

He called Dick master, and evidently stood in fear of him since the heavy fall he had had from Dick's superiority in the art of wrestling, in which skill is so superior to mere brute strength, for as regards the latter, the man could have eaten Dick up. They all followed him across a long hall, and though two empty rooms, and then down six steps into a small apartment that at one time had been a sort of waiting-room. There was no grate in the place usually so filled, but upon the hearth a wood fire was slowly burning. The smell of tobacco was powerful in the room. As regards furniture, there stood in the centre of the apartment a table which, from its shape, had evidently at one time been fixed to a wall, and in its best days had been, too, rather a gorgeous piece of furniture, for the legs of it were carved and gilt. Some chairs of all sorts and sizes, from the low *prie-Dieu* to the large old fashioned arm-chair were there likewise, and they completed the furnishing of the room, for upon the floor there was nothing in the shape of a carpet.

"Sit down, and rest yourself," said the fellow. "There's plenty of seats, you see, master."

"Yes," said Dick, "and of all sorts. I suppose these come from some of the other rooms of the house?"

"Oh, yes, master, there's no end of old traps in the place."

"Indeed. Is it furnished then?"

"Why, you may say it is, master."

"Who owns it?"

"The lawyer, old Griffiths, is the only one as I sees. He gives me, you see, a trifle to look after it, and keep the doors and windows shut."

"And you live here all alone?"

"Oh yes, master, all alone. I wander about a little, and looks after the garden, and so on; but as you say, master, I lives here all alone."

"A solitary sort of life."

"Oh, very, master, very. Would you like to take anything just to keep the damp out, master?"

"No," said Claude, quickly.

The fellow looked at him as though he would have said—"I did not ask you," but he suppressed the inclination to be uncivil, and merely added—

"Perhaps you will, master, though, for all that."

"No," said Dick. "I don't drink anything before dinner. We will only wait till the rain has gone off a little, and then push on. You are sure you tied up the horses inside that porch, Jack?"

"Oh, yes," said Jack, "they are safe enough, and under cover, too. I think we had better go now. I don't hear the rain."

"Let us listen."

"I'll go and look out and see how the weather is," said the man.

Before they could have said a word in objection, the fellow left the room, and they heard him walking very quickly away.

"Dick, I don't like this place," said Claude. "Let us get out of it as soon as we possibly can. The rain without is better than danger within."

"I am of your opinion," said Turpin. "I feel as certain as I am of my own existence, that you fellow is a scoundrel of the first-water. Ah! what's that?"

The door of the room was suddenly slammed, but it did not close perfectly. Some one uttered an imprecation on the outside, and when Dick Turpin and Claude both rose and made towards the door, they distinctly heard footsteps running from it at a hard rate.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Claude.

"Why," said Jack, "it just means that we should have been shut in here, if I had not, as we first came into the room, slipped the little bolt at the under part of the lock out. That, as you see, prevented the door from going close, and he who came to shut it was in too great a hurry to stay to see what the obstruction was."

"Confound his impudence," said Dick.

"Look to your pistols," cried Claude.

"Ay, we shall perhaps have a fight for it yet."

"When, oh, when will all this end," said Cicely. "Oh, Claude, let us leave this place at once."

"We will, dear one, if we can."

"Come on," said Jack. "This way to the outer door. This way. We ought to lose no time now. Up those steps. Don't you recollect now the way?"

"Yes—yes. Quick, oh, quick," said Cicely.

They ascended the steps and rushed through the empty room to which they led. They reached the door of it—it was fast shut, and seemed as firm as a rock!

"Ah! we are caught!" said Dick.

"It looks like it," replied Jack.

"This is too ridiculous!" exclaimed Claude. "You rascal can hardly suppose that we are going to stand any of his nonsense, or that a closed door is to bar the way against three men."

As he spoke, Claude flung himself against the door vigorously, but the solid oak of which it was composed effectually resisted any effort of his to force it, and he was compelled to give up the attempt in some chagrin at its complete failure:

"It won't do," said Dick.



"So I see."

"What will become of us?" said Cicely.

"Be under no apprehensions," added Claude. "We are rather too strong a party to play any serious tricks with. How is the window situated, Jack?"

"Stop a bit," said Jack. "Never mind the window; here is something better. If I mistake not, this is a door, although well enough for ordinary purposes, concealed in the panelling."

They all proceeded to the part of the room where Jack was, and there they saw sure enough that there was a door which had been at one time, after the house had been built, doubtless cut out of the panelling, so that moulding and all fitted tolerably exact, giving it the appearance as though it had been made for a concealed door, when, in all likelihood, no such notion was entertained by its architect.

"Is it fast?" said Claude.

"They would hardly neglect it," said Dick.

"They?" exclaimed Cicely. "Then you think there are many here? Have we fallen into bad hands?"

"Hush! hush!" said Claude; "I pray you compose yourself. There is some little mystery in this affair, which a little time will, no doubt, quite completely disclose."

"People who think themselves wonderfully clever," said Jack, "often neglect obvious precautions. This door is only locked, and now it is not even so well fastened as that."

As he spoke, he skilfully picked the lock of the door. A quantity of dust came from the top and sides of it, and they saw beyond it what at first appeared to be a most particularly gloomy passage.

"Come on," said Claude. "Let this lead to where it may it will be better policy to follow it than to remain where we are; for here in this room we were, no doubt, intended to remain, so that by leaving it we may defeat some plan or combination against us."

"What a gloomy place," said Turpin, as he drew a pistol from his pocket and shook the priming.

Claude had pushed on, and upon feeling the opposite wall, which was not above four feet from the door, that Jack had opened, he came upon something soft like cloth. Upon pushing more strongly it yielded before him, and to the agreeable surprise of the whole party a door, covered with cloth and destitute of all fastenings, swung open, and admitted them into a spacious and most elegant apartment. Situated as this room was into which they now all made their way, it had, doubtless, at one time been the principal dining-room of the mansion. The walls were covered with faded tapestry. The ceiling was richly painted in arabesque, and the five windows were, in some of these compartments, fitted with crimson glass, that gave a sort of richness of colouring to everything within the apartment. One of these windows opened into a small conservatory. It would appear, that from this room some of the furniture of the apartment into which they had been shown by the man had been taken; for they saw in niches in the wall, several tables similar to the one they had noticed in what he called his room. A quantity of furniture, of one kind and another, was scattered about the place, but all in the most miserable state of disorder, and absolute delapidation from sheer neglect. The dust lay upon some things like black snow.

"This is at all events," said Dick, as he glanced rapidly around him, "a change for the better, Claude. Do you not think it is?"

"I do," said Claude. "But you are right to be upon your guard, Turpin, and I will do the same."

Claude took the pistol upon which he knew he could most depend, from his breast-pocket, and carefully examined it to feel certain that it was in a state of efficiency for use.

"All's right!" he said.

"The best thing we can possibly do," said Jack "is to make our way to our horses, and be off. The storm has abated, so I don't think we need wish to protract our stay here."

As though to give the most startling contradiction to the words of Jack, there came, at this moment, a clap of thunder that seemed as if it shook the house to its foundations. The echoes appeared perfectly interminable, and rolled and rattled about the wings of the building as though some wild animal was seeking admittance. Cicely clung to Claude's arm. Dick made his mouth up with a whistling

expression ; and Jack placed his hands over his ears to shut out the dismal and startling reverberations of the

“ Loud-mouthed artillery of Heaven !”

“ Well,” said Dick, “ what do you think of that ?”

“ It was terrible,” said Jack.

“ It was, indeed,” exclaimed Cicely ; “ oh, let us leave this place, for the very atmosphere is full of horrors. From the first moment I crossed the threshold, a shuddering feeling came over me, and it seemed as though a voice not of this world whispered to me, ‘ Turn and fly.’ ”

“ My Cicely,” said Claude, “ you do, indeed, now allow your imaginations to play with you.”

“ Well,” said Dick, “ I am not in love with the place, and storm or no storm, I am willing to leave it as soon as you like, Claude. Only say the word.”

At this moment, when they were in a state of doubt and hesitation as to what to do, a door that they none of them had noticed, suddenly opened, and an old man with white hair, and quite a patriarchial look, made his appearance.

## CHAPTER CXLII.

### DANGER THICKENS.

THEY all looked in astonishment at the old man, and the old man looked in astonishment, real or pretended, at them. For a few moments not a word was spoken on either side, and then Claude, advancing and adroitly placing himself between the old man and the door at which he had entered, said—

“ Pray, sir, who are you ?”

The old man made a half-kind of bow, as he replied—

“ Really, gentlemen, I might, considering all things, ask that question of you.”

“ We are overtaken by the storm, that is all,” said Claude, “ and took shelter here, where we have encountered some strange treatment.”

“ Strange treatment, sir ?”

“ Yes, a man locked us in a room, with what intention is best known to himself.”

“ Alas ! alas !”

“ But we are prepared for anything, and if violence is the object, we are just about the worst people it could be tried upon.”

“ Dear ! dear !” said the old man, as if in great grief. “ Was the man tall, sir ? and, though I say it perhaps who ought not, was he rather ill-favoured.”

“ Yes, tall,” said Claude.

“ And most decidedly ill-favoured,” said Dick.

“ Then, gentlemen, I grieve to say it, instead of encountering me, you have unfortunately seen my poor deranged son.”

“ Deranged ?”

“ Yes, gentlemen ; mad—quite mad. His manner is sometimes to strangers all courtesy, and he will declare, to the surprise and confusion of the people, that he has known them for years, and insist upon treating them as old acquaintances ; and then at times he will be so rude and insolent, that people will fancy this rather a den of malefactors, than a peaceful old deserted house. Alas ! alas !”

The old man wiped away a tear.

“ This is extraordinary,” said Dick.

“ My poor, poor, boy,” muttered the old man. “ You see, gentlemen, if I did not live with him, who would ?”

“ But what do you mean ?” asked Dick.

"Why, you see, sir," replied the old man, "the house now belongs to Colonel Vesey; and as I was many years with my old woman (rest her soul! she's gone now) in the service of the family, they gave us this house to live in, and what with the kitchen-garden, and the grapes the ladies used to take some of in the summer-time, when they come to view the house, we did pretty well."

"And brought your mad son here?"

"Alas, sir, he was in a lunatic asylum, but they said he was incurable, so we took him back to us, with the hope that love with something like liberty, and old well-remembered faces about him, he would be a little better. Alas! alas! I think the sight of him hurried my poor wife, rest her soul! into the other world."

"This is melancholy," said Cicely.

"Yes, sir, it is. It is."

"And so," said Claude, "you live here all alone with the poor lunatic?"

"I do, sir, I do. God help me!"

Conversation was now for a few moments put an end to by the rain, which came down so tremendously, and made such a clatter upon the glass roof of the conservatory close at hand, that it would have been difficult indeed for any one to make himself heard. Jack was the only one who had said nothing to the old man; but he was not an unobservant spectator of the interview between his friends and that venerable personage.

"It's coming now," said Dick, as he glanced through one of the windows. "It can't last long though at this rate."

"Impossible," said Claude; "it would be a second flood if it did."

"Pray, gentlemen," said the old man who had been wiping his eyes, and doing what he could to recover his composure, after conversing upon such a dismal subject as his mad son. "Pray, gentlemen, make yourselves at home here, I beg of you, as long as you like."

"Thank you."

"You need not at all tarry. I can find you clean seats in the drawing-room, for we keep that always in good order, for visitors you see, gentlemen; but this room has not been come into for I don't know when."

"Indeed?"

"No, gentlemen. But as I heard you here, I thought it was my duty to come and speak to you."

"You are very kind."

"Dear, dear, how the rain does come down to be sure. Please to follow me, gentlemen, and I will lead you to the drawing-room in a minute. This way, if you please, gentlemen, this way."

The old man led the way through a little ante-room; and then opening one of a pair of folding doors, he said—

"That is the green drawing-room, which used to be the most favourite room in the house, they tell me, long, long, ago; and to tell the truth, it's quite a pleasant lightsome room, now."

The room into which they all entered fully merited the encomiums of the old man, and no one, to look at it, could doubt that it had been a favourite apartment. The walls of this drawing-room were hung with pale green damask; and what made that hanging much more estimable was, that it was not deformed by the odious figures with which old tapestry is mostly covered, presenting such vile and abominable imitations of humanity, as must be offensive to any one with the smallest pretensions to real taste. This tapestry had flowers richly embossed over its entire surface; and the roof of the room was painted so as to give by its shadowing an excellent appearance of a dome ceiling. The heavy and voluminous window curtains, the rich carpeting, and the covering of the old chairs and couches, were all of green silk worked with flowers, and similar to those upon the tapestry, so that there was quite a charming unity about the decorations of the place, which is as rare as it is really attractive.

"This is, indeed, a handsome room," said Claude.

"Very," said Dick; "and what a view."

They all went to the window, from whence there was a view into a garden, tolerably well kept.

"We are at the back of the house," said Claude.

"Yes," replied the old man. "The back contains all the principal rooms, as it looks to the south; and has a pleasanter aspect than the other portions of the mansion. Ah, gentlemen! will you excuse me?"

"For what?"

"For my great anxiety to look after my poor boy, which compels me to leave you by yourselves for a short time, if you will permit me to be so very rude."

"Certainly—certainly," said Dick. "Go, by all means."

"I will bring you a bottle of my poor wife's—rest her soul! she is dead and gone—ginger wine, gentlemen. It will keep the cold and damp out of your stomachs."

The old man, with looks of anxiety, left the drawing-room by another door, which he carefully closed after him.

"Poor old man," said Cicely. "What a cheerless life his must be; indeed, I pity him from my soul."

"You do?" said Jack.

"Yes; and do not you?"

They all looked at Jack, who had his finger upon his lip, as a sign of caution; and then he added, in a low tone—

"Does he not look venerable with his white hair?"

"Yes—yes," said they all.

"Hush!—hush! I—"

"What—what?"

"I saw it was a wig!"

They were all silent for a few moments, and then Jack added—

"Yes, a wig!—Actually, a wig! Now a man may wear a wig; but there is no occasion for his wearing a white one."

"Not the least," said Dick. "But are you sure, Jack?"

"I am."

"Then he is an old rogue. By heavens! there was, at times, a something about his manner, that I did not like."

"But what do you suspect?" said Cicely.

"Everything," replied Jack.

"That is as vague as it is comprehensive."

"Yes, but when a man disguises himself in such a way, it cannot be for a good purpose."

"Let us search the room while he is gone," said Claude Duval. "You see that odd stain on the carpet—what is it?"

There was a large stain upon the rich carpet close to the table, that occupied the centre position in the room; and the more they all looked at it, the more suspicious they all thought it was, and yet could not tell what made it so exactly. It is strange how the thoughts of several people will take one direction, and yet each dread as it were to be the one who shall become the actual exponent of the idea. Thus was it with our party as they looked upon the stains in the carpet. One and all, if they had spoken interrogatively upon the subject, would have said—

"It is blood?"

This was a word, however, that they each appeared to dread to give the slightest utterance to. Perhaps if the men had been alone they would have spoken firmly, but they none of them wished to alarm Cicely

"It is—strange!" said Dick.

"Very," said Claude.

"I think so, too," said Jack.

This word "strange," stood to them all in lieu of blood.

"Stop," said Jack. "Before we search this room, let us see if we can in any

way secure ourselves from interruption ; I should think that these doors—and I see but two—have some mode of fastening.

He approached the doors and found that they were easily to be secured by little bolts. He did so, and they all began a vigorous search in the really magnificent room.

It was strange, very strange how suddenly, as it were, they should all be inclined to the opinion that something was to be found in that room, confirmatory of their suspicions that they were in anything but good company in that old uninhabited house ; but such was the case.

Gradually, however, this notion weakened, as they found nothing upon which it could be fed.

They looked behind all the cumbrous pieces of furniture, and beneath all the tables that had covers, but they found nothing that could be construed into having the slightest suspicious tendency.

“Are we mistaken?” said Dick.

“No,” said Jack, “I’d lay my life we are not.”

“But candidly speaking now,” said Claude, “what is it that we suspect, and what is it that we expect to find by all this searching in holes and corners?”

“Don’t know,” said Jack, as he pressed his hand upon his brow. “Call it superstition if you will, but I feel as though we were in this place surrounded by an atmosphere of murder.”

“Murder?”

“Yes, that is the word—murder !”

“Oh, horror !” exclaimed Cicely. “Is that the translation of all our thoughts ? Let us fly from here, Claude. Let us fly at once. All the dangers of the road are as nothing compared to the uncertain and unknown horrors of this place.”

Claude drew a long breath.

“Cicely,” he said. “Banish fear. I ask you as a favour to me, to permit that we stay and unravel this frightful mystery.”

“Claude— Claude !”

“Nay, if you feel that you are quite unequal to the task of remaining here, we will even go. What say you friends ? Shall we go at once and brave the rain without, or stay and have our imaginations trifled with here ?”

“I for one,” said Dick, “would stay ; but as Cicely is with us, I think we all owe to her so much deference and courtesy as to leave the decision on her words entirely.”

“I thank you,” said Claude, “for those words.”

“And I too thank you,” said Cicely ; “and when I beg that we go, believe me I please myself with the idea that I am perhaps doing you a service likewise, by removing you from this place.”

Dick with a smile upon his face, was about to say something kind to Cicely, when they were startled by an exclamation from Jack, who had been diligently continuing the search in the room, by lifting up the tapestry that hung from the walls in different places, and carefully looking behind it.

“A cupboard !” he cried.

“A what ?” Jack.

“A cupboard ; and—and—upon the threshold of it a—a—a—”

“A what ?”

They all rushed to the spot.

“A pool of blood,” said Jack, in a low deep voice. “Look at it. Can any one look upon those stains and for one moment doubt their origin ?”

A feeling of thorough conviction that the stains were those of blood came over them all, and as they gazed at them a shuddering feeling of horror crept across their minds. If they had all spoken at once they would have said, with one voice—

“What is in the cupboard ?”

Jack knew what they all meant by the expression upon their faces, and nodding his head, he said—

“We will see.”



The cupboard-door yielded the moment a button was turned. It swung open; and slowly, with a hideous fall, the corpse of a murdered man, dabbled in gore, fell to their feet!—Bang! bang! went some one's fist at one of the doors that Jack had fastened—bang! bang!

## CHAPTER CXLIII.

## THE FIGHT IN THE GARDEN.

Cicely did not shriek, but her eyes were fixed in horror upon the corpse which had fallen at their feet from the cupboard. It was at once the most awful proof that could have been tendered to them of all their worst suspicions regarding the place in which they were. No longer could Claude now doubt the fact; and, without heeding the knocking at the door, he said to Dick Turpin—

"Let us fight our way out of this place at once. The very air of it seems full of blood. It is a den of murderers."

Bang! bang! went the blows upon the door again.

"Who can that be?" said Dick; and then advancing to the door, but standing not in a line with it, for he knew not what amount of trickery might not be intended, he said, in a loud fearless voice—

"Who is there?"

"Fly!" said a voice from the other side of the door. "The officers of justice are at the great gate leading into the grounds, and they ask for persons such as ye are. Fly from here, and save yourselves."

"What shall we do?" said Dick in a whisper to Claude.

"Do you think the information regarding the officers is true?"

"I do; for how else could those people know anything of our being pursued at all? It must have some foundation."

"True.—true. We have enemies, then, both within and without this place; but we will not shrink from any of them."

"What are you about to do?"

"Secure the one, for I don't think there are more, who is at this door. You may depend the great object is to get us out of this room, so as to avoid the chance of the discovery we have already made."

"It may be so. But would you open the door?"

"Yes. Hark, what is that?"

The loud tingling of some heavy bell at a distance reached their ears, and the voice from the other side of the door cried—

"Open—open and follow me; I will lead you clear. The fact is, we are no better than we should be in this house, and I confess that we sometimes commit robbery; therefore if you are the persons sought for by the officers, we have a kind of fellow-feeling with you, and the sooner we can expedite you on your way the better we shall be pleased."

The mouth of the speaker of these words was very near the key-hole, so that they were all distinctly enough heard by our little party in the room. Suddenly, and without by a single word giving the man who was without the least idea of what he was about, Claude opened the door. The fellow half fell into the room, and Claude completed his entrance into it by seizing him by the head and dragging him completely across the threshold of it, while Jack closed the door again. This man was one whom they had not seen before, and he struggled with Claude fiercely, and actually succeeded in getting a knife from his pocket. He had, however, met with his master in regard to strength, for Claude clutched him by the throat and held him at arm's-length, until he got black in the face, and the knife dropped from his useless hand.

"Hold open the cupboard-door, Jack," cried Claude.

"Yes—yes."

"We will get rid, for the time present, of one of these rascals."

"And you could not put him into a more appropriate place," said Dick.

"Cram him in, Claude, and there is some company for him."

Not without a feeling of repugnance, Dick lifted the dead body by the clothes, and crammed it into the cupboard along with the half-strangled ruffian, and then Jack slammed the door and fastened it.

"Now then," said Dick. "It's off and away with us as soon as possible. Come on, and keep your arms in readiness, for I am getting more uneasy than I can well express about our horses."

"And I, too, feel somewhat more than uneasy about them," said Claude "and would go through any danger to get at them. They are our only hope."

Cicely now crept close to Claude, and looked interestingly at him, as though she would have implored him not to fly into unnecessary danger for her sake; and he answered that look by whispering to her—

"Fear nothing, my Cicely; I feel convinced that we shall pass scatheless through this danger. My time has not yet come."

Cicely shuddered.

Those words, in their extended implication, might be a prophecy that his time was to come—a time at which he should die a death of violence. How she prayed that before that happened she should be even

"As a clod of the valley."

"Are you ready?" said Dick.

"Yes."

"And your pistols well primed? A miss-fire might be our destruction now. We may have to fight our way."

"All ready," said Claude. "Lead on. I have an extra care, you know, here in Cicely."

"No," said Dick, "no. We will all perish rather than desert her, or permit a hair of her head to be injured. Yourself, Claude, cannot do more. Now, come on. You and I, Jack, will lead."

"No," said Jack. "Let Claude and Cicely be the main body. You take the advance, and I will bring up the rear, for remember, that our foes are just as likely to strike from behind as in front."

"True—true. You are right, Jack. Keep a wary eye, and I fully believe after all that your post is the one of the greatest danger."

All this passed very rapidly. Much of it was spoken simultaneously, so that not above a few moments were consumed in the arrangements before they left the room in which they had confined the living and the dead in the cupboard. Their great object was to get out of the house by the front, if possible, and so reach their horses, which once obtained, they would find that their danger was not half what it now seemed. But that house had such a world of intricate passages about it, and so many windings and turnings, that it was next to impossible they should find their way easily. Perseverance, however, will do wonders; and if three men, with a brace of pistols each in their hands, and three such men too as our adventurers were, could not get out, any other persons might well indeed despair of doing so. Heaven only knows how many had so despaired in that haunt of the murderer; for that the house was a den of that description, there could be now no shadow of a doubt. Jack performed his duty as a rear-guard well; and as they passed a staircase he fancied he heard a shuffling noise, as if some person was hurriedly going up it. He had only just time to glance up, when, from a great height, there came down an immense feather bed. If it had fallen upon Claude and Cicely it must have struck them down, and then they might have become an easy prey. Two men ran partially down the staircase at the moment, but Jack had called out, "Forward—quick!" in good time, and Claude had caught Cicely round the waist and darted on a couple of yards, so that the bed fell between them and Jack. Turning then, he saw the two men descending the stairs; Jack and he both fired at once, and a loud cry of pain sufficiently testified that the shot had taken effect upon one of them.

"On—on," cried Dick. "I can see the conservatory, and our horses cannot be far off. This way—this way!"

Dick had opened a door which led into a very pretty, although small, apartment, at the further end of which was a glass door, most of the panes in which were exquisitely stained and wrought in flowered devices. Through this glass door a conservatory could be plainly seen, and the party now hurried forward full of the hope that it was the one not far from which they had tethered their horses.



To their chagrin, however, when they reached it they found that it opened upon the back of the house instead of the front, and that they stood upon the verge of a large garden. Still they saw no enemies.

"We must have our cattle," said Dick, "and the easiest way will be now to get to the front of the house by the garden. Stay here, all of you, while I go upon the expedition."

"Nay, let me go," said Jack.

Dick shook his head.

"You would have a little more difficulty than you are aware of in getting Black Bess along," he said. "Your cattle probably not have been made such pets of, and will come with me; but my Bess is my friend and companion, and from the great indulgences she has had, is as self-willed as a spoilt girl."

He darted off as he spoke, and Jack then climbed up some iron lattice-work which was close to the conservatory, to get a good look about him, which otherwise was prevented by the mass of flowering shrubs that grew in great luxuriance around. They had all concluded, that if there were any officers in pursuit of them, that it was in the front of the house they were to be found; but the moment Jack got a clear view over the shrubs, he cried to Claude, in a voice of alarm—

"By Heaven, they are here!"

"Who? Who?" said Claude.

"Our foes—the officers."

"No—no. Surely—"

He was up the lattice-work in a moment, and there he saw, over a portion of the garden-wall, a considerable distance from where he was, no less a number than half-a-dozen men scrambling. From their appearance he had no doubt in the world that they were officers. The highwayman was quite as good a judge, in those days, of a Bow-street runner as the latter prided himself upon being of a highwayman. Two of them had dropped into the garden, and the other four were partly upon the wall and partly in the act of dropping from it into a soft flower-bed that was at the foot.

"How easily they could be picked off," said Jack.

"They might, indeed."

"And yet it would look almost like murder, would it not, Jack?"

"It would be absolute murder, Claude. No—no. Let them attack us and get into fair fight with us, and I would as soon put a bullet through one of them as look at him; but I must own I should not fancy firing at them as they are now clinging to yon wall."

"And yet," said Claude with a sigh, "I doubt much if they would be one half so scrupulous towards us."

"Of course they would not. But let us think ourselves something better, Claude, although we are knights of the road, than thief-catchers."

"We will, Jack."

"Thank the fates, here is Dick Turpin with the horses all safe. At all events, that is something gained."

"It is everything," said Claude, as he sprung down from the lattice. "It is everything. Stay, Jack, and watch them a moment or two."

Jack remained upon the lattice watching the officers who were making so determined a descent into the garden of the house, while in a few words Claude managed to inform Dick Turpin of the state of affairs.

"So," said Dick, "they will fight it out with us at last, will they?"

"So it seems."

"Well, they must have their own way so far."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, as regards the fight. Here are the horses all safe and sound, but they would not have been so but for Bess."

"Indeed!"

"No. You will be amused to hear that when I got to the railing by the balcony to which we had secured them, I heard some one groaning and swearing alternately. Upon getting nearer, I saw, sitting upon the ground, about as disreputable a looking scoundrel as I ever looked upon. 'Hilloa!' I said, 'friend, what's the matter?'—'That mare,' he said, pointing to Bess, 'is a fiend in the shape of a horse.'—'Why so?'—'The devil kicked me.'—'Then you must have interfered with the devil,' said I.—'Yes,' he replied with ferocity, 'and if she had not kicked me in the extraordinary way she did—for, confound her,

she twisted round to do it—I'd soon have cut off your retreat by securing your horses."

"Then we ran a risk, indeed," said Claude."

"We just did."

"What did you do with the rascal?"

"Oh, I only laughed at him and left him there. I think he was too much hurt to get up, to tell the truth."

"He deserves it."

"He does, indeed; but here are the horses all safe and sound, and refreshed, too. My advice is, that we had better go round the garden close to the wall, until we find some door, which we may be able to open and escape by. The vegetation, you see, is quite high enough to be above the horses' heads, although if we were to mount we should be above it."

"True—true."

"They are all over," said Jack.

"Which route do they take?"

"None at present; they are consulting about it."

"Then this is our time," said Dick. "When officers begin to consult, you are sure of some time before you. They are like a parcel of old women to talk. Each one will have his own opinion, resting upon some limited kind of experience he has had; and they will stick to it as distinctly as—the duce! What is that?"

A sharp crack sounded in the air; and something whistled over the heads of our little party.

"It sounds marvellously like a pistol bullet," said Claude.

"They have seen us," said Dick.

"Then it must have been Jack holding on to the lattice. Let us shift our quarters, or we shall have a few more such messages; and if they only chance to fire a little lower they may do some mischief to us."

"They may, indeed. Come on."

Turpin led his own mare, while Jack and Claude each led their respective steeds; Cicely kept close to Claude; and so at a very slow pace, and making not the slightest noise, they crept along in a flower-bed close under the garden wall, hoping to double upon the officers. They heard another pistol-shot discharged at the spot they had just quitted, and Dick muttered—

"I do think the muddy-fated rascals will let us fairly give them the slip, in this simple way, after all. There they go again. Come on a little faster."

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## CHAPTER CXLIV.

### THE ESCAPE.

THEY quickened their pace. The soft ground of the flower bed upon which they trod still concealed all sound of the horses feet, and Dick, who was foremost, looked carefully along the wall, with the hope of finding one of those doors which, for convenience, are commonly, at not very distant intervals, placed in the walls of very large gardens. None such appeared.

"Confound it," he said. "We shall get right round to the house again if we don't mind, and then there will be the devil to pay."

"The wall is high," said Claude, as he scanned it with his eyes.

"Ah," said Dick, "I know what you are thinking of; but it won't do. Bess knows what a jump is, but she could not clear that."

"So I was thinking."

"Stop," said Jack.

"What for?"

"I have an idea."

"Out with it, then," said Dick, with a smile. "I will not say as the man said to his friend, when he made a similar speech, 'Where did you steel it?' Out with it, Jack; I have no doubt it is a good one."

"This wall is of brick."

"Ha!—ha!"

"Upon my word, Jack," said Claude, "it needs no

"Ghost to come and tell us that!"

"No," said Jack. "But if you keep yourselves profoundly quiet I will endeavour, seeing the decayed state it is in, to pull down enough of it, with the assistance of my knife here, to enable the horses to get out of the garden; and if the hole is big enough for them, we will conclude it is for us."

"Good," said Dick.

"Yes, that will do," said Claude. "Work away, Jack."

"We will all work away," said Dick. "I happen to have a good large knife, that some folks would call a small cutlass, about me, and if it don't displace the old rotter brick-work quickly, I don't know what will."

"Claude! Claude!" said Cicely.

"What is it?"

"Look!"

She pointed in the direction of a large bush of variegated laurel which was not far off, and there he saw one of the officers holding back two of the boughs, while, upon his knees, he glared at the party. The moment Claude saw him, the boughs collapsed again; and the man was gone, no doubt, to warn his comrades of where their prey was to be found.

"Did you see him?" said Claude to Dick.

The latter had a pistol in his hand, which he was presenting in the direction whence the man had disappeared, but he did not fire.

"It's a thousand to one," he said, "about killing him now. A leaf will turn a bullet in another direction, sometimes. We shall have to stand a siege."

"I fear we shall."

"Never mind. I like Jack's idea so well, that I think we may endure a few shots here, rather than not carry it out. Let us work away at the wall."

"Agreed.—Cicely?"

"Yes, Claude."

"Lie as flat upon the grass as you can, and you will be out of danger of any of those chance shots that may be whistling about our ears shortly."

"And you, Claude?"

"I must be up and at work. But if I do not know that you are safe, I shall be fit for nothing, Cicely."

"But—but—"

"Nay, dear one—time is precious, and we owe something to those who are risking their lives. Let me implore you to make no difficulties."

Cicely flung herself, weeping, upon the little edging of grass that shielded the flower bed, upon which the horses had been walking and where they now stood.

"Be under no undue apprehension," added Claude. "All will be well."

"I pray it may."

"Stay, you may do us some service. As you lay you can hold the bridles of the three horses. There, that will leave us at liberty to work upon the wall."

By this time, Jack, who had let nothing disturb him from his operations upon the wall, had got out several bricks; and as the commencement of any operation of that nature is one-half the trouble, they went on capitally. They were not to escape, however, without some interruption. Suddenly they heard a voice say—

"Surrender, in the king's name; or your deaths be upon your own herds."

"Hush: don't answer," said Claude. "Work away."

"We know you are on the other side of these laurels," added the voice; "and if you don't give yourselves up we will fire."

Not a word was spoken, and in the course of a minute or two more the same voice added—

"We are unwilling to shed blood, but we must 'and will take you all, alive or dead. Once more, as a last chance, will you surrender?"

There was no answer.

"Fire!" said a voice.

Both Claude and Dick stooped, and Jack darted aside, so that they escaped the bullets; but one of the horses was slightly wounded in the shoulder, and began to be restive in consequence.

"Confound it," said Dick. "I'd rather they hit me than Bess. Let us move the cattle on one side a little."

This was done, and hardly was it so, when Jack said in a low tone—

"All's right. I can see daylight through the wall now. We shall have it down by a good push."

"Think you so? Then here goes."

"All together," said Jack. "Now, Claude, push away. Once—twice—ah, there it goes. That will do."

A good portion of the old wall fell outwards, and immediately that it did so, Dick cried—

"Give them a volley. We owe it to them, and I really should not like to go away in their debt, even to the extent of a few lumps of lead."

They all three fired in the direction from whence the officers had discharged their pistols at them, and then, before even the smoke had cleared away, they fired again. A few dropping shots from the officers replied to this, and then a voice of a far different character to that which had spoken before, cried—

"Forward!"

In a moment, round the screen of laurel bushes rushed the officers, boldly determined to seize their prey.

"All's right," said Dick; "give it them."

He caught up a brick, and dashed it at the foremost officer, whom it hit in the face, and at once sent headlong to the earth insensible. A short but decisive contest now ensued. The officers grappled with their foes, but they soon felt all the disadvantage of fighting with men whose lives hung upon the issue of the contest. One of them was felled to the ground by a blow upon the forehead, with the butt-end of Claude's double-barrelled pistol. Dick threw one a tremendous fall upon the bricks, and Jack got another down, and was sawing away at his throat with the knife he had used to pull down the wall. It was lucky for this officer that his cravat was thick, and the knife blunt. In the course of three minutes our adventurers had all the field to themselves, and the only noise consisted of the shouts of murder of the officer Jack had got into so precarious a position.

"Let him go, Jack," cried Claude.

"You rascal," said Jack, not hearing what was said to him. "You rascal—so you thought you would get the better of us, did you?"

"Oh! murder—murder!—mercy!"

"Mercy, you vagabond. I wonder what sort of mercy you would have had upon us? But I'll send your head to the Secretary of State, that I will."

"No, no, Jack; let him get up," said Claude, as he laid his hand upon the shoulder of his old companion.

Jack slowly arose. The officer would have done the same, but Claude gave him a look, as he said,—“You had better not.” And the man laid down again as flat as possible, looking as white as a sheet.

"Very well," said Jack. "The next time will do as well; and if I catch you again coming after us, off goes your head."

"I have had quite enough of it," said the officer. "I'll be off to London, and not trouble you any more, you my depend upon it, gentlemen."

"Now for it," said Dick.

They turned and saw that he was mounted.

"Let's off and away," he added. "We have had too long a stay here already. Mount, and let us be off."

"And no one is hurt?" inquired Cicely.

"Not I," said Dick.

"Nor I," said Claude.

"Nor I," said Jack. "So we are all right, you see, after all, and have cleared the road too."

"I am sure we have," said Dick. "But what is to become of this house, and the scoundrels that live in it?"

"That ought to be seen to," said Claude. "Ah, I have it. Here, Mr. Officer, get up; I want to throw a little job in your way.—Come here."

The officer was full of suspicions that some practical joke, of perhaps not a very pleasant character, was about to be played off upon him, and he only gave an odd sort of groan, as he replied—

"Thank you all the same, I'd rather lie down here till you are gone."

"Come here, I say."

"I won't look after you, gentlemen, indeed I won't."

"No mischief is intended you; I have only something to say to you. Come quickly or the consequences may be unpleasant, as we have no time now to throw away."

The officer thought it was best to comply. When he got close to Claude's horse, the latter said to him—

"This house is inhabited by murderers, who make a habit of waylaying persons who come to see it. You will find the corpse of one of their victims in a cupboard in a room hung with tapestry. I leave you to make of the information what you please. It is your business to see to it."

The officer looked aghast. Before he could say a word in reply, Claude, who had Cicely safely upon the horse with him, galloped away. He was closely followed by Jack and by Dick Turpin. They went on about a mile before they exchanged a word, and then Claude drew up and spoke to his friends.

"I must get back to Ealing Common."

"Well," said Dick, "this is not the way."

"No," said Claude, glancing at the sun; "it is not, I can see; but can you tell me, as a last favour, of any near route to that place?"

"Last favour?"

"Yes, I feel that I and Cicely are but as clogs in your way. We lead you into all sorts of unprofitable adventures and dangers, distracting you from your pursuits; and we feel that we ought to bid you good-by with our best and most grateful thanks for the service you have done us."

"Oh, nonsense! I will see you safe to the common; as for fancying you are in any way indebted to me, don't think of it. Recollect, Claude, that we have one common enemy—the officers of the law; and that while contending with them, let the precise circumstances be what they may, I am fighting my own battles."

"To some extent, but——"

"Nay, now we will have no buts about it. Say no more upon this head; I am very well pleased to have made your acquaintance; and when you have placed her who, I do not wonder, is dearer to you than all the world beside or life itself, in a place of safety, I will bid you adieu; for the same road ought not to hold you and I. We should be too much for society."

"I thank you with all my heart."

"Come on, then: and as we trot gently down a lane here, which will lead us right, I will try and persuade you, Jack, to tell me more particularly how you escaped the—the gallows—that is the word, although it is an awkward one for gentlemen of our profession to utter."

Jack shuddered.

"Nay," said Dick, "if the theme be disagreeable to your feelings, say no more about it, Jack."



"No, no. There are people whom I feel that I can tell, and you are one of them ; so you shall know all."

They now turned abruptly into a shady lane, that was entered close to some wheat-ricks, that cast a shadow over the mouth of it ; and Jack was about to say something to Dick, when the sound of carriage-wheels came upon their ears.¶

"Ah !" said Dick, "do you hear that ?"

"Yes," replied Claude ; "it is in the lane too."

"Ay, as luck will have it ; and I don't see why I should not combine a little business with pleasure."

"You will stop it ?" said Claude.

"Why, yes, I thought of doing so. If you have any objection, though, only say so, and I will let it go by at once. It don't much matter."

"Oh, no, now. I have no sort of objection, Dick. Business after all is business, and the world scarcely will give us any credit for forbearance, I take it."

"Forbearance ? oh, dear, no ; it is quite impossible, let us do what we may, that we can be so bad as the kind, good-natured world is willing to make us out. But here it comes ; what a close affair."

"It is, indeed."

The carriage, that now appeared at a turn of the lane, was a chariot, the blinds of which were all closed. A postillion drove it, and it was as plain a coach as could possibly be. It came on at a good pace. The postillion, when he saw our party, waived his whip for them to let him have a clear road. This was not exactly what Dick purposed doing. On came the carriage at an accelerated speed, and the postillion, with gestures that betrayed more passion than prudence under the circumstances, again made signs he would ride over Dick, if he did not get out of the way. Turpin drew a pistol from his pocket, and shutting one eye as he presented it, he affected to be taking a deliberate aim at the postillion, who first decreased his speed—then stopped entirely—and at last slipped off his horse in the road, calling out as loudly as he could—

"Murder ! murder ! there's a highwayman with a pistol as long as my arm taking aim at me ! I'm a dead man ! I'm a dead man !"

## CHAPTER CXLV.

### A STRANGE ADVENTURER.

"You will be a dead man if you don't stop that howling noise," said Dick as he rode up to the carriage. The postillion was silent. Claude accompanied Dick towards the carriage, for although he looked upon it as Dick's affair, yet he thought there might possibly be some danger which he would willingly assist to get over. The postillion had crept now to the road-side, and there he sat trembling, it being quite evident that there was nothing to dread from him. The only thing that a little surprised Claude was that he kept saying—

"It will be all blown ! It will be all blown ! Oh, dear—oh, dear !"

What it was, in the peculiar parlance of the postillion, that was to be blown, Claude could not conceive, but he turned all his attention to the carriage, at the door of which was Dick making ineffectual efforts to let down the blind, and see who was within the vehicle.

"They are shut up close enough," said Dick.

Scarcely had the words left his mouth than the blind was alertly let down from within, and to the surprise of both Dick and Claude there appeared at the window a young girl of such beauty and intelligence of feature, that for a few moments they could say nothing, so absorbed were they in contemplation of her exquisite countenance. This young creature was about fourteen or fifteen

years of age. Her dark hair hung in masses upon her neck and shoulders. Her complexion was the purest that could be imagined, and she had such liquid transparent blue eyes that it was truly ravishing to look upon them. And joined to this there was such an elegance of expression, that she fascinated them both beyond all power of withdrawing their eyes from so fair a vision. Truly, any one might have obtained an easy victory over them both at that moment, so completely thrown off their guard were they while in contemplation of that most lovely sight which God has given man the joy of looking upon—a young, beautiful, and innocent girl. A voice, however, from the interior of the carriage at once restored them to a consciousness of their position. The voice came from some one whom they could not see, inasmuch as the young girl blocked up the window. The tones were harsh and discordant.

“Say it! say it!” cried the voice.

The girl started.

“Yes—yes,” she replied, “I will, Phillip.”

“Say it at once!” cried the voice.

“Gentlemen,” said the young creature, addressing Claude and Dick, “gentlemen, I beg of you to allow me to proceed; I am going to visit a dying father. Oh, gentlemen, if you have any pity, let the carriage proceed. I do not know but that this short delay may be the cause of imbittering my poor father’s last moments, by denying him a sight of his child, and rendering him unhappy that I was too late to receive his blessing.

“Yes—yes. Oh, yes,” said Claude.

“God will reward you.”

“Hold!” said Dick.

“Nay, this must not be,” said Claude. “Dick, you surprise me. You are not now acting in accordance with all I have heard, and all I know of you.”

“Yes, I am, Claude.”

“No—no.”

“Yes, Claude, I am; do not prejudge me.”

The young girl burst into tears, as clasping her hands, she said—

“Is there no feeling of pity in your breasts? Have you no compassion upon me? Oh, gentlemen, I pray you let me go!”

“Do not fancy, my dear,” said Dick, “that it is from any want of feeling towards you that I detain you; I have a fancy to say a word or two to the gentleman who is with you in the carriage.”

“No—no. Postillion drive on,” said the voice.

“That he cannot conveniently do,” said Dick; “Claude, remain where you are, while I go round to the other door.”

“No, no,” said the voice, again. “Murder! help!”

“Oh, have mercy upon him,” said the girl. “He is my friend now.”

“Now?” said Claude; “was he not always?”

“No—but—but he has repented.”

“Ah,” said Dick, “I am glad to hear those words; I think I am upon the right scent; I thought I knew the voice of the person in the carriage; I will see if I know the face as well.”

Dick had now got round the vehicle by the back, as being the nearer way, and notwithstanding some resistance from the inside, he wrenched the door open, and beheld a man fashionably dressed sitting in the carriage. The man tried to hide his face.

“Come,” said Dick; “let me have a good look at you.”

He forcibly turned the man’s face round to the light, and then he added—

“So, it is you, Phillip Manning. You rascal, what do you do her?”

“I—I—you—I—”

“Come—come, no stammering. Who is this young girl?”

“My cousin.”

“Cousin?”

“Yes,” said the young girl, “this is my cousin Phillip. He is not a bad young

man as he used to be, and my father has forgiven all, and trusted him to bring me home to the lodge."

"Trusted him?"

"Yes, oh yes; I pray you to let us proceed at once. Remember, gentlemen, that it is my dying father that I am hastening to see."



PHILIP THREATENING GRACE IN THE PRISON.

"My dear, what is your name?" said Dick.

"Grace Manning."

"And your father?"

"Is Judge Manning."

"And do you know, for a fact, that this man is your cousin?"

"Oh, yes—yes; my father has told me so often."

"That is good authority. It is true that this rascal, Phillip Manning, who is perfectly well known in London, always represented himself as the nephew of Judge Manning, but we never believed it. It seems, however, from what you say, that it must be true."

"Well," said the fellow, gathering courage, "what have you to say against it?"

"Nothing, Phillip. Do you know me?"

"I do not."

"Do you know Colonel Stillkey?"

"The devil!"

"No, not the devil, but Colonel Stillkey, to whom, you made, about a month ago, a certain proposition, which the colonel pulled your nose for insulting him by making. Perhaps, if you look at me more attentively, you will see some resemblance between me and the colonel whom you met at the hotel in St. James's."

"He—he—had a moustache."

"They are in my pocket."

"And lighter hair."

"The wig is in my travelling valise."

"Confusion!"

"Yes, Mr. Phillip, I think you have named it rightly; it is confusion to you rather, you unmitigated scoundrel."

"What is the meaning of all this?" said the young girl. "What is the meaning of it all? Oh, sir, will you not let us proceed?"

"Where, my dear, do you suppose you are going?" said Dick.

"To London, to my father's house."

"Well, London lies east of here, and you are travelling due west. Now, listen to me. This precious cousin Phillip of yours, is deceiving you. Your father is no more ill, in all likelihood, than I am, and this is a new scheme to take you away and secret you somewhere. It's a providential thing that you found us, or rather that we found you."

"It's false," cried Phillip. "It's false, I say. The old man has been lying ill in his bed for a week; and only when he was given over, he sent me to bring him his child, and you would, for some base purposes of your own, hinder me upon my errand of mercy and kindness."

"Ill in bed for a week?" said Dick, as he put his hand into his pocket. "Here is a newspaper, now—you need not look incredulous of what it contains; it is not the 'Times,' but really an honourable paper, and under the date of only the day before yesterday; here is the report of Judge Manning's speech at the opening of the sessions, at the Old Bailey."

Phillip fell back in the carriage with a groan. In his eagerness to lie with effect, he had, like most perverters of the truth, overshot the mark. The girl smiled through her tears, as she cried,——

"My father is not dying?"

"No, Miss Manning, certainly not."

"Oh, Phillip! Phillip!"

"Phillip, how could you be so wicked?"

"Yes, you now see what a pretty rascal this cousin of yours is; and you see you have had a narrow escape."

"You are deceived, Grace," said Phillip. "This man, who has taken so much upon himself, is evidently, by his appearance, a highwayman."

"But he has saved me from you, Phillip."

What language could have conveyed such a world of reproach as these few simple words did! If the villain had any heart at all, it must have been deeply wounded at that moment. He shook for a moment or two as though he had been suddenly seized with the ague, and then he said——

"It is all false. All false."

"It is for you to decide," said Dick to Grace.

"Decide? Oh no, there is no decision wanted. The truth is manifest. Oh, sirs, protect me from this bad man."

"With our lives," said Dick. "Now, Mr. Phillip, I will trouble you to get out of this vehicle. You see how your fair young cousin shrinks from you. She feels that your touch is contamination."

"But——"

"Get out, I say; get out, or my method of compelling you may not be quite so gentle or so pleasant an one as you would like, Master Phillip."

"You—you won't——"

"Won't what?"

"Kill me?"

"You don't suppose, now, that I would cheat the hangman in such a shabby way, do you? No, Phillip, hanged you will be some day, and it is not for me to interfere with the proper destination of such a personage as you are. Get out of the carriage at once, I say."

"Have mercy, I say—have mercy!"

"Get out!"

Phillip got out of the carriage, looking like some wretch who was condemned to death. The glance with which he regarded Dick had something in it that was essentially ridiculous, as fear in its more abject manifestations always is. He fell or flung himself to the ground. Dick Turpin stooped over him for a moment, and then, with an exertion of strength, such as one could hardly have looked for from him, he fairly lifted Mr. Phillip and flung him into a stagnant ditch, the surface of which was plentifully covered by duck-weed, and which was close to the side of the road. The shriek of the discomfited ruffian mingled with the loud splash which he made in the water; and there he lay floundering about, and from the slimy slippery character of the mud, in which he found himself engulfed, quite unable for a time to extricate himself. Dick turned all his attention to the young lady in the coach, and speaking to her in a kind tone of voice, he said—

"Now, my dear, where would you like to go?"

"Home—home."

"But which? Back to the place which you call the Lodge, or home to your father?"

"To my father. I shall still be afraid of Phillip, if I go to the Lodge, for he may follow me there. Oh, you do not know how wicked he is, and how much I have had to forgive him."

"You can tell me nothing of his wickedness that I cannot fully believe. But will you trust yourself with us?"

"Yes—yes. Am I not much beholden to you?"

"But we are strangers."

"But you saved me from Phillip."

"Well, that is true. I will consult with my friends here, as to the best method of proceeding."

Dick turned to Claude, and said in a low voice—

"This young thing ought to be taken, for safety's sake, to her father, Judge Manning.—How can it be done?"

"He is the severest judge upon the bench, is he not?"

"Yes, and we will take a noble vengeance upon him, by restoring to him his only child."

"It is indeed a noble revenge."

"I knew you would agree with me in that."

"And I, too," said Cicely, who was just near enough to hear what they said, "I, too, fully agree with you, and honour you for the feeling which has dictated those words."

"Thank you," said Dick. "But the means of carrying out this resolution, do not readily present themselves. What do you advise, Claude? I regret

that some imperative business will prevent me from riding into London with the young creature."

"Then I will do it."

"You, Claude?"

"Yes, why not?"

"Oh, think of the danger."

"Nay, it may be

"——— That nettle, danger,  
From which we pluck the flower, safety;"

and besides, I have thought of a plan. Do you, Cicely, get into the carriage with the young girl. I will take the postillion's cap and jacket, and drive, while Jack follows on horseback leading my horse, who, as he has been for some time carrying double, will be glad of a rest."

"That will do," said Dick.

"And—and," interposed Cicely. "Do you think, Claude, you run no great risk?"

"In good truth, I think I run little, if any; I will first drive to the town at Ealing and lodge you in safety, after which I will take Grace to London.

## CHAPTER CXLVI.

### CICELY IN SAFETY.

THIS was certainly not a bad plan of operation, although as regarded the latter portion of it, namely, the taking Grace Manning to London by Claude, very much could not be said for the safety of the proceeding. Claude, however, as the reader has long since discovered was not one to allow himself to be turned from a purpose by considerations connected with his personal safety. He thought as little of the large rewards for his apprehension that were promulgated, as if no such sums of money had been in existence, and if he could but provide for the safety of Cicely, and then do a good turn to a young and innocent girl, he was happy.

"That rascal, Phillip, though," said Dick, "must not know of the route we take, I will tie him with his face to the tree."

Dick turned and glanced at the ditch where he fully expected to see Phillip, but no Phillip was there."

"Hillio! Gone!"

"Who? Who?" cried Claude.

"Why, that scoundrel, Phillip, to be sure."

"Jack, Jack," said Claude. "Why did you not look to him?"

"I—I, really," said Jack, "I was looking at what one so rarely sees, and yet what at the same time is the sweetest sight in all nature, the fresh, child-like, beautiful face of an ingenious young girl, that I thought of nothing else in all the world."

"Oh, Jack, Jack, you ought to be past all that."

"I hope when I am past all that," said Jack, "that I shall not have got past my grave, Claude. But this fellow must be near at hand."

"Surely, yes," said Dick.

As the latter spoke, he scrambled up the hedge, and took a long look around him. But no Phillip was to be seen, and what was, if possible, more provoking too, Claude suddenly called out—

"And where is the postillion?"

"What! is he gone?"

"Yes."

"Now," said Dick Turpin, shaking his head, "I call all this rank negligence upon our parts. It is too bad. Here, under our very eyes, two persons, with neither of them courage enough to stand up like men, have fairly given us the slip."

"I know the reason," said Cicely.

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Then pray favour us with it," said Claude. "I see you smile, so it cannot be a very serious one, Cicely. What is it?"

"Perhaps I ought not to tell you; but the fact is, if the blind of the carriage window had been up, and neither of you had been able to take repeated glances at the, I will own, beautiful and engaging face of Grace Manning, you would have kept a far better guard upon your prisoners."

Claude and Dick glanced at each other.

"Guilty!" said Dick.

"Guilty!" said Claude.

Jack laughed as he said—

"Ah, Love's magic has, indeed, wrought. Come, let us search well for these fellows; they can't be far off. I will gallop down the lane this way, and one of you can take the other. I dare say we shall find them by a little perseverance."

The search was duly instituted, and although not a little perseverance was brought to bear upon it, not a vestige of either of the runaways could be found to reward it. This was especially provoking, inasmuch as it complicated the whole affair, by rendering it probable that Philip might yet attempt something to the discomfiture of the party; but Dick suddenly said—

"No; upon consideration, I do not see that we have much to dread; for when we come to consider the whole facts, we have no reason to believe that Philip Manning or the postilion, either, have the smallest idea of who we really are.

"There is something in that," said Jack.

"Well, then," said Claude, "let us pursue our original intention. Are you all agreed to that?"

"Yes—yes."

"Then the sooner we carry it out the better. Cicely, get into the carriage at once; and if you see any occasion so to do, I would not hesitate to confide to Grace Manning that she is in company with one of her own sex."

"It will ease the girl's mind much, I am sure," said Cicely, "if I be at once allowed to do so, Claude."

"Then do so, in the name of Heaven. Tell her to respect your secret, as we are at some pains to protect her."

"I will—I will."

"But mind, Cicely, do not bother this young thing with more secrets than cannot be helped. She need not know to whom she owes her rescue. If she should, as most probably she will, ask who we are, give the general name of Smith to us all, and say we are private gentlemen merely."

"I will, Claude."

Cicely now made her way to the carriage, and at once got into it. At the sight of a young man, which Grace Manning took her to be, she slunk as far off as possible into a corner; but when Claude shut the door, Cicely took her hand, saying—

"Be not afraid of me, I am not what I seem."

"Oh, do not touch me—do not be as bad as Philip, who would hold my hand while I loathed him."

"Nay, Grace, I am not a man. Look at me!"

Grace Manning looked long and earnestly in the face of Cicely, and then the soft, feminine, and really beautiful features of Cicely presented themselves as convincing proof that it was a female with whom she conversed."

"Ah, this is joy," she said.

"You are satisfied?"

"I am—I am. You are like me—some persecuted girl?"

"I am the wife of him who will take you in honour and in safety to your own proper home," said Cicely.

"How can I thank you?"

Grace threw herself into the arms of Cicely, but then rapidly extricating herself, with a blush, she said—

"I wish you had not this dress on."

"My dear, Grace, will you in return, for all that my husband is doing for you, do me one favour?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

"It is a very simple one. It is, merely, to abstain from asking me why I am thus disguised, and why I am not more communicative than I shall be respecting who and what we are. Will you promise me this much?"

"Yes, anything; and yet——"

"And yet, what, Grace?"

"I would fain, when I pray for the happiness of those who are dear me, know by what name to speak to God of you."

There was something so unaffectedly sincere—something so—if we may be allowed the expression—serenely pious in the way in which the young creature spoke these few words, that Cicely was too deeply affected to answer them for some few moments. She could only turn aside her head and weep.

"Forgive me," said Grace, "I have said something now to you that I ought not to have said. Can you forgive me?"

"Forgive? Ah, no! It is I who ought——"

She wept convulsively. Grace threw her arms round her, and implored her to be calm. She lavished endearments upon her that were worth a kingdom. It was in the midst of this affecting scene that Claude came to the window of the chaise. He had, by the assistance of Jack and Turpin, made himself very well up, from their united vallaises, and looked like a respectable kind of groom, with a top coat on to keep out the cold.

"What has happened?" he said.

"Nothing—nothing," said Cicely. "Only, Claude, you must do all you can for Grace, and preserve her from all danger."

"That will I, as sure as my name is Smith!"

Claude placed an emphasis upon the name of Smith, to awaken Cicely to the imprudence of calling him Claude, and then he added—

"Compose yourself. I am going to mount and be off directly. Do you feel unwell, Cicely?"

"No—no. All is well—go on."

Claude closed the door, and proceeded to depart with the chaise, containing two of the fairest and best of created beings. Claude's feelings were too much interested for the young creature, who had been rescued so opportunely from her rascally cousin, to permit him for a moment to shrink from the full carrying out of the project that had been agreed upon between him and Dick, for her restoration to her father; and yet, if we come to consider of it for a moment, we cannot fail to be struck by the enormous amount of risk he ran by so acting. He had to traverse a number of streets of the metropolis, where if it had only been for a moment whispered who he was, every arm would have been raised against him. Truly it required no small amount of chivalry of spirit, to overcome such feelings as these. But first he meant to proceed to the farm-house, at Ealing Common, where he knew that a friendly welcome, for his sake at first, and afterwards he felt certain, it would grow into one for her own, awaited Cicely. When she should be in safety, he felt with how much more ease of mind and spirit he should be able to devote himself for a few hours to the service of Grace Manning; and after all it was only the work of a very few hours to place her upon her father's threshold. Dick had not yet parted with them, but he intended to do so now, as soon as they got within sight of the farm-house, which was to be the place of refuge of Cicely. Jack, as had been arranged, followed the carriage, leading



Claude's horse, and mounted upon his own, while Dick rode on, as a sort of advance guard, about twenty yards in the van. They thus proceeded, until by driving tolerably quick, they came within sight, from a rising piece of ground at the top of which Claude pulled up to allow the horses of the carriage to take breath, of Ealing Common. Dick rode to the side of the carriage.

"Farewell," he said.

Cicely put out her hand to shake hands with him; and Grace would do the same.

"We shall meet again," said Claude.

"Perhaps."

"Nay, I feel assured we shall. Something seems to whisper to me, that you and I are yet to execute an exploit which will transcend all that has been done upon the road."

Dick waved his hand, and was gone. In another half hour, for in truth the Common was further off than it had seemed to be, Claude drew up at the gate of the farm-house, which the reader is already acquainted with, and where Claude stopped a whole day once before. They did not know him in his disguise, but the moment they really became aware of who he was, their welcome was most cordial. A very few words sufficed to place Cicely quite at home there. Grace Manning alighted too, at the earnest request of Cicely, and partook of some refreshment at the farm; for she had travelled many miles now without having anything in the shape of food. After a time, Claude spoke to her—

"Will you trust yourself alone to my care?" he said, "I will take you safely to your father's house in London."

"Oh, yes, and yet, I—I——"

She glanced at Cicely, whom it was evident she would gladly have had the society of on the road, but Cicely shook her head saying—

"I would, but I feel that I should only, perhaps, embarrass, where I would guard."

Grace Manning, young as she was, and all unskilled in the world's ways, could not but see that there was some mystery of a serious character about her new friends, but she forbore to make the slightest attempt to penetrate it; and she took a most affectionate leave of Cicely, with many expressed hopes of meeting her again upon some other, and perchance, happier occasion. Then as the long shadows of the trees proclaimed the decline of that busy day, Claude once more mounted one of the horses, and drove off with Grace for London. A feeling of gloom, which some more superstitious minds than Claude's would soon have made into a presentiment of danger, slowly crept over him; but yet it had not the most distant power over his intention to persevere in the restoration of Grace to her father. The more he had seen of the manner and feelings of that young creature, the more she had won upon his esteem.

"No," he said to himself. "I will not allow a few gloomy fancies to turn me aside from an act which will be a source of pleasureable thoughts to me while I live—I will persevere."

It was full of such thoughts that Claude reached the top of Oxford-street, and heard the din and bustle of the mighty city, in which he had so many enemies.

"Truly," he thought, "I shall owe my safety, I think principally to the fact, that no one will believe that I could think of coming here; and if any one sufficiently familiar with my features to pronounce a judgment upon them, were to see me, they would mistrust that judgment."

Claude was tolerably right. The very outrageous audacity of some undertakings protects the author of them. The lamps—miserable oil substitute for the present glories of gas—were all lighted in Oxford-street by this time, and as Claude rattled along he could see the tradesmen in their shops, lighting up for their evening display; while the streets were each moment getting more and more thronged. Among all the faces that flitted past him, he knew not one; and it was a satisfaction to him to observe that the carriage which he drove only excited an ordinary share of observation. This convinced him that his disguise was tolerably

perfect, and that by night it would pass very well. Had it been daylight when he got into London, he certainly would have run a much greater risk. Once, and once only, an uneasy feeling of suspicion that something might be amiss, came across his mind; as a close chaise suddenly darted down a street to the right at a rapid pace, the driver of which appeared to regard him with unusual earnestness. Claude soon recovered from the slight shock this gave him, and he smiled to himself as he said—

“Truly our fears are the scarecrows that conjure up spirits to attack us at every turn.”

## CHAPTER CXLVII.

### CLAUDE'S ARREST

THERE must have been some sort of entertainment at one of the houses in the immediate vicinity of where he was going; for there was a great concourse of carriages, and he saw so many men and boys dashing about with links in the restless and disorderly manner incidental to such men, and such boys. The additional care he was compelled to take in driving, very likely had the effect of distancing from his mind more uncomfortable topics. As he neared the square in which Judge Manning resided, he found the throng and confusion to increase, and as he had forgotten the number of the house where the judge resided, he drew up close to the iron-railings of the centre garden of the square where there was the least tumult; and having dismounted he approached the carriage-door to speak to Grace.

“I have forgotten the number,” he said, “of your father's house.”

“It is forty,” she replied. “But you will know it by the first floor being adorned with columns.”

Claude looked about him. The only house so decorated was the one that was the very focus as it were of all the bustle and confusion. Its windows were a glare of light; and there was abundant evidences of its being at that time the centre of attraction in consequence of some large *fête* or entertainment going on there.

“Look out for a moment,” said Claude.

She did so.

“Is that your father's house?”

He pointed to the one where the lights blazed forth with so much brilliancy, and from which came the sounds of music.

“Ah, yes,” she replied, “it is—it is.”

“There is something unusual seems to be going on. Shall I enquire? or will you have me drive you to the door at once?”

“I have been thinking,” said Grace, kindly, “that my father might not wish that this affair should attain an undue publicity. He can punish my guilty cousin, without any but the members of our own family knowing aught of the circumstances.”

“You have but to decide,” said Claude, “what you would wish done, and I will do it for you, with the greatest pleasure.”

“And—and, besides, my father has many guests to-night,” she said, shrinkingly. “I would fain, that by some less public means, than by entering his house, amid such a throng, he knew I was here.”

“That is not difficult,” said Claude.

“Is it not?”

“No. If you have courage to remain here for a short time, I will make my way to your father, and let him know all that has occurred, when he may take what steps he may think proper, in his wisdom, to get you into his house. Will that be the best way?”

"It will; but it is imposing upon you so much trouble."

"The trouble is nothing," said Claude, with a smile. How truly he might have added—"But the danger is much." He was too generous, however, to let Grace Manning know how much more she was indebted to him, for such a service as he was rendering to her, than she would have been to any other person, upon



THE DEAD INFORMED BY CLAUDE AND DICK.

whose existence a price had been set. There can be no doubt, but that in following out the impulses of his generous feelings in this adventure, Claude ran the greatest risks. But if a courage, as rare as it was admirable, would suffice to carry him through such an adventure, he would be carried through it safely.

"Be cautious," he said, as he closed the carriage door carefully. "Be cautious, I pray you, and speak to no one."

"Depend upon my caution, as you may upon my gratitude," replied Grace Manning, in a voice faltering from emotion.

Claude felt that he could not hope, without creating more observations than was at all desirable, to obtain an interview with Judge Manning in his then present costume; but he was too much of an adept in changes of that sort, to suffer much difficulty upon that score. By taking off his great coat, which he had flung over one of the horses, and making a few other trifling changes in his costume, he was able to look quite dressed enough not to be remarkable, although he certainly did not look as though he was attired for an entertainment. It was easier for a foot passenger than for one in a vehicle to get to the door of the judge's house. Claude soon succeeded in elbowing his way along, until he ascended the steps; and then accosting a powdered and bedizened flunkey, whom he saw lolling with some companions, he said—

"Are you the judge's servant?"

There was something in Claude's tone and manner which induced a respectful answer, when to any one else, probably, it would have been an insolent one.

"Yes, sir."

"Show me into a waiting-room, then, and let him know that a gentleman must see him on business of importance."

"The judge, sir, is very busy."

"Yes, I know."

"It is a party you see, sir."

"Never mind that. My business will quite satisfy the judge, that I am justified in disturbing him. The world don't stand still because people have parties."

"My good, sir, will you step this way?"

Claude followed the footman, and was shown into a waiting-room close at hand. In another moment he was alone.

"How will all this end, now," he said to himself. "Shall I get clear of this most perilous adventure, or shall I by some cross accident find that by trying to do good I have brought upon myself evil? Well, well, we shall see. We shall see."

The room was well lighted, although not brilliantly, that is to say it was not lighted as though it formed any part of the fete but only in the ordinary sufficient manner.

The door suddenly opened, and the servant who opened it announced the judge. Claude advanced towards him and bowed. He felt rather surprised that the judge did not, as a gentleman both by education and habits he must be, he did not make the least show of returning the compliment.

"Well, sir," he merely said.

Indeed, thought Claude, this is not exactly the man whose feelings Grace need have been so very particular about sparing."

"It is of your daughter, sir, I come to speak," said Claude.

"Well, sir!"

Claude was thunderstricken to find the indifference of the judge upon such a point; and for some moments he was silent. How very unworthy is this man, he thought, of such a child as Grace.

"Well, sir," repeated Judge Manning, with still more harshness and abruptness than before.

"Shame upon you, sir," said Claude, "that the name of your fair child does not call up gentler emotions. Were I the father of such a piece of gentleness and excellence as Grace Manning, and a stranger came to me with her name upon his lips, my tenderest feelings, my deepest anxieties would be raised. I am sorry that she has such a father."

The judge clutched the back of a chair for support; as in a voice that shook with passion, he said—

"Where is she? What do you demand?"

"Demand?"

"Yes, speak, ruffian, name the extent of your demand."

"Ruffian! How dare you?"

"Peace. No more of this. I know you, I say—I know you. You may well taunt, to find that it is so, and that by a circumstance quite sufficiently extraordinary to enable me to think it almost a kind interposition of Heaven. I know you, and therefore I say without further parley, how much do you demand villain?"

"Sir, if you do know me, you may congratulate yourself upon knowing a more courteous, and possibly honester man than yourself."

"Dare you thus insult me?"

"Ay, I dare."

"In my own house?"

"Your own house? What is there in the atmosphere of your own house, I should like to know, what gives you a license to use intemperate language without the ordinary consequences? Tell me that."

"You incorrigible rascal."

"I am sorry to call the father of Grace Manning an ill mannerly old idiot," said Claude.

The judge sank into a chair as he said, in gasping tones—

"I thought I should be equal to this interview, but I am not. No, I am not. I feel that I am not."

"That is quite evident," said Claude.

"Torture me no more."

"Torture you! I torture you! Is this man mad?"

"You will drive me mad. What sum of money do you demand for the restoration of my child? Answer me that. Let your demand be exorbitant and you shall have it."

"There is some horrible mistake here," said Claude. "Sir, the conviction is momentarily creeping over me that by some means, Heaven only knows how, we are at cross purposes."

"Cross purposes?"

"Yes, that is quite clear. I come here not without some risk, to do you a great service, and am met by personal abuse, and some of them strangest questions one man could put to another. You ask me to name a sum; I want no money of you."

"What do you want then?"

"To restore to you your daughter."

"Where is she? I demand to know where she is?"

"Stop," said Claude. "In the first place indulge me by briefly explaining to me, who and what you take me to be."

"Read that, and tremble," said the judge, as he laid a crumpled note before Claude, who took it up and read it with astonishment. It was addressed to Phillip Manning, Esq., and was as follows—

"Sir—Knowing you as the nephew of the much respected Judge Manning and knowing that, notwithstanding some wildness of behaviour incidental to youth, you entertain the greatest respect and love for your uncle, I apprise you of an affair that very nearly concerns his happiness.

Some villains, by way of raising a sum of money, intend by a false tale of your illness, to get your cousin, Grace, to accompany them from her aunts at the Lodge. They will hide her somewhere until your uncle's fears for her safety induces him to pay a large sum, literally, for her ransom.

One of the gang will call upon your uncle this evening, to open the affair as regards the money. It is for you to take such steps, contingent upon this piece of intelligence as your affection for both your uncle and your cousin, may dictate to you.

You may rely upon the perfect authenticity of this intelligence."

"From your well-wisher,"

"A. B. C."

"P. S.—Do not seek to know who I am, as the gang of rascals, whose pro-

ceedings in this case I inform you of, would murder me if they knew I had betrayed them."

"Now, sir," said the judge, when he saw that Claude had perused the letter.

"Now, sir, are you convinced how far my knowledge extends?"

"I am astonished!"

"And you do not blush at your infamy? Alas! alas! My poor nephew upon the receipt of this letter, which was slipped into his hands in the street by a woman, who immediately fled, took horse and went to the lodge. He was too late. Too late."

"Too late for what, sir?"

"To save my child. The villains had already got her away with them; and I—I.—But name your price."

"And your nephew, to-night, brought you this letter?"

"Only a quarter of an hour ago."

"Is he here?"

"He is; and I will confront you with him."

"Stop, hear my statement first. It was your nephew, Phillip, himself, who planned this abduction of your daughter. He, himself, is the writer or the dictator of this letter."

"Impossible!"

"Yet true. I rescued your daughter from his hands, at her her own earnest, and imploring solicitation."

"I will have him here to confute you."

The judge rang the bell, and when an attendant appeared, he said—

"Tell Mr. Phillip that I want him."

"He is not within, sir."

"Not within?"

"No, sir. He left the house about a quarter of an hour ago. Indeed, directly after he had seen you, sir."

"And left no message?"

"None, sir."

"Of course not," said Claude. "It would have transcended even his impertinence and assurance to have met with me before you face to face."

"I cannot for a moment," said the judge, after ordering the servant to leave the room, "I cannot for a moment believe your statement. What proof can you bring me of it?"

"What proof has Phillip Manning brought you of his statement, sir?"

"Your presence here is amply sufficient."

"Well, thank God, I, too, have proof of the truth of my statement. Proof before which he would quail, and before which your scruples must vanish into thin air."

"What proof?"

"Your daughter's testimony."

"Ah! That indeed—but no—no—Phillip could not—dared not——"

"Suspend your judgment, sir. Close to the railings of the square garden, and a little to the left only of being exactly opposite to your house, is a plain brown travelling chaise. A great coat is thrown over one of the horses—in that chariot is your daughter."

"My Grace? My child?"

"Even so, sir. After rescuing her from Phillip, her worthy cousin, I only paused sufficiently long to enable her to take some refreshment at a farm house at Ealing, for she was faint and weary, and then I brought her direct to you. Send your servant to bring her here, and I will stand or fall by the statement the young lady may please herself to make."

The judge rang the bell violently, and several servants rushed into the room at once.

"My secretry!" he said. "My secretary!"

## CHAPTER CXLVIII.

## THE STRONG CELL.

THE judge seemed to be quite exhausted by the violence of his emotions, after giving utterance to this order, and he sat in a large chair, looking as pale as death itself.

"The company, sir, ask for you," said a servant.

The judge only waved his arm, as though he would deprecate any attempt to withdraw him from the business he then had in hand, but the servant was not used to the language of signs, or he thought the entertainment that was going on above stairs was too important a matter to be disposed of by a wave of the hand, so with more pertinacity, he said—

"Sir, the saloons are full, and Lord John Muscle has twice asked for you, sir, if you please."

"Let him ask again. Begone!"

The servant retired, but those who had gone in search of the secretary presently announced Mr. Atkinson, who was the secretary in question.

A middle-aged respectable-looking man was this secretary, with a remarkably soft voice, and much suavity of manner.

"Atkinson," said the judge, speaking with difficulty on account of the deep emotion he was suffering under, "Atkinson, I am informed that Miss Manning is in a coach close at hand. Will you fetch her?"

"With the extremest pleasure, sir."

"Go, go—let no one know——"

"You will find the young lady," said Claude, "in a plain travelling chariot, without any arms upon it; and you will know it by a great coat being thrown over the off horse."

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Atkinson, "this gentleman will accompany me?"

"No, no," said the judge.

"No," said Claude, "I am a sort of hostage or gage here for the truth of what I assert regarding the young lady being in the carriage at all."

Mr. Atkinson stared.

"But I am willing to be such bail for such a fact," added Claude; "and you will better please both me and the judge by being prompt in your mission, sir."

Mr. Atkinson left the room hastily.

"He will bring her in by the side door," said the judge, "which opens into the next street, if she be there to bring."

"She is there to bring," said Claude.

"Sir, if you should turn out to be right, I shall give you what reparation I can for my suspicions of you."

"And nothing for the service I have rendered you in rescuing your child from the hands of such a scoundrel as your nephew."

"Oh, yes; much—much. Name the price, and I——"

"Price? Price? Really, my lord judge, you seem to think that all human nature may be bought and sold, and to subscribe to the doctrine that every man has his price."

"We will settle all this, sir, when Mr. Atkinson returns," said the judge.

"Do not let us enter into what in either event must be a profitless discussion. If you have saved my child, you will find no occasion to taunt me with any want of gratitude. If your statement on the other hand be untrue, your own imagination may depict to you what a father is likely to feel, and likely to do in consequence."

Claude slightly bowed, and then the conversation stopped.

The judge with difficulty rose, and proceeded towards a door opposite to that by which the room seemed to be generally entered. He opened this door and held it partly for self support, and partly to keep it open, as he said—

"This is the way, she will come. Of course if she be there at all, Atkinson will bring her at once to me. This is the way, she will come. Oh, God, if anything has really happened to my girl?"

The fatherly anxiety of the judge, and the evident affection with which he named his daughter made a favourable impression upon Claude, and quite effaced anything in the shape of irritation which his mind had felt upon the occasion of the few words that had passed between them.

"Be at ease, sir," he said. "All is well."

"I hope so."

"You may be assured so. Your child will be restored to your arms pure and spotless, as when she left them."

"She is my only child, sir, and if anything were to happen to—but no, no that is impossible."

He shrank back from the door, and again sank into a chair.

"I hear footsteps," he said.

"Then she comes," said Claude.

"I—I only hear the footsteps of one person, and they are not hers. Do you think, sir, a father's ear would not recognise the footsteps of his child?"

Claude approached the half open door. In another moment Mr. Atkinson appeared. Claude grasped him by the arm tightly, as he said, in loud clear accents.

"Miss Manning, sir? Where is she?"

"I only wish I had the supreme happiness of knowing. There is no such coach as you mention—no such horse with a great coat thrown over him, and I grieve to say no Miss Manning."

The judge uttered a deep groan.

"This is false," cried Claude. "It is too absurd. It is—is—good God—it is possible——"

"What is possible," said the judge. "Speak now—speak. I command you to speak to me. What new horror would you suggest?"

"That your nephew, Phillip, may have dogged your child and me to London, and while we were here engaged in profitless discourse, he may have again seized her."

"Oh dear, oh dear," said the secretary, "that I should live to hear that. The blood of the Mannings, sir, would not stoop—could not bear down as it were in a manner of speaking to——"

"This is trash!" cried Claude impatiently. "I will go and search for her myself. Do not despair, sir, I have promised, myself, to bring you your daughter, and I will keep my word."

Claude was moving towards the door, but the judge rising with a sudden energy, cried in a fierce tone—

"Stop that man! Do not let him escape! Seize that man!"

"Is this possible," said Claude.

"Stop him! Seize, I give him into custody!"

Claude had reached the door, when Atkinson shouted—

"Stop thief!"

Stung by the injustice that was being done him, Claude drew a pistol from his pocket, and cried—

"Take your reward for that cry!"

He pulled the trigger, but the weapon was faithless. During his drive from Ealing, the powder in the pan got scattered, and so Mr. Atkinson was saved. It was the only weapon Claude had about him, for at the moment he recollected with a pang of anguish that he had placed his other pistols in the pocket of the great coat he had flung over the back of the horse.

"Ah, I am supremely fortunate," said Atkinson. "Stop thief!"

"Are you," said Claude, as he flung the pistol in his face with a force that sent him retiring to the floor with an awful contusion upon his nose. "Are you. Let him who sets small value upon his life try to stop me!"



The cries of the judge, and of Atkinson, had by this time reached the saloons and the hall, so that Claude, when he gained the threshold of the room in which this singular conversation had taken place, found himself in the midst of a throng of persons.

With a conviction of his fate he said to himself in a low voice—

“I am taken.”

But it was only to himself that he made this remark, and not to his foes.

Dashing forward, he endeavoured to make his way through the throng of persons, for he felt that in so doing, upon the spur of the moment, lay his only chance of escape.

He was nearly successful, but in fighting his way he quite forgot that there was a rather steep step at the door. His foot slipped, and he fell.

In another moment he was a prisoner.

“Thank you, Phillip Manning,” said Claude, bitterly to himself.

“Hold him tight—hold him,” cried Atkinson. “Where’s a constable, hold him tight. He seems a desperate fellow!”

Some half dozen men held Claude until a constable came up, who said in a voice of authority—

“What’s the charge?”

“Felony!” cried a voice, and the old judge appeared to be in the hall. You know me, officer?”

“Yes, your honour.”

“Then I give this man in charge, and you will take him upon my personal responsibility?”

“Certainly, your honour!”

Claude was forcibly held while a pair of handcuffs were put upon him, and then Atkinson coming up to him, said—

“I have the supreme satisfaction of congratulating myself upon the fact, that you will be hanged.”

“No,” said Claude. “Not this time. You and I will meet again and without witnesses, too, before that happens. You may affect to smile, but you will find me a true prophet.”

“Ha! ha!” laughed, or rather tried to laugh, Atkinson, for it was only a try after all.

“Take away your prisoner,” said the judge.

“Now, young fellow,” said the officer; “come along.”

“Where to?” said Claude.

“Where to? Why the lock-up of St. James’s to be sure, and there we can accommodate you with a strong cell. Perhaps you know it?”

“No.”

“You don’t? Well, then, you will another time, if you should escape being lagged or scragged this time, which ain’t very likely, you see; for if anybody ought to know what they are, stout old Judge Manning ought to be that individual. Oh, that’s you, Morgan, is it; I’m glad you are come, for I don’t much like this customer single-handed, though the darbies are on him. There’s no knowing how many palls he may have about this ere place.”

These words were addressed to another officer who came up at the moment.

“What’s he been amusing himself with doing?” said Morgan.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? Then how came you to take the charge? Is he a war-rant customer?”

“Not a bit of it; but Judge Manning gave him to me, and says it’s felony, and orders him to be well looked after.”

“Oh, that alter’s the case. I’ll come with you.”

Morgan walked on the other side of Claude and after some time, he said—

“And pray what do you call yourself, young fellow, when you are at home?”

“What will you give me for that information?” said Claude.

“Give you?”

"Yes. How much will you give me?"

"That is a good one. Well, if you ain't a cool hand. Come, old fellow, just to honour the joke, how much do you want?"

"£500."

"What?"

"£500, and that's cheap too; there's many would like the bargain."

"Well, of all the pieces of impudence that I ever heard of, I think this beats them," said the officer.

"And I too," said the other. "£500! Well that is a good one—and all for the pleasure of knowing what a man's name is."

"We shall see," said Claude.

At that time in the evening there were few, indeed, in the streets to take any notice of Claude and his captors, and probably if there had there would not have been many who, in the prisoner, would have recognised the famous Claude Duval, over whose head there hung rewards equal to within a trifle of £3000.

The old watch-house of St. James's was soon reached; as the constable for the night had just taken his seat, Claude was brought before him with no small amount of affected bustle.

"Hilloa! hilloa!" cried the night constable on duty; "what's the charge against this gentleman? Accommodate him with a seat."

Claude's appearance had had its effect, and the constable no doubt thought it was some street row or practical joke, concerning which, the distinguished-looking personage—for Claude was distinguished-looking—that was brought before him, was about to be charged with.

"Why, your worship," said one of the constables, "this ain't my charge, but Judge Manning has given the prisoner into custody, and desires he be kept fast, and he will make it all right."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, that's it, your worship."

The night constable—who was called worship, from the same strained courtesy that folks in the House of Commons are called Honourable Members, or in the House of Lords, Noble Lords, or on thrones, miracles of beauty and virtue—turned a fierce look upon Claude, as he said—

"You ill-looking rascal, what have you been doing?"

Claude did not condescend to return any answer.

"What is your name, villain?"

"Don't you know me, any of you?"

They all looked at him, and shook their heads.

"Will any one here give £500 for a knowledge of who I am? I will impart that knowledge to him secretly, and I don't want to be paid immediately."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the night constable. "Ha! ha! That's good. Oh, what a ruffian this must be, to make jokes in St. James's watch-house, actually."

"Well," said Claude, "if you will persist in considering it merely as a joke, I cannot help it. You can have your own way."

"Ah, my fine fellow, that's just what we mean to have, and what we generally have. There's no doubt you are a great rogue, or Judge Manning would not have taken the trouble to have anything to do with you. Ha! ha! You shall be put in the strong cell, my fine fellow. Jobkins! Jobkins!"

"Yes, sir."

"Is the strong cell vacant?"

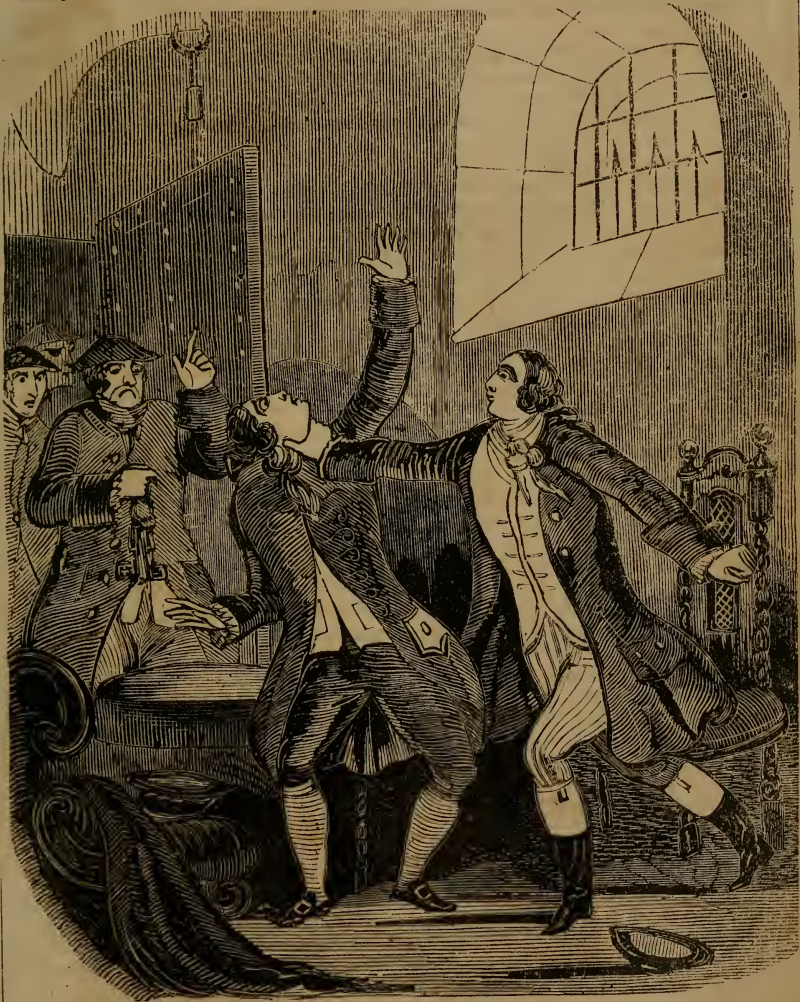
"Yes, sir. All's right; but it lets in the water woundily."

"That's no matter. It's refreshing. You will put this fellow in, and in the morning I will wait upon Judge Manning myself, and ascertain what he has done."

## CHAPTER CXLIX.

## THE SUPPLEMENTAL SESSION.

THIS was certainly a novel mode of administering justice, to lock up a man in a strong cell over night, and then go in the morning to inquire what he had done; and, probably, even the non-astute mind of the night constable might have been



CLAUDE SEIZING PHILLIP MANNING BY THE THROAT IN NEWGATE.

a trifle shocked at so unusual a mode of doing business, had he not had the authority of a judge for it.

Mr. Jobkins, who was a great, hulking-looking, good-humoured fellow, with a face about the size and colour of a warming-pan, escorted Claude to the strong cell, according to the orders he had received that way tending.

That anything but desirable location was situated under ground, and reached by a descent of twelve steps. An iron door then opened, and then there were two steps more, after which the strong cell was gained.

It would have been more to the purpose if they had added another syllable to its name, and called the strong cell the strong cellar, for a cellar it was to all intents and purposes.

Now, Jobkins was kind in his way, and he said to Claude, as they descended the stairs together—

“I don’t know what you have done; but there’s no need that you should be more uncomfortable than needs be, I’ll take of your handcuffs for you.”

“Thank you,” said Claude, “thank you. I will remember this act of kindness, and it will go hard with me but some day I will find a means of requiting it.”

“Oh, that’s no matter.”

“Jobkins took of the handcuffs, adding, as he did so—

“If the cell ain’t strong enough to hold a man safe for a night without a pair of darbies on him, it ain’t no good at all.”

“That is true enough,” said Claude. “You spoke of it letting in water, did you not, my friend?”

“Yes I did, and not without reason too. Don’t you hear it.”

They both paused upon the threshold of the cell, and Claude heard quite distinctly the dripping of water.

“That’s anything but pleasant,” he said.

“Quite the reverse of pleasant,” added Jobkins. “It’s not common to put anybody in here at all, unless they have shown fight.”

“How do you mean by showing fight?”

“Why made a row up stairs, and tried to get away, but you have not done that at all. Howsoever I suppose the night constable thinks he’ll please the old judge by telling of him in the morning what an amazing lot of care he took of you.”

“Very likely.”

Claude stepped into the cell. It felt sloppy under his feet, and a natural feeling of indignation arose in his mind at the idea of it being a part of the barbarous policy of the state, to confine prisoners in such unwholesome places, and that too before they were convicted of any offence against society.

“You stand still a bit,” said Jobkins, “and I’ll try to make the place a little more comfortable for you.”

How he was to succeed in doing that, Claude could not divine, but he waited for about a quarter of an hour with patience. Then the door of the cell was opened, and a truss of straw was thrown in.

“All right,” said Jobkins.

“Yes,” said Claude. “Thank you, all is right as you say, and I am very much obliged to you, indeed.”

“Don’t mention it.”

The cell was locked up, and Claude was alone.

Under the circumstances in which he now was, his reflections were not likely to be other than of the most painful character. In addition to the mental aggravation of being apprehended upon a charge of which he was most particularly innocent, he could not doubt but that upon his appearance in the morning at a police-office, some one would be able to recognise him; and in that event he would be at once hurried to Newgate, and his death determined upon as soon as possible.

When he came to consider, he much doubted if, even upon his recognition by any one, that person would get any reward, since he (Claude) was already in custody; but after all, that was a matter that did not much disturb him.

He began quite plainly to understand how the whole affair had been managed by Phillip Manning. That unscrupulous individual had got to town just a little before him (Claude) by some means, and prepossessed the mind of his uncle with

the story that had induced the judge to give him (Claude) such a strange, and, at the time, incomprehensible reception.

Then Phillip had—probably by the assistance of some persons in his service, while he (Claude) was talking to the judge—left the house, and got possession of the young girl, and driven the chariot off with her.

And even amid all his own troubles, serious and affecting his life as they were, Claude felt heart-stricken at the idea of Grace Manning being in the hands and at the mercy of her abandoned cousin.

“And thus,” he said, “for a time does wickedness triumph.”

After a while he stirred himself to see if there were any means by which he could possibly escape from the cell. He tried the door; but destitute of implements as he there was, any attempt to force it would be utterly futile. The walls he struck in all parts; but from the dead sound they returned he felt certain that the cellar he was in was a mere excavation, and that all around him was solid earth, so that he could only hope that on the morrow something would turn up of an advantageous character, so as to induce the judge to side with a belief in his innocence before any discovery of who or what he really was could be made.

And Claude had some confidence in the usual stupidity of the police. He well knew their great anxiety to identify any one whom they were asked if they knew, and he likewise well knew how stupid they were at anything in the shape of recollection.

Of course, when he reasoned thus of the police, he excepted some of the old experienced Bow-street men, who, if they were to see him, would at once be able to name him.

Wearied with such agitations, and worn out by the great fatigues he had gone through for the last twenty four hours, Claude, at length, lay right in the centre of the truss of straw, that had been so kindly given to him by Jobkins, and fell fast asleep.

The probability is, that he enjoyed a far sounder repose than Phillip Manning, notwithstanding that villain had so successfully, for the time being, got the better of him, by fixing his own guilt upon his (Claude's) innocent shoulders.

Daylight at bright noon, and midnight, were alike in the strong cell of the St. James's watch-house.

Claude started, and rubbed his eyes, when some one called “Hallo! hallo!—Get up, unless you are fond enough of the damp to lie here and rot.”

It was not Jobkins who made this speech. Claude rose, and felt his limbs much stiffened by, no doubt, the damp air in which he had slept; before trying to turn his head he found that he had got that most unpleasant companion, a stiff neck. He could not help uttering a malediction upon the place.

“Ha! ha!” said the officer, who came to fetch him, “you don't seem to like it at all. But come on; it's time you made an appearance at the police office.”

Claude did not condescend to make this man any answer, but followed him up the twelve steps.

It was broad daylight.

A tin mug, half full of water, and a lump of very brown, coarse looking bread was given to him for breakfast, and then he was permitted at a pump to wash his face and hands.

“Now, you rascal,” said the night-constable, bustling up to him, “I have seen the judge.”

“Have you?” said Claude. “Is he pretty well after it?”

“After what?”

“After the infliction of a visit from such an ass as you are.”

The officers did not want to laugh; but they could not stand this, and a general roar testified their appreciation of the joke against the night-constable, who was not celebrated among them for any large amount of wisdom.

“You villain, do you dare to make a laughing-stock of me?”

“Oh, yes,” said Claude.

"I wonder I don't knock you down."

"It's no wonder at all. The simple explanation is, that you are afraid to try it."

The night-constable looked ferocious; but he turned away muttering to himself—

"If I can do you an ill turn, master, I will; you may make up your mind to that. I never was so insulted in all my life."

Claude felt that now was coming the time when he would have to run the risk of detection in his true character. He wished much to prolong the period during which he should be unknown; and he so disposed his hair, and the upper part of his clothing, that he looked as unlike what he usually looked as possible.

He thought it would be prudent to give some name to the magistrate, however; if he did not, he knew that the officers would all be put upon the mettle to find out who he was, and some one might make a shrewd guess, who otherwise might not have his attention directed towards him (Claude) at all.

Police vans were at that time things undreamt of, and the charges over night at the various watch-houses of the metropolis, were taken through the streets properly ironed, and the procession headed by a couple of officers, while two more brought up the rear; and in this way was Claude Duval conducted to Bow Street.

He had hoped that some other less conspicuous police office would have been chosen; but Bow Street it was.

His was not the first case called upon, but when he was conducted into the court, he saw Judge Manning on the bench talking to the magistrate. The judge, looked old and worn.

A general feeling of curiosity was manifest upon the countenances of all who were present, for it had got whispered about that the case was a curious one, and Claude found himself very uncomfortably the centre of attraction.

The magistrate was a short, bloated-looking man with an immense projecting under lip, and features indicative of sensuality in the highest degree. His voice was harsh and discordant.

"Well, prisoner," he cried, "what is your name?"

"John Smith," said Claude. "What is the charge against me?"

"Oh, you want to know the charge, do you?"

"I trust that that is not a very unreasonable amount of curiosity in one so situated as I am."

"You are a scoundrel, sir! Hold your tongue."

"You are a fool, sir, and a liar," said Claude; "and if holding my tongue, in your vernacular, means keeping silent, while you make me the subject of silly and impertinent remarks, I will not do so."

The face of the irritable magistrate turned of a purplish hue. Never had he been before so defied in public, and, like most bullies, he had, when such a circumstance really took place, hardly anything to say for himself.

Judge Manning interposed.

"Pardon me, your worship," he said, "for interfering; but I am quite willing to state the charge against the prisoner at the bar."

"Very well—very well," said the magistrate, wiping his face with a flaring silk handkerchief. "Very well—as you please, my lord. Let it be so."

He spoke as though it was some great indulgence to the prisoner at the bar to state the charge against him. What a famous inquisitor such a magistrate would have made; but then, all this was in the olden time. Ministers are now forced to place men of education and some judgment on the magisterial bench; but it is only the force of public opinion that has made the change, as only the force of public opinion makes all changes in this country of corruption, and dominant rascality. All ministers go into office with but one motto, and that is "Resistance to all change."

"The charge," added Judge Manning, "is for the abdication of a young lady."

His voice faltered as he spoke.

"Not guilty," cried Claude.

"Silence," said the magistrate.

"Not guilty," cried Claude again, in a voice that might have been quite conveniently heard in Bow-street.

"Allow me to state the charge and to call my witnesses," said the judge.

The magistrate waved his hand as though he were the emperor of all the world, and only graciously gave his permission for other folks to breathe a little to keep life in them.

"I charge this man," added Judge Manning, "with the abduction, from the house where she was residing, some distance from London, of my daughter, Grace Manning."

He then briefly and very clearly went through the particulars already known to the reader; namely, the mysterious commission to Phillip, and the arrival of Claude at the mansion in town, with his accusation of Phillip, and assertion that Grace was in a chariot without, and would substantiate it; when no Grace and no such chariot could be seen at all in the neighbourhood.

Claude listened to all this without the least interruption, and then the judge said—

"If the prisoner has any question to ask of me, I shall of course reply to him."

"I would merely ask if your nephew Phillip enjoys your confidence?"

"My confidence?"

"Yes. Is he a person of that character that you consider him worthy of belief?"

"Yes—yes—Now."

"Then there was a time when such was not the case."

"There was."

"I have nothing further to ask of you, sir. I have only to say that you are much deceived."

"Well," said the magistrate, "this is quite clear. The prisoner at the bar has committed a most heinous offence, and I shall commit him for trial."

"Perhaps you will condescend," said Claude, "to hear any witnesses first that may depose to what the prosecutor has stated, and which, with all due deference to him, I would suggest is not yet proved."

"I will call my nephew," said the judge.

"Ah," said Claude. "I shall be glad to see him."

Phillip was in the body of the court; and now looking as pale as death itself, he made his appearance. It will easily be conceived how reluctant he must have been to come forward and confront Claude, and yet how impossible it was that he should not do so under the circumstances.

The oath was tendered to him and duly taken.

"Now, Phillip," said the judge. "You will oblige me by stating as briefly as you can all that you know of this affair; and you will be as temperate as you can."

"I will, sir."

"Proceed then," said the magistrate.

Phillip had time to muster up courage to look Claude in the face, but he could not do so; and the conscience that the eye of the innocent man whom he was going to do all that perjury could do to condemn, was upon him, dazzled him like sunlight.

There surely is something in the very nature of truth that makes it apparent and infinitely superior in its very essence to falsehood; for notwithstanding Phillip had a good tale to tell, and was well backed by both the magistrate and his uncle, no one in the court could listen to him without a lurking suspicion that all was not right with his evidence.

## CHAPTER CL.

## CLAUDE'S FRIENDS BECOME ACTIVE.

We shall see how he got on with his vile and slanderous tale of infamy and calumny.

Phillip Manning put in the letter that he said he had received, and which pretended to warn him of the projected abduction of his cousin Grace; and then he went on to say how he had tried to thwart the design—been too late, and finally, just managed to get to London again in time to put his uncle in possession of the frightful fact that Grace was actually carried off.

“Look at me,” said Claude.

By a good effort, Phillip managed to do so.

“Where have you seen me before?”

“At my uncle’s house, last night.”

“And when and where before that?”

“Nowhere.”

“Then I will refresh your memory. We met in a green lane near to Ealing, yesterday. Do you deny that, upon your oath?”

“I do.”

“Do you keep a carriage?”

“Certainly not. My income will not permit me to do such a thing.”

“But your income will no doubt easily permit you to hire one now and then, Mr. Phillip Manning, and that was possibly the case as regards the one in which I stopped you when you were conveying off Miss Manning.”

“This is monstrous,” said the magistrate; “what does the prisoner mean?”

“Ay,” said Phillip, “what can he mean?”

“Simply,” said Claude, “that I rescued Grace Manning from you yesterday, and brought her to London. By her own request, I left her for a few moments outside her father’s house while I went in to prepare him for her sudden appearance, and during those few moments she disappeared. Where she is now, you Phillip Manning can best tell.”

“I?”

“Yes, who but you?—who but you stole out of your uncle’s house, while he and I were talking, and made off with her?”

“Surely, surely this cannot be true?” said the judge.

“It is all false,” said Phillip. “I should be worse than the worst if I could do such acts.”

“You would, indeed, Phillip.”

“And are,” said Claude. “That such has been the case I am now quite certain; and a time will come, I hope, when the only witness who can clear up this affair will do so, to my honour, and to Phillip’s confusion.”

“What witness?” said Phillip, looking round him with apprehension, as though he feared that from the crowd in the court some one would step forward and confront him, bringing proofs of his duplicity and villany.

“This man asks what witness?” said Claude; “and I declare that the witness I hope yet to see will be Grace Manning.”

“Where is she?” said Phillip.

“What!” said Claude, “have you forgotten where you took her to last night?”

“I—I took her nowhere—I don’t know anything about her.”

“Prisoner,” said the judge, “restore me my child, and, even now, I will abandon this charge, and you shall go free.”

“I wish I could,” said Claude; “ask your nephew.”

The judge sunk back upon his seat again, from whence he had partially risen, and uttered a long-drawn sigh.

“I will commit him,” said the magistrate. “Prisoner at the bar, you stand committed to take your trial for——”



"Stop a moment," said Claude. "Has Phillip Manning a servant—a stout man with red hair?"

"Yes, yes," said the judge, "he had."

"Then that servant was with him, when I met him in the green lane, and rescued your daughter from him. He was then playing the part of a postillion."

"Well, my servant is here," said Phillip; "put him upon his oath, and let us see where he was last night at the time you mention. Peter! Peter!"

"Here, sir," said a voice; and the identical man who had driven the chaise, and who, it will be recollected, crawled away in the bustle attendant upon Claude's rescue of Grace Manning, made his appearance.

The oath was taken by this man; and Claude said to him—

"Where were you yesterday, about sunset?"

"I was in London all day, and all night too. My master gave me a guinea to go and relieve a poor family with, and that took me all day, for I could not find where they had moved to."

"But you found them at last; and, I hope, relieved them?"

"No; I couldn't for the life of me discover where they had moved to. Please, sir," turning to Phillip, "here's the guinea, as I could not find the poor people."

"That will do," said Claude. "I have nothing further to say to this witness. Time alone can put this affair to rights. I pity you, my lord judge, more, if possible, than I feel for myself, for you, after all, in the uncertainty as to the fate of your child, are the worst victim of this most foul conspiracy."

"But it shall be found out," cried a voice from the body of the court.

"Ah!" said Claude.

He knew the voice. It was Jack's.

"Who was that?" said the magistrate. "Seize that man, and bring him before me—officers, seize that man; I have not the slightest doubt but that it is one of the prisoner's abandoned accomplices."

An active search was made, and a vast amount of bustle ensued, but the officers with all their exertions were unsuccessful in discovering who had spoken the words.

Claude was very anxious to say a word or two to Jack; but all he could venture upon was a few words of a general character.

"If any friend of mine," he said, "be here, let him try to find Grace Manning as well for my sake as for her own and her father's consolation."

"Yes!" cried the voice again.

"Hush!" said Claude. "Hush!"

"Upon my life!" cried the magistrate, "this is very strange and very annoying. Officers, I demand that the person who interrupts the court in this manner be brought before me immediately!"

The officers now felt the necessity of laying hold of somebody, so, as they could not find the real offender, they laid violent hands on the most stupid, inoffensive, harmless-looking person they could see, and dragged him forward, exclaiming—

"Here he is, your worship. Here he is!"

"Well, fellow," said the magistrate, "what have you got to say for yourself for this indecorous interruption of the court?"

"It wasn't me, your wuship!"

"Come, come—be careful what you say, sir."

"Of course he denies it, your worship," said one of the officers.

"Of course," repeated his sapient worship. "I have a great mind, sir, [to commit you to prison for a month; but as it is, I will let you off this once with a fine of forty— Eh?"

The clerk had whispered something to the magistrate, who, after a whispered consultation with that functionary, added—

"A-hem! Will anybody swear that this was the man who disturbed the court?"

The officers had some sort of dread that the real offender might come forward ; and they nudged each other to take the necessary oath, which the magistrate observing, induced that potentate to say—

“ Well, prisoner, for this time you may go ; but don't let me see your face here again—mark that.”

“ Yes, your wuship ; but I didn't speak.”

“ Go away, sir, and be thankful.”

The man slunk away, and then the judge said, in a low tone, expressive of much dejection—

“ May I request that your worship will remand the prisoner for a week ? I hope, during that time, that by indefatigable exertions, something may be brought to light that will elucidate the mysteries in which this painful affair is enveloped.”

The magistrate assented ; and Claude found himself formally remanded for one week.

Claude was rather anxious regarding what prison he was to be sent to ; for he knew that there was rather a paucity of jail accommodation in London, and that it was a very common thing for even remanded prisoners from all parts of the metropolis to be taken to Newgate.

“ Where am I to be taken ?” he said.

“ To Newgate.”

Claude looked upon his recognition at Newgate as certain, and all he said was—

“ I protest against all this proceeding, Judge Manning. You will be sorry, sir, for sacrificing one who has run into much danger to save you much sorrow.”

“ Save me much sorrow ?”

“ Yes. I tried to do so by restoring to you your daughter. I failed in that, perhaps, mad-brained, too chivalric enterprise, and here I am !”

Judge Manning was evidently shaken.

“ Would to God,” he said, “ I could see my way through all this tangle of incidents ! I shudder to do less or more than justice !”

“ The time will come,” said Claude.

“ Now, young feller,” whispered an officer in his ear. “ This way, if it's all the same to you.”

In another moment he was led from the court. As he passed out he was quite close to Phillip Manning. That rascal glanced around him to see that his uncle was not nigh, and then he saluted Claude with a grin of malice as he said,—

“ I triumph now.”

“ Yes,” said Claude, “ you fancy so.”

“ I know it.”

“ But you dread the result, and that will surely come. Triumph, do you say ? Is that cowardly hang-dog-look one of triumph ? Why, you are shaking with fear, to your inmost soul. Officers, look at us and say which, in your experience, is the guilty, and which the innocent man ?”

The officers only looked at each other, but they made no reply to this remark of Claude's. It was not at all likely, under the circumstances, that they would. As for Phillip he walked away as quietly as possible.

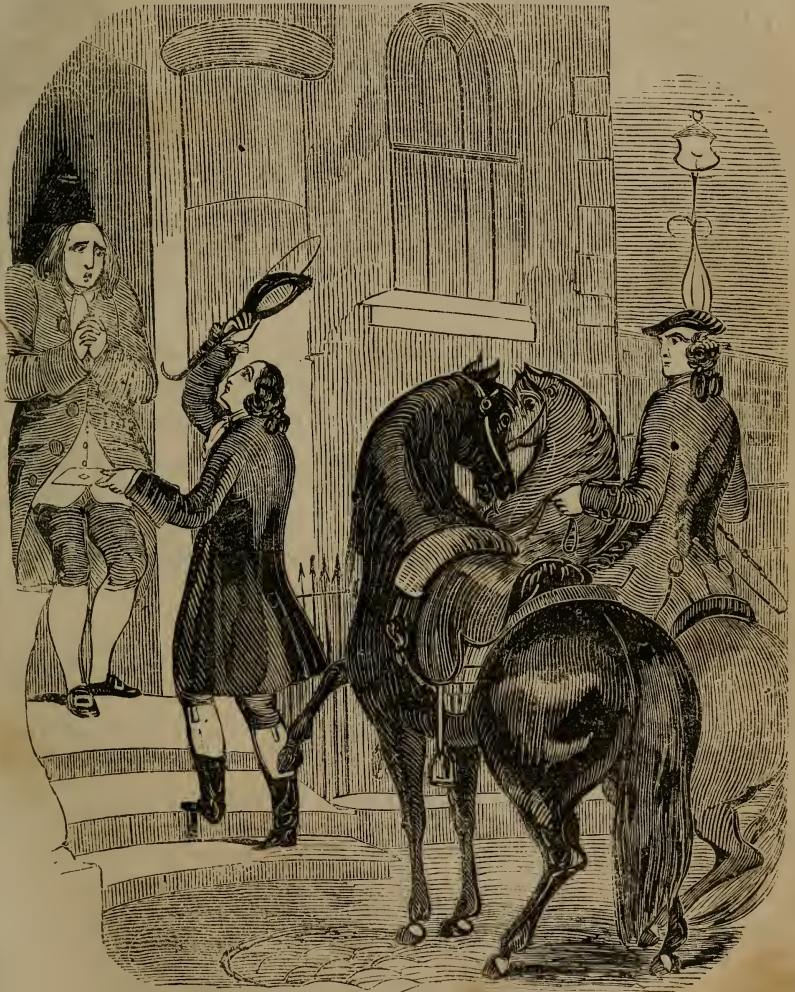
“ Shall I keep up my incognito or not ?” was the question that Claude now put to himself. After a few moments council, he answered, and in the affirmative.— A coach was procured. He was told that that was done by order of Judge Manning, and in the course of about five minutes more our hero was on his road to Newgate.

He was carefully handcuffed.

If such had not been the case he might yet have made some sort of effort at escape, upon the principle, that it ought to be much easier to get out of a coach than out of Newgate.

The gloomy portal of the prison was soon reached, and then came the most anxious moment of all—a moment which would decide whether Claude would be recognised or not by the officials.

“What sort of a lot have you got there?” said the man at the wicket.  
 “I’ll be hung if I know,” said the officer who had special charge of Claude.—  
 “But I don’t suppose it’s of much consequence; I’m to give this letter to the governor. Is he up and about?”  
 “Not he. Didn’t you know he’s been confined to his bed for a fortnight?”  
 “Not I.”



DICK TURPIN PRESENTING HIS CARD AT THE QUAKER'S.

“Well, it’s a fact then, and our fellows say here that he sickened when Claude Duval got away the last time, and has never been his own man again, and won’t be, ’till we have Claude under lock and key.”  
 “Then the letter must be taken to h’m.”  
 “Ay, that can be done. Peter, take this letter to the governor; I suppose it’s about the prisoner?”

"Not a doubt of it as it's from old Judge Manning. The charge though don't seem to be much, and between you and I and the door-post, Bill, this chap, in my notion of things, isn't the right party."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, I do. You take a look at him."

Claude had managed, by stooping, to deceive his real height very much, and by slightly puffing out his cheeks, he certainly materially altered his personal appearance, so that one would have needed to be very familiar, indeed, with him to have recognised him.

"Humph!" said the man who was, as it is technically termed, on the lock.— "Humph! It seems, to me, as if I had seen somebody like him somewhere; but I'll be hanged if I know where."

At this moment the lad, who had been sent to the governor with the letter, came back with it opened, and said,—

"The governor is too ill to attend to it; but he says 'I'm to shew it to Mr. Blain, and he is to attend to it.'"

Then, it's no secret," said the turnkey. "Let's have a look at it."

"Ah read it out," said the officer, who had brought Claude from Bow-street. "Read it out."

"You read it, Peter."

Peter, in a school-boy-like drawling tone of voice, without the smallest regard to punctuation, then read as follows:

"Judge Manning present his compliments to the Governor of Newgate, and would feel obliged by the remanded prisoner, John Smith, being placed in a private room, and shown all the indulgence consistent with his safe keeping; as Judge Manning has not sufficient evidence to pronounce confidently on his guilt, and is anxious to commit as little injustice as possible."

By this time some half dozen officers had repaired to the vestibule, and no one seemed to recognise Claude. They all heard the letter read, and then turned away with looks of indifference, as though they would have said—

"Oh, this is nothing; this will turn out no case."

The one named Blain now took the letter, and intimated to Claude that he was to follow him.

Claude did so, affecting to be quite lame of one leg.

"Are you hurt?" said the officer.

"No," said Claude, "this is an old affair."

"Well, you can rest yourself as long as you like in the place I'm going to take you to; I suppose it's all some mistake?"

"Yes," said Claude, "quite so."

"Ah, well you will have nothing to complain of in Newgate; and when you see Judge Manning again, you can say that Blain made you as comfortable as he could."

"I will; and yet it's an awful thing to be put in Newgate."

"Stuff, I live in it. This way—this way.

I'd work not by night nor by day,  
But back on my fortune I'd fall,  
If I could but find out the right way,  
To say 'wanted' to famed Claude Duval.

Ah, sir, he's the fellow we are all sighing after, here."

"Really," said Claude.

## CHAPTER CLI.

### DICK'S VISIT TO NEWGATE.

IF Claude could in those adverse circumstances in which he was placed, have been amused at anything, probably the regrets, both in prose and verse, of the officer in Newgate, at the impossibility of capturing such a prize as Claude Duval, would have had that effect.

But his heart was too full to enable him to do more than faintly smile.

The room into which he was now conducted, differed very much indeed from those sad and dreary portions of the prison which ordinary malefactors, who had no one upon any ground or with any authority to intercede for them, were placed by the officials.

The letter from Judge Manning had done much more for Claude in Newgate than all the appeals to the humanity and sense of justice that could have been made, would have accomplished; and when it is recollected that many an innocent man is taken up and committed to jail until an investigation of the charge against him is made, it is a disgrace to the jurisprudence of this country, that his punishment should begin before the law has declared him guilty.

But yet such is the case.

It is said in England to be an axiom that the law preserves all accused persons to be innocent, until, by the regular course of judicial investigation, they are clearly and distinctly proved to be guilty; but to any one who has paid attention to the subject, it is quite clear that the administrators of the law, from the lowest policeman to the governor of Newgate, are of a different opinion.

They presume that the suspected and the accused are in all cases guilty, and therefore there is no difference between the convicted thief and the man whose neighbour has "borne false witness against him," in regard to treatment.

Any man in England, who chooses to take a false oath, may place any other man in prison—put handcuffs upon his wrists—associate him with thieves, and characters worse than thieves; and although in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the innocence of the man falsely accused, would eventually be brought to light, who is to undo what is done?—Who is to say that he has not suffered as much up to the point when his innocence becomes apparent, as though he had been guilty?

Hence, then, we say that the treatment of accused persons in England is in all cases most gross and unjustifiable.

That Judge Manning felt this to be the case, is pretty manifest by the care he took that Claude should not undergo it.

The judge had doubts of Claude's guilt, and hence he had sent the letter, which the reader has heard read, to the governor of Newgate. No doubt, in the clear and astute mind of the judge, as the case or presumed case against Claude had developed itself, there had arisen many circumstances to cast a doubt upon his nephew Phillip's statements; and from all that was taking place, Claude entertained a sanguine expectation that if he happened not to be recognised, he might soon find himself at liberty.

There was a carpet upon the floor of the room to which he was consigned, and in other respects it bore evidence of regard for comfort. In a small closet adjoining was a bed, and indeed the only circumstance that really gave it what might be called quite a prison-look was that the windows were well defended by iron bars both within and without.

"What do you think of this?" said the turnkey, as he glanced round with quite an air of pride like the owner of some palace. "You may be as comfortable here as the day is long. Don't you think you can now?"

"I should not wonder," said Claude.

"Only look. Here's a fine view of a bit of the outer wall, and if you only get to this corner of the window and squint downwards, you will see a little bit of one of the enclosed yards."

"Very lively, indeed," said Claude.

"Ah, you may say that. I don't know how they are going to manage about your grub, but I suppose as they have put you into such good quarters as regards your lodging, that will be all right."

"I don't know," said Claude, "what they mean to do, but I know what they ought to do."

"What's that?"

"Why, compensate an innocent man in every way that is possible for an unjust

detention here. Liberty is the dearest possession in the world, and if a man be deprived of that, he may well, provided he be innocent, expect other indulgences."

"Humph!" said the jailor, "as for the innocence, that's neither here nor there. We never yet had anybody in Newgate that, according to their own account, wasn't one of the most injured of individuals; and as for innocence, lord bless you, new born babes afore they begin squalling can't be more innocent than they. Ha—ha—!"

"Ah," said Claude, as he threw himself upon a singularly hard couch that was in the room. "You look, my friend, upon all these things with a professional eye."

"I rather think I do. However, I wish you well; and if I can do you a good turn, I will, for to tell you the truth, I like the looks of you."

"You have my best thanks."

The man smiled and withdrew. Claude heard the sound of the lock of the door as it was carefully secured on the outside, and then there was the unequivocal bang of an iron bar into its place.

"These indulgences," said Claude to himself, "are not without the usual severities, but this is better than a cell. I wonder now if I owe this to the honest convictions creeping over Judge Manning that I have told the truth and that his nephew is a rogue, or to his fears about his child?"

By a natural movement enough now Claude commenced a careful examination of his prison.

No place could so little reward a scrutiny. There was literally nothing that could invite a second glance. The walls were stone. The floor was stone. Hobs or cupboards, with the exception of that which held his bed, there were none, and that might be called something between a hole and a cupboard. Less than five minutes sufficed to convince Claude that there was nothing to glean in the way of hopeful information from an examination of the room, if it might be called so, in which he was.

He cast himself upon the hard couch again, and gave himself up to reflections, some of which were of anything but a pleasant or consolatory character. It seemed to him to be next to an impossibility that he should escape recognition from some of the authorities of Newgate, and in that case he, of course, knew that the very worst might be expected. There was only one gleam of consolation amid the sombre darkness of his position, and that was the conviction that Cicely was safe and well cared for.

It cost him much thought, however, and many pangs to know how and in what way he should communicate to her his perilous position.

When he came upon that subject, the tumult of his thoughts would not allow him to be still, and he rose and paced the small apartment to and fro, with rapid and uneasy steps.

In the midst of this state of things, he was startled by the sudden opening of the door, and Phillip Manning stood upon the threshold.

"You will find him there, sir," said a voice. "I will wait, and you have only to call out in a loud voice 'Very,' and I will come and let you out."

"Thank you," said Phillip.

The door was closed, and he stood a couple of paces within Claude's particular prison.

At this moment, the impulse to knock him down certainly came strongly over Claude, but by a powerful effort of his judgment, he restrained it, for he felt how important it was to him not only to hear what Phillip had to say, but likewise to avoid making any commotion in the prison, which might have the effect of summoning round him some who might know him.

He would not speak first, however, but he looked Phillip in the face with a stern defiance, before which the conscious villain shrunk and trembled.

At length, finding that Claude would not ask him the purport of his visit, he was compelled to commence the conference himself.

"You may make me your friend, if you like," said Phillip.

"No," said Claude. "If such a thing were possible I would decline the process. Speak out at once, and say what new circumlocution of villany brings you here?"

"I regret the turn affairs have taken."

"Indeed."

"Yes, in truth I do; and I think, upon mature consideration, we had better back out of it now, with what we can get."

"We?"

"Yes; I say we, because I am quite willing that you should be a sharer in the full proceeds, you see."

"Go on. Explain yourself more fully," said Claude, controlling as well as he was able, which was not very well, the indignation that was swelling at his heart.

"Why, I don't mind telling you because no one else hears me, and if you repeat it, nobody will believe you, that I did, while you were talking to the Judge, pass out and get possession of Grace."

"I know it."

"That is to say you guessed it."

"Well, well, Phillip, I guessed at it.—What next?"

"I can't help stopping to tell you how well pleased I am to find you so reasonable about this matter; for, to tell you the truth, I fully expected you would have stormed and raved in good style."

"You see how calm I am?"

"Yes, I perceive. Well, as I was saying, I recovered my prisoner and have her safe, but—but the thing is a failure rather, and—and——"

"How a failure? If you have her safe, what do you mean by a failure? You must explain yourself more particularly."

"Well," said Phillip, with a toss of his head. "You know so much of the affair already, and you suspect so much more, that the safest way, if any good is to be done with you, is to tell you all."

"Much the safest," said Claude.

"So I think. In the first place I want money. In the next I was not without a certain amount of admiration of my cousin Grace.

"Good."

"Well, as we were first cousins, and so within the legal bounds of consanguinity, I did not see the least objection to marry her. She is my uncle's only child, and will inherit all his wealth, to a certainty, and he is rich. I proposed to Grace."

"And was rejected?"

"Yes, with great scorn. From that moment I promised myself revenge; but I likewise promised myself that I would be careful in my manner of exacting it. Grace went to stay with a distant relative, from whom I got her away by the story of her father's illness, as you are well aware. You met us and spoiled my plans, or I should have taken her where she would have been quite safe, and I would have forced her into a marriage or blighted her existence in such a way, that it would have been a relief to have had even me to have called by the name of husband."

"The situation," said Claude, "must have been indeed desperate that would have made that a desirable resource."

Phillip continued without heeding this bitter sarcasm.

"But things have turned out differently. She is as obstinate as twenty mules, and I am afraid that she will kill herself. All I have got her to consent to, is, that if she is restored to her father, she will, provided you likewise consent, bury the whole affair in oblivion, and not accuse me. But that is only half the battle gained. I want money, and surely you cannot be quite indifferent to the claims of a couple of thousand pounds."

"Not at all."

"Well then, I know that for the restoration of his child, the judge, if you ask him, will hand you a draft for £4000 or £5000, and consent to ask no questions.

He will be with you here in the course of an hour. I ask you to adopt that course. Ask him for the money. Promise him his child by twelve o'clock to night ; and then when you hand me the cheque, I will restore you, and to-morrow morning we will meet and share the proceeds."

" Ah !" said Claude. He could not trust himself at the moment to say more.

" Well, is it a bargain ?"

" Where is she ?"

" You must excuse me there, my friend. That is a secret worth knowing, so I intend to keep it to myself."

Claude covered his face with both his hands and thought. Shall I, he thought, consent in appearance to this villany for the sake of restoring the child to the father, and then afterwards proclaim it ? No—no. He, this Phillip, will bind Grace to secrecy by some oaths, which her pure spirit will not break ; and then I should denounce him in vain ; besides, could I go through the interview with the judge ? No—no. A hundred times no. The words in which I should cloathe the proposal for the restoration of his daughter for a sum of money, would stick in my throat. I could not—I could not !

" Have you decided ?" said Phillip.

" Yes !" cried Claude, with startling energy.

" And you will do it ?"

" You will find what I will do. Villain ! Monster !"

Claude made a dash at him and caught him by the throat. Phillip raised a stifled cry, but it sufficed to reach the ears of the turnkey, who opened the door just as Phillip was turning black in the face.

" Holloa ! What's this !"

" Keep off !" cried Claude. " Keep off ! There will be one scoundrel the less in the world. Keep off, I pray you."

" No, no, this sort of thing won't do," said the turnkey.

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a whistle, and blew a shrill note, which had the effect of bringing half-a-dozen tunkeys to his aid, and by their united exertions, Phillip Manning was torn, more dead than alive, from the grasp of Claude.

For a few minutes the scene of confusion was most intense ; and several of the officers were of opinion that Phillip Manning was dead.

" You have let yourself in for it now," said one ; " you will swing for this."

" Such a villain," said Claude, " deserved death from the first hand that could be raised with sufficient power to inflict it."

" Ah," said an old officer shaking his head sagely from side to side. " If all the villains were to be throttled, what would become of the population I should like to know. That would never do."

The door of the room was again closed upon Claude, and fastened securely, while the insensible, and as some thought, the dead Phillip was taken to the Infirmary, for the purpose of seeing if the surgeon could do anything for him.

It was only a case of suspended animation. A little blood-letting soon recovered him. Such folks as Phillip Manning, somehow, always do take a deal of killing, while people whose lives are of both public and private consequence, most easily

" Shuffle off this mortal coil."

" There is surely a special Providence for the conservation of blackguardism. Do we not see daily instances of men whose lives, as far as society is concerned, are perfectly worthless, running risks and escaping dangers which would be the instant destruction of any really estimable and valuable member of society ? There are men who ride across horses, who patronise gigs, who ride steeple-chases, and daily expose themselves to all the chances of death and accident, and yet upon such men's safety, you may freely wager—and why ? Simply because their deaths would be a gain rather than a loss to society.



And so Phillip recovered with his heart full of such unmitigated hatred to Claude, whom, it must not be forgotten, he only knew as John Smith, that nothing short of his complete destruction would now satisfy him.

It was about half an hour after these events, that Claude's door was opened again, and the turnkey said—

"Here's your brother, Tom Smith, as he calls himself. I suppose you won't go far to throttle him!"

## CHAPTER CLII.

### JACK UNDERTAKES A PERILOUS MISSION.

"My, brother!" exclaimed Claude.

"Yes. But if he isn't, why we can——"

"Stop! Stop!" cried Claude, "it's all right; I only thought he was out of town. That's all. Let him come in directly."

"Ah, John," said a voice, "I knew you would be glad to see me."

It was Dick Turpin.

Claude, at the moment, deeply congratulated himself that he had taken the hint about a brother, and not said anything to breed a suspicion that such was not the case; but he was, at the same time, full of wonder to know how Dick could possibly have found out what had happened to him.

"I am, indeed, glad to see you, Tom," said Claude.

"Oh, it's all right," said the turnkey, as he closed the door. "There will be no throttling this time, I suppose."

The moment they were fairly alone, Claude said,—

"Dick, I am pleased, and afflicted at this visit."

"How afflicted?"

"At the danger you thrust yourself into."

"Oh, don't think of that. Danger is the element such men as you and I live in. It comes as natural to us as water to a fish; but, speak low, and don't pronounce my name, nor will I yours. Walls have ears they say, and I don't feel much trust in anything, even being quite alone in Newgate."

"I will be careful; but how did you find me out?"

"I have many and some very strange sources of information. At some other time we will talk about that. Moments are precious just now; for, although, it is contrary to their orders to forbid me to visit you, upon my stating my near relationship; yet they will cut that visit as short as possible, you may depend."

"True—true!"

"Then tell me, Claude, at once, what is best to be done, and Jack and I will do it. Bother my tongue! I uttered your name just now, after myself giving you the caution not to do so."

"Never mind. You spoke in a very low tone."

"I hope I did."

"Be assured you did, and that, as yet, all is well. There is only one course of conduct that you and Jack can adopt to aid me, and that is to follow Phillip Manning, and find out where he has bestowed Grace."

"He has her, then?"

"Yes; the villain has been here and confessed as much. I have half choked him, I believe; but I hope I have not wholly done so. The restoration of Grace to her father, untrammelled by any promise to keep secret Phillip's share in the infamous transaction, will be the signal for my instant liberation; and if that can take place before any awkward recognition of me takes place here, the whole affair will end well, and do to laugh at on a winter's night.

"It shall be done."

"Then I feel easy; for well I know that if it can be done at all, you and Jack are the persons to do it: and now, as regards Cicely, merely tell her that I am

engaged for a day or two upon a matter that has suddenly sprung up; but it is quite needless to mention me in any connexion with this dreadful building, which is already sufficiently a bug-bear to her imagination."

"All shall be as you wish in that respect."

"Hilloa! is the gossiping over?" cried the turnkey. "Ten minutes is all we allow."

"Yes, yes," said Dick. "Good-by, John."

"Good-by," said Claude. "All's right. They are very civil to me here, Tom, and this man has been particularly so."

Both Claude and Dick felt the importance of propitiating the officials of the prison, so Dick at once handed the man a guinea, saying—

"Take that as an earnest of another, when my brother here is declared innocent, which he is."

The turnkey tossed the coin in the air by a dexterous movement of his thumb; and as he caught it in its descent, and placed it in his waistcoat pocket, he looked aside at Claude, saying—

"He won't fare the worse; but mum is the word about the spangle."

"All's right," said Dick; "I know. God bless you, brother John.—You will soon be out of this."

Claude was again alone, but his reception of visitors was not yet over. Phillip Manning had spoken for once in a way, just because it happened to suit him, the truth, when he said the judge was about to pay Claude a visit, and sure enough, Dick had hardly got well clear of Newgate, when the judge was announced.

Claude rose and received the old man with respect, for he could not quarrel with him, knowing well, that in his conduct towards him he acted as any one would have done under the circumstances, and probably with much more consideration, than any ordinary person would have brought to bear upon the subject.

Claude was aware that the judge placed his own back to the light, which gave him the advantage of seeing Claude's features fully, while his own were partially shrouded; but Claude had no sort of objection to such an arrangement. He had no emotion of his mind, that might find expression upon his countenance, to conceal.

"You will perhaps be surprised at this visit," said the judge.

"No, sir. Your nephew told me of it."

"What, Phillip?"

"Even so, sir."

"Then he has made already an attempt to move you to compassion for a father's sufferings? What has been your answer?"

"Phillip has made no such attempt."

"Do not try to deceive me. For what other motive could he seek you in this gloomy prison?"

"To add to his villany by attempting to get me to participate in a scheme of robbing you."

"Impossible!"

"And yet true, sir. I took him by the throat as my answer. They wrested him from me, or he would not have lived to deny the new charge against him as, of course, he will most freely and distinctly."

"Alas! alas! What am I to think?"

"Nothing is more natural than that you should be thoroughly confused by all that has happened. You would need to have the prescience of the Almighty to see your way through the conflicting evidence that is brought before you. Nothing but the evidence now of your daughter, Grace, can be conclusive to your mind."

"Restore her to me—restore her to me!"

"I would that I could."

"Hark your, sir; this child—this Grace—is the child of my old age. My only

one. Without her I am desolate. God who looks into all hearts as into an open book, only knows if you be guilty or innocent of her abduction ; but you must confess yourself that circumstances are strong against you.”

“They are.”

“Well—well, if you be guilty, I implore you, as you wish that Heaven should



THE OLD PUMP, NEAR CLAUDE'S TOWN RESIDENCE.

overlook that guilt—as you hope for all, ay, more than all, the advantages you even expected to accrue from that guilt—I entreat you to restore her to me upon your own terms ; you have only to speak.”

“This is hard, indeed.”

“What is hard ?”

“To be thus appealed to upon the presumption of my guilt. I tell you, sir

judge once for all, that I was your child's defender—that I rescued her; but that she has been torn away from me and from you again. Look to Phillip for a further answer."

The judge groaned.

"Yes, sir; I add, and I add it most emphatically—Look to Phillip, whom you have loaded with benefits—to Phillip, whom you have had occasion to forgive for much, and whom you have so forgiven. Look to him, and to him only, for your child."

"I am as one in a maze, I know not what to think, nor which way to move," said the judge, mournfully.

"Hark ye, sir," said Claude, after a slight pause. "I do not feel any degree of bitterness or resentment against you for this imprisonment which I innocently suffer. I admit it was forced upon you."

"If you be innocent," said the judge, "you are the most generous of men. But if guilty, you are——"

"Go on, sir. Being innocent, I can very well bear to hear what you would say of guilt."

"You are, then, of guilty, the most artful and spurious."

"Excepting one."

"What one?"

"Your nephew, Phillip, sir."

"If I were once only assured of his guilt in the present instance, he should never again reach my heart; but it is too improbable. What could he, of all men, have to gain by the abduction of my child, but shame and want?"

"He knows that you are rich, sir."

"Granted that I am. What then?"

"He knows that Grace is your only child, and that upon her will devolve the greatest amount of your wealth. Thus calculating, then, his great object was to get her to consent to an union with him."

"You are wrong. She has already explicitly refused him."

"Yes, but he hoped that by taking her from all who would befriend, he should be able to place her in such a position that even marriage with him would be far better than the shame which would be her position otherwise."

A flush of angry colour came to the judge's cheeks.

"No, no," he said, "that is too much."

"In what way?" said Claude, speaking quickly. "Do you think that anything in the way of wickedness, that you and I may imagine is in reality, too much for Phillip to perpetrate? I tell you, sir, he has been to me to-day."

"I know it. He has tried to move your heart."

"Move my heart? In good truth, sir, he did move both my heart and brain to that extent, that I could not keep my fingers from his throat. I did not kill him; but it will be some time before Phillip Manning forgets the clutch with which I held him, in consequence of moving my heart."

The judge glared at Claude with an expression that looked almost like insanity, as he said—

"And what is your account of the interview you have had with Phillip?"

"The true one?"

"But its substance?"

"That you will not believe it if I tell it to you; and yet you shall know that he admitted to me he knew where Grace was, and his object in coming to me was to get me to take the guilt off his shoulders, by owning that I was the criminal, and asking of you a large sum for the restoration of your child, which sum he proposed to share with me. That was his errand."

The judge looked astonished.

"And your answer?" he said.

"Look for it upon Phillip's throat."

"I know not what to think. I am bewildered. Your tone and manner is so like innocence, and yet the circumstances are so strongly against you, that

you may well suppose that even, with all my experience, I know not what to think."

"Granted, sir. And now I will make to you a proposal."

"Name it. If it tend to the restoartion of my child, you may make your own terms. Go on. Go on!"

"The first condition of my proposal is, that you will not insult me by supposing that what I am about to offer to do is for money. Do you consent to that?"

"I do."

"Then, sir, I will make an effort to get back your daughter from the hands of your nephew Phillip, if you will aid me to do so. I have friends without this prison. It matters not who or what they are, but for my sake they will do their utmost to find out where Phillip has bestowed Grace. Their exertions will be something worth thinking of, but from you I must have certain facilities for them."

"Name any sum required."

"It is not money. What I demand is that they come and go as they please to me in this prison, without question or hindrance."

"Granted."

"'Tis settled then. I demand too, that I may correspond with who I please without my letters being subject to the surveillance of the authorities of the prison."

"Send any letter you please, addressed to whom you like, under cover to me, and I pledge you my honour as a gentleman to forward it."

"I am quite satisfied, sir."

"Then you will try your best?"

"Sir—sir. Remember that you still suspect me guilty."

"No, hardly now."

"Why am I here then? Nay do not look confused, sir, at the seeming inconsistency of your acts. Were I in your place, and you in mine, I daresay I should do as you do, and with that feeling, I of course find no fault with you. As soon as I can get any intelligence for you, satisfactory or otherwise, you shall hear it."

"I thank you, and be assured that if in this matter I have done you an injustice, I have both the will and the power to amply indemnify you for it. You shall want for nothing here."

"I thank you. I am certainly not partial to prison fare."

"Then you know what it is?" said the judge, quickly.

"Yes," said Claude, "and I can well see that that admission tells much against me in your mind. But let it go. You will find that there are worse men out of prison by far, sir, than in them, and that piece of knowledge may be of the first importance to you upon the seat of judgment."

The judge rose and went to the door of Claude's cell. A turnkey was within call, to whom he said—

"Is the governor up?"

"Yes, my lord judge," said the man, "and he will be happy to see you."

"Very well. I wan't to speak to him." Then turning to Claude, he said—

"You may write to me with safety, and you will find, by the free egress and ingress of your friends, if you send for them, that the agreement is being carried out."

Claude bowed.

The door of the prison room was closed, and again barred and locked, and Claude was alone.

"All may yet be well," he said, as he paced the narrow confines of the apartment. "If Dick and Jack can be but the means of restoring Grace to her father, the tale that she will have to tell will complete my justification, and all I shall then ask will be an instant release. Oh, that I were on the road again, breathing the free air of Heaven from the back of my gallant steed."

The very first thing now that Claude wished to do was to make Dick and Jack aware of the sort of bargain he had made with the judge.

This could now easily be accomplished by writing to them and putting the utmost confidence in the promise of the judge to forward his letters without any examination, provided they were addressed to him, he wrote the particulars of the conversation we have worded, ending by saying—

“To save me, detect Phillip Manning. I leave it to the skill and the friendship of you both, to do so much for me.”

### CHAPTER CLIII.

#### JACK AND DICK GO UPON THE TRACK OF PHILLIP MANNING, AND MAKE A DISCOVERY.

THE cogitations of Phillip Manning, after his interview with Claude, could not be of a pleasant character. In addition to being half choked, he had, by his folly and his criminality in the whole transaction, placed himself in a most uncomfortable situation.

Gladly, most gladly, would he now have backed out of the affair, if he could possibly have done so without compromising himself beyond all power of redemption with his uncle.

Whatever scenes or follies of extravagance the old judge might from time to time be inclined to forgive his nephew, it was not at all probable that if he came before him in the character of the abductor of his much-loved child, that he could feel anything but the most intense indignation.

Phillip felt this.

We will, preceding the receipt of Claude's letter by Dick and Jack—by-the-by, it was addressed to the latter, for Claude felt that Jack deserved the compliment at his hands—take a peep at the proceedings of Master Phillip.

We have already stated that while Claude was carrying on that most inauspicious dialogue with the old judge, Phillip had gone into the street, and found the carriage which contained Grace.

The young creature had been waiting most anxiously for the return of Claude, and when the coach door was opened, she looked for nothing but to see him, and to hear some message from her father.

When the hateful countenance of Phillip Manning met her gaze, she seemed as though her life were evaporating, and she could only gaze upon him with a speechless despair.

“You are mine,” he said. “You are mine. Ha! ha! I have you once again, and your are mine.”

Overcome completely by the sound of these terrible words, a dimness, as if the world were enveloped in a mist, came before her eyes, and she swayed, falling to the bottom of the carriage.

“Good!” said Phillip. “Good!”

He at once closed the carriage door, and having carefully fastened it, he mounted himself on the box, and drove off.

Where and how she was bestowed, will be best understood by a slight detail of the circumstances that ensued, upon her coming to her senses again.

When Grace opened her eyes, all was darkness—darkness, too, of the most profound character—so that although she held up her hand before her eyes, she could not see it.

At first her memory was so confused that she could not recollect the various circumstances of the last twenty-four hours; but this state of inertitude did not last long, for gradually circumstance by circumstance then came back to her in detail, all the events that had placed her in her present position, but what that position was she could only conjecture.

She at first felt fearful that she was in some sort of bondage that would prevent her from rising; but she found that that was not the case, and she gained her feet.

"Father! father! Help me!" she cried.

The echo of her own voice was the only answer that was returned to her cry for aid.

"Just Heaven!" she cried, "what will become of me?"

She sank upon her knees, and remained for some time in that attitude of supplication to the Deity, begging for that mercy and consideration which, if extended to any one in this world, surely should be to one so pure and so faultless as she was.

When she rose from this act of devotion, she felt greatly refreshed in spirit, and much more able to reason calmly upon her perilous situation. She did not entertain the smallest doubt as to the fact of her being again in the power of Phillip Manning, and she resolved that, let what might occur, he should not see any evidences of fear upon her part now.

"If I subdue him," she said, "it will only be by showing no fear. His dastard spirit would rejoice in my despondency, as much as it will be cowed by an appearance of courage."

There could not possibly be a juster mode of reasoning than this, as regarded Phillip Manning. His was just the sort of disposition to indulge in weak triumph where he found submission, but to be abashed and shrinking before that real courage, which even in the midst of his power should defy him.

Having come to this resolve, Grace began, as well as the intense darkness would permit her, to feel about the room, in order to ascertain its proportions, and, if possible, find some window or other aperture, by which she could get light.

After a time she did find the window. But the shutters were fast closed. She could only tell by the feel that a window it was; but all her exertions did not enable her to find any means of unclosing the shutters.

Suddenly, while she was engaged upon the attempt, she heard a rattling noise and from beneath a door, she saw a thin pencil of light.

Clasping her hands, she waited in expectation of what might then ensue, fully determined to defy Phillip to the utmost.

She heard a key rattle in a lock—she heard a heavy bolt drawn from the outside of a door, and then it opened, and Phillip Manning, conveying a lamp in one hand, appeared before her.

The sudden glare of light from the lamp, after the intense darkness she had been in, was painful to her eyes at first; but in the course of a moment or two, that feeling wore off, and she was able to move her hand from before them. Phillip had paused upon the threshold, and was looking into the room with an inquiring gaze.

"Grace! he said, "Grace!"

She would not answer him."

"Good Heaven!" he exclaimed, "she has not escaped?"

He rushed into the room with vehemence, but when he saw her standing by the window he drew a long breath of most exquisite relief, and holding the lamp above his head, he said—

"So you are here?"

Still she would not answer him.

"This obstinacy," he said, "will not avail you. Grace, do you know where you are?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Ah! you know?"

"I am in the hands of a villain, so far as he thinks, but in reality I am, as he too is in the hands of Heaven."

"Let Heaven open the door, then, for you," he said, with a sneer; "but I am not going to quarrel with you, Grace. I come to bring you freedom and happiness."

She started and felt her colour come and go at the delightful prospect, but fearing some villany, as, indeed, she had abundant cause to do, she said nothing.

"You have but to acquiesce in what I shall propose to you," he added, "and you will be never again subject to such an annoyance as you now suffer from; your fate is in your own hands."

"Go on," she said, finding that he would not continue speaking unless she made some sort of reply to him—"go on."

"You encourage me to proceed," he said. "'Tis well that you should do so, and I am glad, indeed, to find you so reasonable. Now, Grace, you know that I love you."

"You—love—me?"

"Yes, and why not?"

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"You doubt it? I ought to be able to convince you of your error."

"No, Phillip, no. Love desires the happiness of its object, but you do not, cannot love but one. It is not in your nature."

"And that one is you?"

"No, no."

"What absurd story have you got hold of to my prejudice? Who could have dared to tell you falsely that I love another? Name at once the author of the calumny? Who is it you would say that I love?"

"Yourself, Phillip. Only yourself."

He looked abashed.

"Pshaw!" he said, after taking a few moments to recover himself. "Pshaw! This is only some foolish delusion. My love for you is so great that, you see, in the face of the most serious obstacles, I have taken you away; and now, Grace, you have only to consent to be mine, and you shall be at liberty."

"Look you, Phillip. Where death by some lingering torture upon the one hand, and you upon the other. I would gladly, if no other mode of escaping from you presented itself, endure the bitterest pangs."

"You only say this, Grace."

"I think it, too."

"No, no, or if you do, your mind will change some day. Perhaps the beauty upon which you, no doubt, pride yourself, will fade after the confinement of a year or two in this place, and you will be right glad to embrace my offer. I will keep you here until you go mad and your father dies, and then I will produce you, and as your next of kin, claim the benevolent care of you and all your property. Ha! ha!"

"O, Phillip do you, can you think there is a God above us?"

"I care not."

"The time will come for you to care, indeed."

"Ha! ha! You would attempt to frighten me by religious terrors, would you? but such a course will not do for Phillip Manning. I am long past all that. Let us kiss and be friends."

"Away! do not pollute me by your touch."

"Now by all that's — I've half a mind. But no; that would be folly. You will think better of all this, Grace. I am willing to restore you to your father, upon condition that you immediately give me your hand, and likewise to tell to him, to account for your absence, such a tale as I shall concoct for you."

"Never—never!"

"Beware—beware!"

"Beware of what?—Of you, poor villain? No! You have the heart to think of deep crimes, but not the courage to perpetrate them! I am not afraid of you, Phillip Manning, and I never shall be. My first act the moment I see my father's face, will be to proclaim to him your villany, and to ask his utmost gratitude for him who rescued me from you some time since, and to whom some sad accident must have happened, or I should not have again fallen into your power."



"He's in Newgate."

"Newgate?"

"Yes, charged by your father, at my instigation, with your abduction. Your father is fully possessed with a belief that he has secreted you somewhere, and will no doubt, exert the utmost rigour of the law against him. But you can save him."

"I?"

"Yes; by consenting to become mine he shall be released. All that is required is that your father should be to a certain extent mystified in the affair, which will do him no harm."

"Once and for all," replied Grace, "I reject with scorn your proposals. If I suffer—if my generous and gallant preserver suffer—if my father suffer, let the account of all these deeds be asked of you at the judgment seat of the Almighty. It is your work, Phillip."

"We shall see," said Phillip, "we shall see."

He glared at her with such fiendish ferocity, that even boldly as she had hitherto maintained herself towards him, she almost shrank before him, fearing that he might descend to personal violence.

This no doubt would have been the result of the interview, but really, Phillip felt a degree of terror at the young girl, half a child as she was, which kept him back; and besides, he knew that there could be no hope of anything in the shape of a reconciliation if he once laid his hand upon her in anger.

He drew back.

"Thank my clemency," he said.

She did not condescend to contradict him. Her attitude and the expression upon her face were fully sufficient to show him what her feelings were upon the subject.

For a few moments now, a death-like stillness subsided in the room; and finding she was not likely to break it, Phillip said—

"Perhaps you are not quite aware, that by the law as it stands at present, it is death to abduct from her home a person of your age? When he who now lies in Newgate upon that charge, suffers on the scaffold, I will bring you an account of his last moments.

Without waiting for her reply to this, which he thought likely enough might be one he did not wish to hear, he abruptly left the room.

All was dark again.

When she found herself alone, the feelings of Grace underwent rather a sort of revulsion, and she trembled excessively and wept. But her natural good sense—her education and her courage, soon rose up against the longer continuance of such a state of depression, and she rallied amazingly.

"No--no," she said, "I may suffer, and all who are dear to me may suffer, but I will not deviate from that path which I know and feel to be the right one."

She found her way, notwithstanding the intense darkness in which she was, to the couch upon which she had been lying before her recovery, and sitting upon its edge, she began as calmly as she could to think over her position, and its meagre prospects.

While she was thus occupied, she heard the voice of Phillip in the passage, if passage it were, outside the door of the room, saying—

"Be quick—be quick!"

The door was opened, and while he held the light, an old decrepid hag of a woman came in with some bread and a pitcher of water.

"Here, my honey," she said, in a strong Irish accent, "don't say we starves you, any way."

"Peace!" cried Phillip.

"Musha! master, I was only saying to the little ladybird that any, how we——"

"Peace, I say.—Come away."

The old woman hobbled out of the room again, and Phillip carefully fastened the door. She heard him fumbling at it for some time, and it was clear he was most particular about the fastenings.

## CHAPTER CLIV.

### JACK REPLENISHES CLAUDE'S PURSE.—THE PURSUIT OF PHILLIP.

THE letter that Claude sent through the orders of Judge Manning to Jack came duly to hand.

Dick had completely forgone his intentions of leaving that part of the country, and now signified to Jack, that he would devote himself entirely to the service of Claude, in the matter of his most unjust imprisonment.

To say that Jack was pleased at this determination is to say very little, for in point of fact he was overjoyed at it.

"It is such brave friends as yourself," said Jack, "that Claude wants, now he is in difficulty and danger."

"Well," replied Dick, "he shall not be either in difficulty or in danger for long, if our exertions can rescue him. Let us set about it, Jack, with good will, and if we do not succeed in finding out where this rascal, Phillip Manning has bestowed the young lady, it will, indeed, be an odd thing to me."

Where there's a will, there's certainly, in a vast number of cases, a way, and so Dick and Jack set about placing themselves upon the track of Master Phillip.

They both remounted at the farmhouse, where Cicely was in comfort and security, and at a brisk trot went towards London. Jack seemed to be considering something, and suddenly he said—

"Money is a good thing to have plenty of in Newgate."

"In good truth it is," replied Dick. "The power of money by no means ceases at the vestibule of Newgate."

"Well, then, I know it is quite impossible, what with one thing and another, that Claude can be even moderately well provided; so the only thing I can think of doing is to get him some."

"I understand you," said Dick, with a smile; "you would levy a contribution upon some traveller?"

"I would."

"Don't let me, then, be at all in your way; and if I can render you any assistance, depend upon me."

"Many thanks. I am resolved to stop the first traveller me meet, who shall look worth the robbing. If there are two, I shall, of course, be glad for you to tackle one of them while I make free with the purse of the other; and who knows but we may be lucky enough to get him a good round sum by our exertions?"

Dick could not help smiling at the seriousness with which Jack spoke of their exertions, as though it was some legitimate business affair; but he said, jocosely—

"Yes, Jack, and I promise you that I will manage to keep up the supply to Claude, as long as he is not in a position to help himself. Who knows but some of these fine nights I may get a wound which may so far disable me as to make me fall into the hands of the Philistines myself?"

"It may happen to any of us," said Jack.

"Well," added Dick, "you may rely upon my co-operation with you, if it be necessary."

Jack expressed his acknowledgments with infinite gravity, and the two made their way at an easy canter to London.

At that period, the environs of the metropolis, to the west and to the north in

particular, presented a strikingly rural appearance, and you got quite among the houses before you lost the aspect of the country. To a greater extent than any other roads out of London, these environs now present rural aspects; for when the traveller reaches Hampstead or Acton, he might, by a very small stretch of imagination, fairly enough fancy himself many miles from the giant city.



PHILIP MANNING RESOLVES TO MURDER GRACE WHEN DICK SEIZES AND SECURES HIM.

Thus, then, although both Jack and Dick were very close to Oxford-street, they by no means despaired of meeting with some one whom they might ease of a little ready cash. They were passing through a long avenue of trees, not far off what is now called the New-road, leading towards Acton, when they became conscious of the sound of wheels behind them.

"I hear the sound."

"Shall I leave you to the adventure if it be only one man?"

"Yes, if you will be so good, and another time I will give you the road in the same way."

"Don't mention that. I know your motive, and am quite contented that you should have all the spoil, upon this occasion, to take to our mutual friend, Claude."

Dick accordingly left the side of Jack, and rode so close to the trees on one side of the road, and with so quiet a step, too, that it was next thing to impossible he could be seen.

Jack posted himself in the centre of the road.

In the course of a few minutes the sound of the approaching wheels became very distinct, and Jack's experience told him that it was only a two-wheeled vehicle that was coming. A feeling of great disappointment came over him, for it might only be some commercial traveller, after all, with nothing worth the stopping him for. Still he resolved upon making the experiment, and when the gig, for a gig it was, came sufficiently near, he called out—

"Stop!"

The voice in which he spoke was quite loud enough to have reached further than the gig, and its occupant, and the result was an instant draw-up of the vehicle.

Jack galloped towards it, and when he got quite close, he said in calm determined tones—

"Your money, or your life and money both?"

The person who had been driving was evidently in such a state of terror that he could not speak; but Jack could hear his teeth chattering together like a pair of castanets.

"Comply with my demand quickly," he said, "and you are in no danger."

"I—I have only got eighteen-pence—"

"Pho! pho!"

"Oh, good Mr. Highwayman, it's a melancholy fact, it is, indeed. I'm a very poor fellow, upon my word I am."

"Who are you?" said Jack. "I fancy I have heard your voice before, somewhere; and if I know any good of you, I will let you off. I cannot see your face. Why don't you have lights to your gig?"

"Yes—yes, good sir, I had."

"Where are they, then?"

"They—they blowed out, good Mr. Highwayman. I've only got a small matter of eighteen-pence. Indeed, that's all."

"We shall see. Who are you? Speak at once, or I shall take some means of unloosening your tongue that you won't like."

"My name, sir, is—is Thomas."

"Thomas what?"

"Brereton, sir. I'm usually called plain Tom Brereton, sir; of course, a gentleman like you, sir, may call me what he likes. Take my eighteen-pence, and spare my life."

"Ah," said Jack, "I thought I knew your voice. Why, you are a terrible rascal, Mr. Tom Brereton. I have heard of you. Do you know anything of Claude Duval?"

"I'm done, I'm done. I'm a dead man! I'm as good as done for. The Lord have mercy upon me. It's Claude Duval himself. Oh, don't cut me off in the flower of my youth, don't; I'm too great a sinner, indeed I am, and ought to have time given me to repent."

"You are a sinner I know," said Jack; "but don't be going off with the idea that you are stopped by Claude Duval, for I am not he. You ought to know that well enough by my voice, which is so strikingly different from his; nor is he in my company, nor in any way connected with this affair. Yet by chance I happen to know you are a great rascal, and have behaved yourself as badly as possible to him."

"Oh, no, no, no——"

"I say yes."

"Good Mr. Highwayman, you really are quite mistaken. You don't know how fond I am of Claude Duval."

"Fond of him?"

"Yes; I value him next to the apple of my eye, indeed I do. If you come near him, pray give my respects to him, and tell him how glad I shall always be to see him. Good night, sir, good night. I hope you may do a good stroke of business to night. Good night, sir."

"Move one inch, and I will blow your brains out."

"Oh, dear—oh, dear. What's that?"

"What?"

Quite involuntarily Jack looked in the direction that Tom Brereton pointed to, and at that moment, relying probably upon having a fast horse in the gig, Tom made a desperate attempt to be off, but Jack was one too many for him at that game, and darting to the horse's head, secured him in a moment.

"This is very uncivil of you," said Jack; "you wanted to leave me, did you, without any acknowledgements for your civility? but I will put it out of your power to play such another trick. I have wasted too long a time upon you already."

Tom translated these words into a direct threat to murder him, and throwing himself out of the gig, he fell upon his knees in the road, crying—

"Spare my life, and take all I have. I have got a £100 with me, good Mr. Highwayman, that I stole myself, for you can't think how I have been taken in in marrying."

"You deserve any fate," said Jack.

With this he at once cut the traces of the horse, and set the creature at liberty from the chaise, so that Tom Brereton had no opportunity of again trying to give him the slip. He then approached him, and clapping a pistol to his face, said—

"The money. Give it up at once."

"Here, Sir. Here good Mr. Highwayman. Here. Do you know, sir, I stole it from my wife, who stole it from the dressing room of a lady, that she has gone to live with as maid. I was going to make off with it, sir, if you please, out of the country; and I stole the gig too, sir, and I stole the horse."

"Why, you incorrigible rascal, you will tell me next that you stole the coat that is upon your back."

"Ah, sir. I stole the whole suit, that I did, sir."

"Then you can't blame me," said Jack. "You may depend upon my giving your compliments and kind regards to Claude Duval, if ever I should come across him, and in the meantime I wish you a very good night."

"Won't you give me back some of the money, sir?"

"Give you back some? How absurd. No, Mr. Tom Brereton, you must do the best you can with what you have left."

"Left! Gracious! I have not one farthing."

"Nonsense, you know you have eighteen-pence in change which you were kind enough to offer me, so don't tell me you have nothing. Good night."

Tom Brereton fell with a groan to the ground, and Jack galloped back to join Dick, who, by going at a very easy pace, gave him an opportunity of easily doing so.

"Success," said Dick.

"Yes. Ample. A £100 in gold."

"Hurrah, that is good. It will relieve Claude from many a disagreeable in Newgate, that otherwise, without money, he would be compelled to submit to. I congratulate you."

"Yes, and what makes it more pleasant by a great deal," said Jack, "is that I have taken it from an old enemy of Claude's, and a man whom I know to be one of the most contemptible scoundrels the world ever saw."

"That is better and better."

"It is ; and now we have nothing to do, but to push on for London as quickly as possible, for I long to put myself into communication with Claude."

"Will you venture within the walls of Newgate?"

Jack gave a slight shudder, and then he replied—

"Yes, I will to see Claude ; and perhaps it will do me good, by preventing the thought of that building being such a bugbear to my imagination as it is now."

"There can be no doubt of that," said Dick, "and I encourage your visit, for I am quite convinced Claude would not have told you in his letter it might be made with safety, unless he had had ample reason to say so."

"That is precisely my opinion."

By this time they had reached Oxford Street, and Dick proposed that they should halt for a moment or two at a noted hostel on the left-hand side of the way called "Hercules's Club," where knights of the road were accustomed to bait.

"We shall hear the news of the day there," said Dick, "For my own part I am full of apprehension that Claude will not be able to preserve his incognito in Newgate; and in such a case, the whole aspect of affairs will be changed, and any visit to him might be attended with the most dangerous of all consequences."

"What?" said Jack.

"The arrest of the visitors. But here we are at the 'Hercules's Club,' and we will take a glass without dismounting, and ask the news of the landlord."

"Does he know you, Dick?"

"Perfectly well, and if he knew you likewise it would be no matter, for you would be as safe as you are now. But do not fancy that upon that account I am going to tell him a word about you. Your secret is your own, not mine."

Jack was quite satisfied with this assurance.

A very few moments brought them to the door of the hostel, which Dick had spoken of in such terms of commendation ; and in answer to his call, a man appeared at the door, who said in rather a crusty tone.

"Who are you, I wonder?"

"Look again," said Dick.

"Eh? Bless my soul, yes it is you. Well, who would have thought of seeing you in this quarter of the world. Come in?"

"No, thank you. I can come in. It is not my part of the country this certainly. But I have business in London. Bring us out a cup of wine, such as I know you have at hand for a friend, and then we must be off again."

"That will I," said the landlord.

The wine was brought in an antique silver flagon, and Jack and Dick divided it between them. Then Dick, in a careless way, said to the landlord—

"Is there any news stirring?"

"No. None that I know of."

"By-the-by, have you heard anything of Duval's lately?"

"Only that he is still on the Western Road, that is all."

## CHAPTER CLV.

### THE RESCUE OF GRACE MANNING.

FROM this reply of the landlord's, both Dick and Jack were quite satisfied that up to that time Claude's incognito had not been blown upon. If he had been discovered in Newgate, the news would have got to no place with greater alacrity than to the "Hercules's Club."

"Thank you," said Dick, as he returned the empty flagon to the landlord. "The next time I come I hope I shall be able to step in, and have a gossip with you about old times."

"I hope so too," said the landlord; "you have been a good friend, Dick, to me, and mine, and there is no man I should be more glad to see at all times."

Dick shook hands with him, and then Jack and he rode off at a rapid pace down Oxford Street.

"I will take Claude the money, Jack," said Dick, "if you in the least way feel any repugnance to going into Newgate."

"No. I have made up my mind to it," said Jack; "and I am so bound up in the service of Claude, that I feel confident now I shall be able to go through with the affair."

"Very good. I am glad to hear you say so. We will find a place to put up our nags, and I will make what changes we think necessary in our costume; and we will, in a serious manner, undertake this job of unasking the villany of Phillip Manning."

"And we shall succeed Dick."

"In good truth it will go hard with us, as well as with others, if we don't; for a trifle don't stop me when once I undertake a thing."

"Nor shall it stop me."

"And in addition to my feelings," added Dick, "for Claude in this matter, and my great anxiety to see him safe out of the stone pitcher, in the Old Bailey. I have got used to the road, and the free balmy air of the open country, and the sweet smell of the hay, and the songs of the birds, that it is quite a sacrifice for me to spend twenty-four hours in London."

"I, too," said Jack, "love the open air, and the birds, and the trees, and the flowers."

"Ay, Jack, as all must, who compare such beauties with the grimy town; but business, my friend, is business, and must be attended to. We will see Claude free, and then hurrah for the road again, and the open sky. After all, Jack, what life is like ours?"

"What indeed?"

"We enjoy existence with very few of its cares. With a good steed, a pair of paps that can be depended on, and a light heart—we are happier than kings."

"Yes," said Jack, "I was once, but I am now spirit-broken."

"Not so, old fellow. You will come round again in good time, and the name of Sixteen-string Jack will yet be spoken as it was once spoken of. Why, folks used to delay journeys on your account once upon a time; and you were as well known upon the great north road, as any old sign. It was always a question if any one came off a journey in that direction, 'Did you meet the famous highwayman, Sixteen-string Jack?'"

Jack's face glowed for a moment with the remembrance of old times, and he said in a voice of emotion—

"I never was grasping, or cruel either."

"No, Jack, I never heard that you were, either. It is not in your nature to be cruel or grasping. But here we are."

"Where?"

"Why, close to Soho, where I will find you a lodging in which you can sleep securely, and where our cattle will be well taken care of. In the morning, then, you can make yourself up for your visit to Newgate; and after that we will be like bloodhounds upon the track of that scoundrel, who has got Claude into this mess."

"We will."

Jack fully expected to find Dick stop at some house of ordinary entertainment, the landlord of which he knew; but to his surprise Dick drew up at the door of a quiet looking house in Dean Street, which, from its private and respectable exterior, looked as though it belonged to some people who were highly proper, and well to do in the world.

"Why surely you don't bait here?" said Jack.

"Yes," said Dick.

"Well, you know best, of course."

"I know the people, Jack. This is one of the safest cribs in all London. I don't mean to say that the master of this house will be quite delighted to see you and I; but for all that, he will pay us every attention in the world, and we shall be quite safe."

"Who is he?"

"I can better tell you, Jack, what he is than who he is. In plain terms, he keeps a fence."

"Ah, a receiver?"

"Yes, and one of the richest in London. He don't interfere with petty spoil, nor is he at all known to petty thieves; but to such as I and Claude, and to such as you, Jack, he is quite a patron, and keeps his house open to us, although he does not wish any of us to come except upon an emergency; but of that he can be no judge; so he will make us welcome, fancying this is one."

"Must he know me?"

"He does know all you have to tell him, I suspect."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, Jack; he told me the last time I saw him, although at that time I was far from believing it, that you were alive, and expressed a wish to see you, and a desire to be of what service to you he could. How he came by the secret of your resuscitation I know not; but such men as he have a thousand unknown resources of information. At all events, you may depend upon your absolute safety in his house."

Jack was a little shaken at the idea of his being known; but the assurances of his safety, which he knew Dick would be the last person in the world to make if he did not feel quite confident upon that subject, reconciled him.

"In that case then," said Jack, "I prefer that I should be named to him at once. If a man be trusted at all, let him be trusted wholly."

"That is good, both in principle and in practice, Jack," said Dick. "There is no knowing the mischief that results from half-confidence; I will at once introduce you to Josiah Franklin."

"Oh, is that his name?"

"Yes, and he is one of the most respected quakers in London."

"Quakers?"

Dick laughed.

"I thought, Jack," he said, "that would surprise you; but our friend here is a quaker. He knows Claude very well, and has upon more than one occasion accommodated him with a suit of quaker's apparel."

"I have seen him so attired," said Jack.

"Then he got the clothing from Franklin; and after that I hope you trust in his good faith, and in your own perfect safety, beyond a doubt."

"It was beyond a doubt before, Dick; and yet I am glad to hear that Claude knows and trusts this man. I wonder he never mentioned him to me."

"He could not. Franklin makes his intruders promise that they will not mention him to their nearest and dearest friends; and I should not now have dreamt for a moment of bringing you to his house, if he had not, as I have already mentioned, expressed a wish to see you."

Jack held Dick's bridle while he dismounted, and when Dick rung at the door bell, it was answered by one of the most serious-looking domestics that could be imagined.

"Is Mr. Franklin within?"

"Friend," said the servant, "hast thou a card?"

"Yes," said Dick.

He took a card from his pocket-book. It was an odd enough card, for there was nothing upon it but a diamond, such as is used in playing cards. In fact, he presented to the serious footman the ace of diamonds.

"Verily, humph!" said that personage. "Wilt thee walk in?"

"Yes, and my friend likewise."

"Has thy friend a card?"



"No, but he will have. It's all right. We want the horses taken care of for a day or so."

"Leave them to my care, friend, and thou shall not be disappointed," said the serious domestic, without altering a muscle of his countenance.

Dick beckoned to Jack to come in, while the serious domestic called some one up from the lower part of the house, who took immediate charge of the cattle.

In another moment Jack and Dick were both in the passage or hall of the house, and the door was closed.

This house, which for many years was inhabited by Josiah Franklin, the quaker, is still standing in Dean Street, Soho. Perhaps the present proprietors would not thank us for pointing it out, so we will content ourselves by saying that it is a large one, and on the right hand side of the way going southward.

The hall—and it was not a mere passage as is too often the case, dignified by the name of one, but a really large space—was handsomely got up. Dingy-looking busts, with a respectable amount of dust upon them, stood grimly upon brackets looking down upon the intruders; and some large pictures hung against the ample wall.

"I will announce thee, friend," said the serious domestic, "if thou wilt have patience for a short time."

"Don't hurry yourself," said Dick.

"Well," said Jack in a low voice, when they were alone in the hall. "This is a place worth knowing. I suppose Franklin makes it well worth his while?"

"Not a doubt of that. When a quaker is a rogue, he is an outrageous one, you may depend. The garb of sanctity in this world forms one of the most admirable cloaks for all sorts of iniquity."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Now, Jack, I look upon you and I as bold, honest men, compared to such a fellow as this Franklin. It is true that we say, 'Stand to a true man upon the king's highway,' but we say it boldly, and he may have a shot at us for our pains; but there are thousands of men in this great city of London, who rob their neighbours with a smirk and a smile, and go to church regularly, who would, if you were to call them anything but honest men, be ready to leap down your throat."

Jack was rather amused at the vehemence of Dick, but he could not help fully agreeing with him in what he had just said. It was too true to be disputed. In about three minutes the serious domestic came back to them, and said—

"If thou wilt follow me even to the room that is at the back of the dwelling, I will introduce thee to Mr. Franklin, as the vain and the giddy call him, but to plain Josiah as he is called by the devout."

"Lead the way, then, you hypocritical rascal," said Dick.

The serious domestic did not seem at all put out of the way by these words. He only shook his head and uttered a sort of groan, which might be supposed to be deprecatory of the sinfulness of mankind in general.

Dick and Jack were presently ushered into a large, handsome room, situated at the back of the house, and they found there seated a small man, plainly attired in a quaker's costume, who rose at their entrance, and with a grave air said—

"Be seated, friends. Thou both art welcome. Leave us, Aminadab."

When the door was closed, Dick pointed to Jack, and said—

"This is Sixteen-string Jack."

The quaker did not suffer the least emotion to be visible upon his face, as he said—

"Friend, I am glad to see thee, to which end indeed I did express a wish to thy friend, Turpin, here. I heard that, notwithstanding thou hadst been hanged by the neck at the place called Tyburn, that thou wert still in the land of the living."

"Yes," said Jack. "I was recovered after execution."

"Truly friend, thy case is a singular one. Hast thou any swag?"

"No," said Jack; "I have nothing."

"No doubt, Turpin, thou hast some."

"Not a scrap," said Dick.

"Then what the devil, friend Turpin, I ask thee, didst thou come here for if thou hast no swag, d—n thee, why didst thou trouble me?"

"Be patient," said Turpin, "and I will tell you. Claude Duval is in the stone pitcher at last."

A slight shade of increased colour at these words seemed to pass over the face of Franklin, but he did not speak.

"Yes," added Dick. "He is there, sure enough, and it is about that business that Jack and I, much otherwise against our own inclinations, have come to town."

"It is very strange," said Franklin, "that I did not know of this. Thou must, friend, be misinformed thyself. My information is generally tolerably close upon the fact. I will ring and inquire."

"Spare yourself the trouble," said Dick, arresting the hand of the quaker as it grasped a bell-rope. "Spare yourself the trouble, friend Franklin, and you will soon find out from what I shall tell you how it is that you know nothing of it."

"Proceed, friend."

Dick, then, in as few words as possible, told him the whole story of how Claude had got into his present condition, and how, up to the last intelligence he and Jack had, he still continued, to preserve his incognito; Franklin listened with evident displeasure; and when Dick had done, he said—

"And, pray, what business was it of Claude Duval's if all the Phillip Manning's in the world ran off with all the Grace Mannings? His only duty to himself and to me was to stop them and ease them of their valuables by the way. I never heard of anything more absurd, friend, in all my life, than his conduct."

## CHAPTER CLVI.

### PHILLIP MANNING GETS UNEASY, AND MAKES A RESOLVE.

PLAIN Josiah Franklin was so incensed that he rose and paced the room for a few moments quite in a fume.

Dick let this feeling subside before he spoke again; and then he said—

"It's done, Franklin."

"What dost thou say, friend?"

"I say, it's done, now, and it is not the part of a wise man to fret and fume about the past. The future is our own, but the past is gone for ever, and may not be recalled."

The quaker stopped short in front of Dick; and then, after regarding him for a few moments attentively, he said—

"Thou art right, friend."

"I knew you would see the thing in a proper way soon."

"I do see it, and I see that Claude Duval will be hanged at Tyburn."

"He is not yet even discovered," said Jack.

"But he will be, friend."

"I should not like to feel so confident of that," said Dick. "If Jack and I are, as I hope and trust we shall be, successful in tracing the hiding place in which Phillip Manning has placed his fair young cousin Grace, all will be well. Three words from her lips will exculpate Claude, and his instant release, as the falsely accused John Smith, will follow."

"No, it is too much to expect, friend," said Franklin. "I look upon the fate of Claude Duval as settled."

"Then mine is settled likewise," said Jack.

"How dost thou mean, friend?"

"Why, I don't intend to survive Claude. I will find my death in some

desperate attempt to rescue him, even if it should be at the foot of the gallow itself. That is my determination; and I care not who knows it, or hears me avow it."

The quaker looked at Jack for a moment, and then he shrugged his shoulders, as he said—



THE QUAKER VISITS CLAUDE UNDER THE DISGUISE OF HIS SOLICITOR.

"Every one to his taste, friend."

"Come—come," said Dick, "we need not quarrel about what any of us may do in the event of such a contingency. It may not happen, and if it does, it will then be time enough to think of it."

"Exactly, friend," said Franklin; "and now I presume that Claude will want something in the way of help with money while he is in his present situation, and

you have only to ascertain from him how much, and I will immediately produce it."

"You will?" said Dick.

"Ay, friend, I will."

"Th s is kind of you," said Jack.

"Nay, friend," added Franklin, "it is nothing out of the way. I am a man well to do, and I have made that which I now have by gentlemen of thy profession, friend; so it is but fair that I should help thee and such as thee in the hour of need."

"You have done yourself no harm, Mr. Franklin," said Dick, "by the kind offer—for it is kind, let you say what you will of it. Claude will have plenty of money for all his wants in Newgate. All that we require of you is a place of refuge for ourselves and our horses until we have traced this Phillip Manning, and so ferret out where he has bestowed the judge's daughter."

"That you shall have, friend. Think that my house is your own, and all within it at thy disposal."

"Many thanks—many thanks. Jack wants to go at once to see Claude in Newgate, and he wishes to be disguised."

The quaker looked at Jack scrutinisingly for a few moments, and then he said—

"If thou wilt follow me, friend, I will show the sort of disguise that I would recommend thee to put on."

"Go, Jack," said Dick; "I will wait here."

"Thou mayest wait with a perfect conviction of thy safety, friend Turpin, or thou mayest come with us."

"Then I will come with you, since I have the option."

The quaker led the way to the top of his house, and having selected a key from among several that he took from his pocket, he unlocked a back attic, which, all around it, was filled with presses, something like a linen-drapery's shop, where every description of apparel was to be found, from the sooty habiliments of a sweep to the showy apparel of a general officer.

"Here, friend," he said, "I can make thee look like a very respectable grazier; and as to-morrow is market-day at Smithfield, it will favour the delusion, although I cannot quite comprehend how Claude has got leave to see whoever applies to visit him."

"His letter," said Jack, "says that the judge has got him such leave."

"Yes, friend, it says so, but——"

"You doubt it?"

"Indeed I do, friend. But here is the grazier's suit, which, to my mind, will compare well with thy cast of countenance, to which I can impart a more ruddy tinge; and if any one speaks to thee, thou must talk much of south-downs and port horns, and such like matters, with which thy natural wit will surely furnish thee."

So saying, the quaker took from one of the presses the costume he had mentioned; and when Jack saw himself fully dressed and his face tinged with a mixture that Franklin produced, he was indeed surprised at the perfection of the disguise.

"This is capital," he said. "What do you think of it, Dick?"

"Simply that it is capital in its way. You are a genius, Mr. Franklin. Quite a genius."

"Nay, friend, I am a plain man, trying to make that which in this great christian country is worshipped by all, and thou wilt easily guess that by that I mean money."

"It is true," said Dick.

"I will now go at once," said Jack. "Only tell me, Dick, where to meet you for my interview with Claude, and I will come to you."

"Let it be at the judge's house-door. You have the correct address?"

"I have, and will be there."

Jack left the house of the quaker, feeling very easy about the before ticklish

matter of keeping himself concealed as regarded identity from the inhabitants of Newgate, some of whom he well knew had a most marvellous faculty of recollecting any face they had once seen.

Dick took his way, dressed quietly in black, to the judge's house, where he thought that, either coming in or out, there was a chance of seeing Phillip Manning.

We will accompany Jack to Newgate.

If we were to say that he felt no trepidation at all as he ascended the steps leading to the lobby of the prison, we should certainly be going far beyond the truth, for not only did Jack feel emotion, but it was considerable emotion.

The only thing that supported him at that moment, was the thought that it was for one whom he so much valued, as he did Claude Duval, that he was doing what he did.

"Courage," he whispered to himself. "All may be lost by one shrinking action. All may be gained by boldness."

He tapped at the wicket of the old prison.

"Hilloa!" said a turnkey, "what do you want? Have you lost a cow, and do you think it has strayed into Newgate?"

"No," said Jack. "I want to see John Smith."

"John Smith—John Smith. Humph! Do you think he wants to see you, old fellow?"

"I know he does. He sent for me."

"Here, Guty," cried the turnkey, "you know all about this. It's some one for John Smith."

"All I know," said Guty, "is that there's an order sticking up there in the governor's hand-writing to let anybody go and come during the regular hours to John Smith, and you know as much as that yourself."

"Come in, then," said the turnkey, admitting Jack, and then muttering to himself—"I wonder what's the use of anybody on the lock at all, if anybody is to come in and go out as they like? There used not to be such doings in old times. We never thought of letting anybody in till they tipped, and that handsomely too."

Now, Jack was resolved to set his own mind at ease regarding his disguise, and to test thoroughly his own means, by doing something after which nothing could come amiss. He knew the turnkey very well by sight, and he said to him—

"Do you remember Sixteen-string Jack?"

"Do I?" cried the man. "Don't I? What do you know about him, master, eh?"

"He stopped me once."

"Did he, and what did he take from thee?"

"A canvas bag with twenty-eight guineas in it; but when I told him the loss of all would distress me on the morrow, he gave me back five again."

"Ah, then, you were the man he did that to? I have heard the story before. Well, he was not one of the worst."

"Ah!" muttered the man they called Guty, as he lighted a lantern to conduct Jack to Claude's room. "Ah, Sixteen-string Jack suffered at the Gate, and they say his ghost haunts Newgate now, and has been seen in the long passages."

"That's very improbable," said Jack, as he followed Guty from the vestibule, feeling convinced now that his disguise was perfect. The daring experiment he had tried had had all the effect he looked for from it. It put him quite at his ease, and he walked after Guty with such an air, that no one for one moment could have supposed that he was in danger within the walls of Newgate.

"A visitor," said Guty, as he opened Claude's room-door.

Claude looked up, and for the moment did not know Jack, who walked in, saying—

"How are you, John?"

The voice at once assured him of who it was, and stretching out his hand, he said—

"Ah, how are you? it is very kind of you to come to visit me, so busy as you must be."

The door closed, and they heard the retreating footsteps of Gutty as he went growling down the passage, Then, and not till then, did Jack and Claude cordially shake hands like true and staunch old friends as they were, and Claude said to him—

"Jack, you are capitally made up; I did not know you."

"Yes," replied Jack, "I believe my disguise is good. Franklin, the quaker, got it up for me."

"Old Jossiah? Then Dick took you there?"

"He did, Claude."

"Well, I should have done so, some day, when I got leave of him, only I did not know if he was at all aware of your singular story, and how far you would like me to mention it. But tell me, Jack, have you and Dick yet done anything in Grace's affair?"

"Not yet. Consider the time, Claude. My present business with you is to bring you this."

Jack laid a heavy purse upon the table.

"It was not wanted, Jack."

"Nay it is only £100. Give it about you freely to purchase all the indulgences and comforts that are not denied in Newgate any more than anywhere else in this world to one who has money, enough. You will be better pleased with it when you hear who it came from."

"Who, Jack?"

"None other than Tom Brereton."

"Tom Brereton? Impossible. That he should send me money, and that he should know I am here, is——"

"Stop—stop Claude. You are getting hold of the wrong end of the stick with a vengeance. He neither sent the money to you, nor does he at all know you are here. I took it from him on the road."

"That is quite another thing."

"I met him after a determination to pick up something from the first passenger with a heavy purse, to pay your expenses in Newgate, and luckily he had this £100 by him; which he admitted he had himself stolen; therefore I took it with the smallest possible feeling of compunction, I assure you."

"Well, that was strange."

"It was; but be under no sort of apprehension as to his malice. He tried to say that it was you who robbed him, but I took good care to put that idea out of his head to keep the money."

"I will have some of it, Jack. But how are you situated in that particular?"

"Well enough—well enough."

"I will only have half of it. You keep the other half, Jack. Of course it is a bad thing to have more than you want here, as it might provoke the cupidity of the officials, so fifty pounds will be all I will take."

Finding Claude firm upon this point, Jack yielded, and put fifty of the guineas in his pocket again.

After this was settled, he said—

"And now, Claude, Dick and I will not spare time or trouble in getting the better of that rascal Phillip Manning; so keep up your spirits, and hope for the best."

"I will, Jack; and yet——"

"Yet what, Claude?"

"It seems to me as if some great misfortune were impending over me. I am not, as you know, one of the desponding sort, and indeed I am always much more inclined to look upon the sunny, than the cloudy side of things; but I have a decided presentiment of evil."

Jack shook at this rather.

"Do not speak to me in that way, Claude," he said, "or you will upset me

completely, and before I reach the gate I shall betray myself. I begin to feel already how artificial is the courage that has hitherto held me up."

The tone in which Jack spoke rather alarmed Claude, and he said to him in the most cheerful tone he could assume—

"Pho! pho! Jack; you know I am no believer in omens. Think nothing of the few idle words I have spoken. We shall be all right again upon the road, with a star-spangled sky above, many and many a time.

## CHAPTER CLVII.

### THE DISCOVERY OF CLAUDE'S IDENTITY.

SIXTEEN-STRING JACK had now for so long a time been in the habit of thinking that whatever Claude said or did must assuredly be right, that he was easily depressed by a few mournful words; but then he was almost as easily raised up again in spirits, when Claude spoke to him cheerily.

Having thus brought Jack to a different state of feeling than that which, with its gloomy presages, might really have produced very bad consequences to them all, Claude was anxious to close an interview which at the best was dangerous.

"Go now, Jack," he said, "and do your best. Remember that I wait here a prisoner until Grace Manning is in her father's arms again, and that from that moment I am well aware that I shall be an inhabitant of this place only for so long a time as will suffice for an order to be sent for my immediate release."

"Yes, Claude," said Jack. "We know and feel that, and knowing and feeling it, you, and you only, can imagine what an incentive to exertion that is to both Dick and I. Keep yourself in good spirits, Claude, and as you say, we shall soon enough be under the starlit sky of the open country, I hope. I am going now to meet Dick at the house of Judge Manning, upon which he is keeping a watch; and it is likely enough that even to-day we may succeed in doing something."

"Heaven speed you, Jack."

Jack knocked at the door of the room, until the turnkey, who was some distance off in the passage, heard him, and came to let him out. "Ah," said he with a discontented air. "Ah, then, here is fine doings in Newgate for folks to have who they like come and see 'em, and stay as long as they like, and nobody to say 'times up!' I never seed the like."

"Nor I," said Claude, as he placed a guinea in the rough hand of the turnkey; "but if every visitor pays you as well as this, you will be making money like a physician, my friend, and I promise you that every visit to me will be equally productive to you."

The turnkey's mouth widened into a broad grin, as he said—

"Oh, that's quite another affair. You may have all the world, and his wife, come and see him if you like; and arter all, when you come to think, it's a hard thing that a cove as is shut up in a stone pitcher can't have his friends about him."

"Particularly," said Jack, "if he can pay well for the little indulgences."

"In course."

After this, the turnkey was all smiles and sweetness to Jack, and told him, as they traversed the narrow gloomy passages to the gate, "That he never seed sich a real gemman as his friend, Mr. Smith, and he only hoped as he (Jack) would make it a pint to come often and see him, just to keep his spirits up a bit, and tell him the news out o' doors."

And so, without the smallest accident, or any shadow of suspicion as to who he really was, Jack got out of Newgate, and found himself in the open streets of the city, after what may be truly called his perilous visit.

Of course, now, he had the greatest confidence in his disguise, and walked along

with a much more calm and confident air than he had done before; all which was favourable to his situation, and the carrying out the character which he had assumed. He made his way as directly as he could to the square in which the judge resided.

The distance was not great, and Jack was well enough acquainted with London not to increase it by going an inch out of his way, so he soon, from a side street, emerged into the square, very close to Judæ Manning's house. The first thing he saw, was Dick standing nearly opposite by the iron railings of the centre garden, apparently intently reading a bill that was stuck upon the face of a pump that was there.

Jack at once crossed over to him, and Dick, who had by a rapid side-glance seen him coming, said—

“Read this, Jack. I'll keep an eye on the judge's door while you do so.”

Jack cast his eye upon the bill and found that it offered no less than £500 reward for the apprehension of either of three persons; one supposed to be the notorious Claude Duval, the other Richard Turpin, and the third unknown. They were all personally described, and it was stated at the foot of the bill, that the full amount of £1500 would be paid to any one who would lodge the whole three in any jail without waiting for their conviction.

“What do you think of that, Jack?” said Dick; “ain't we a capital prize for some one! Here is £1000 standing by a pump in London, and not a soul to stretch out a hand to take it. That is really extraordinary, is it not?”

“It is no joke,” said Jack.

“Joke? No. They who might try to earn the money, should find it no joke. I am well armed, and it is not two, or three, or four men that would find it a very easy task to fasten upon me.”

“And I, too,” said Jack, “would sell my life dearly.”

Of course. £500 sinks in value very much to a man with a bullet or two in his inside. But we are getting on well. How did you find Claude?”

“Quite well.”

“And confident of his release, I hope?”

“Yes, he knows us well enough for that, Dick.”

“He does, and he shall not be disappointed. The man we seek is in the judge's house now; I watched him in, and when he comes out, I will follow him, and you, Jack, will follow me.”

“I will.”

“Of course, it is just possible when he does come out, that he may not be going direct to visit Grace Manning in the place of concealment he has found for her; but visit her at some time or other during twenty-four hours, he surely will; and our duty will be, now that we have once set eyes upon him, not to lose sight of him until he houses himself; and then if we feel that that is not the place of the concealment of the girl, we will wait for him until he comes out again, and stick to him like his shadow.”

“Is that him, Dick?”

“Yes, yes!”

Phillip Manning came out of his uncle's house. There was a gloom upon his brow, and he glanced cautiously around him before he descended the steps. If ever a man was thoroughly wretched, not from regret at his own guilt, but from a conviction that it was, as regarded its promised and expected results, a failure, that man was Phillip Manning.

In the interview he had just had with his uncle, although, the old judge had not said one word to put him upon his guard, yet Phillip, with that acuteness of perception that often belongs to the guilty, had not failed to see that he was more than suspected, and that his uncle's faith was much shaken in the truth of the story that he had told of the abduction of Grace.

How the judge had been so shaken, he, Phillip, had no means of knowing; but the fact, combined with the firm resistance, and the dignified and indignant



rejection of all terms of compromise by Grace herself, made Phillip endure the torments of the damned.

There he stood upon his uncle's door-step, a thorough picture of a foiled villain—of one who, for a great object to himself, had committed a great crime, but utterly failing in the object, was left standing, as it were, with nothing but the crime to console him.

While Phillip Manning there stood looking around him for food for suspicion, Dick was pumping away at the pump, while Jack was holding the iron ladle, and they both seemed only intent upon slaking their thirst.

The eyes of Phillip wandered over them, without exhibiting the slightest trace of suspicion, and then descending the remainder of the steps, he walked on.

"On," said Dick to Jack, "keep as far behind me as you can, so as to keep me in sight at all; and mind, Jack, if you see me go into a shop, or knock at the door of any house, or otherwise appear to give up the chase, it will be from a suspicion that I may be observed, and in that case you may go on and follow Phillip: I will soon come after you."

"I understand," said Jack.

By this time Phillip Manning had reached the corner of the square, and after casting around him one last glance, he seemed to be quite satisfied no one was dogging him, and he disappeared round the corner.

It was only for a moment that he was lost to the sight of Dick, for he was quickly at the corner, and then he saw Phillip walking down the street at a quick pace, without once looking behind him. From this time, the chase of the villain might be said fairly to have begun.

Dick kept about fifty paces behind him, and Jack about twenty paces behind Dick.

Phillip made for the northern part of London, and soon began to get into what was then open country, to the north of the New Road that is now. He then crossed the fields to Islington, which then was really quite a suburban district, and by no means of such close acquaintanceship with the bricks and mortar of London as it is now.

To any one not so well acquainted with the locality as Dick chanced to be, the task of following Phillip would have been one that now would have almost ensured detection, for it would look more than accidental for any one to keep upon the track of another, both in town and country. It was quite clear however to Dick, that Phillip was taking a short cut across the fields, where there was a foot-path, that would bring him out at a particular part of Islington, High-street, and he knew that by making a little detour, and traversing a lane which is now a street, he could reach that point.

He accordingly at once struck off from the direct pursuit of Phillip Manning.

Jack at first took this as a hint to him to follow, but Dick caught his eye for a moment, and gave him a sign to follow him, so that Phillip was to all appearance left quite alone; and if anything could tend to completely assure that doubtful character that he was safe, certainly this manœuvre would.

In a few moments both Dick and Jack were together in the lane, which was a very verdant one, and on the side of it, next to the meadows that Phillip was traversing, there was a row of tall poplars, which completely hid the lane, and cast a sort of twilight into it.

"He suspects nothing," said Jack.

"Nothing at all. We shall meet him again easily; but we must push on, for the route this way is nearly double that he is taking, and he walks fast."

They ran swiftly for some distance, and then Dick said—

"If we get upon the bank here, we can take a peep at the rascal through the hedge without his being able at the distance he is off, to have the least chance of seeing us."

Jack was as anxious as Dick to look at Phillip, and when they had scrambled up the wild flower-decked bank, at the side of the lane, they easily through the trees saw the whole extent of the meadows.

Phillip Manning had reached a stile and had stopped. His hand was up to his eyes to shade them, for the sun had peeped out, and he was looking southward. He seemed to be taking a long and earnest glance at the path he had come, in order thoroughly to assure himself that no one was upon his track. He sat upon the stile then, and took from his pocket a small telescope, and with that placed at his eye he made an accurate, and no doubt, very satisfactory examination of the route he had taken. Just for fear he might turn the telescope in the direction of the lane, and not knowing what its power might be, both Jack and Dick crouched down among the tall grass and flowering shrubbery, so that it would have been next to impossible for them to have been seen, even if Phillip had looked that way, which he did not.

To be sure, he did just take a sweeping kind of glance all round him with the telescope, but he did not fix his regards sufficiently long upon one spot to make our friends be in any danger of discovery in their secure hiding-place.

## CHAPTER CLVIII.

### PHILLIP MANNING'S CLEVER PROCEEDINGS.

AFTER this, Phillip, with all the air of a man who is thoroughly satisfied, pocketed his telescope and walked on.

"Now we shall have him," said Dick, "and I call all this very satisfactory, inasmuch as it assures us of one thing, which is, that we shall not have our trouble for nothing."

"Are you sure of that, Dick?"

"Pretty sure, Jack, unless we miss him. You may depend he would not take one half the trouble to assure himself that he is not followed, unless he were going upon some important errand; and I doubt if Master Phillip has anything else upon his hands just now half so important as this affair in which we feel so deeply interested."

"Most probably not, Dick. I see now what you mean, and I do begin to think that our work is already half done."

"Without making too sure," said Dick, "I confess now to being sanguine; but we must put the best foot foremost now, Jack, for Phillip has not far to go to get to the opening into the High Street, and, if we lose him at all, it will be there."

They now proceeded at such a rate that they soon got quite clear of the lane, and skirting a piece of waste ground, they then emerged into Islington, a little above what is now called The Green.

There they slackened their speed a little, and Dick went on in advance as before, Jack keeping upon the other side of the way, so as to break the connection between them to the eye as much as possible.

Suddenly from a narrow turning, out came Phillip. Dick took no notice of him, although he was so close to him that he could have touched him; and to avoid any suspicion, he had to walk on past him. He well knew that Jack would see the necessity of such a step, and would keep an eye on Phillip.

So completely, however, was the rascal satisfied that he had come in perfect security, that he took no notice of any one, and had quite lost the air of lurking suspicion which had before been the grand characteristic of his proceedings. He walked in the most direct manner to a house with a little garden in front of it and a small green gate.

This place looked like a better sort of cottage; and they—for Dick had now looked round, after walking quite far enough to lull all suspicion—saw him take a key from his pocket, open the door, and go in.

Dick beckoned Jack to come to him.

"Well," he said, when they were together, "we have housed him at last. What do you think of that place, Jack, into which he has just now gone?"

"That it certainly is not where we shall find Grace Manning."

"That is precisely my own opinion."

"It is too small and too public," added Jack; "she could alarm the whole



TOM BRERETON DENOUNCES CLAUDE AS THE NOTORIOUS HIGHWAYMAN.

neighbourhood from such a place as that by a cry for help. I think you will see Phillip come out again soon from that cottage; but we shall easily know it again."

"Oh, yes; and at another time, Jack, we will know all about it—but just now Phillip claims all our care. We will not lose sight of the green gate for a moment."

Even while they spoke they did not look at each other, but kept their regards upon that cottage; and this state of things lasted for about twenty minutes, when the cottage door opened, and an old woman, with a basket on her arm and pattens on, came out. She crossed the road, and disappeared down a lane opposite.

"Is it worth while asking any questions of that old dame?" said Jack to Dick.

"No, it would be dangerous. The grand thing, I take it, is to avoid exciting in the mind of Phillip the least certainty of his being watched—suspicion he already has; and if we follow and question yon old woman, how are we to prevent her from telling him of such a suspicious occurrence?"

"True enough, Dick—true enough. I only wish the rascal would come out, that's all."

They waited with the most exemplary patience for nearly a whole hour, but still there was not the least appearance of Phillip Manning emerging from the cottage.

"There is something more in this than we can just now divine," said Dick. "We are done for this time somehow. He cannot have left the cottage by the back, for you see, Jack, it is open to the fields, and we must have seen him."

"Decidedly," said Jack.

"And by the front we know he has not. Confound it, he may be upon quite some other errand to day than that of calling upon poor Grace Manning."

"That is possible," said Jack. "But I begin to have an idea."

"For Heaven's sake then, Jack, let me have the benefit of it at once, for if it be anything that will abridge the monotony of the watch we are keeping here. I fear in vain it will be most welcome."

"You shall have it, Dick. I don't in the least wonder at your getting impatient, for nothing in the world can be so annoying as this sort of thing. You may laugh at me, but my idea is—"

"Hush! There's the old woman again."

"Humph," said Jack. "That is my idea."

"Why—why—what do you mean, Jack? Out with it."

"I think the old woman is Phillip Manning."

"The devil!"

They were both silent as they watched the seeming old woman with the basket and the pattens, cross the road-way to the little cottage with the green-gate. Then they saw her take a key from her pocket, after some rummaging, and place it in the lock. For one instance she held up her head, and took a glance around her.—It was Phillip!

"Done!" said Dick.

"For this time completely," said Jack; "but we have made a good two hours' work of it for all that, for now we know Phillip disguises, and that it must be somewhere close at hand to this spot that he keeps Grace a prisoner. You may depend that in that basket he took her provisions until this time to-morrow."

"Oh, yes," said Dick, in a tone of deep chagrin. "I see it all now. It is as plain as your hand before your eyes, Jack; but that you and I should be taken in is rather too bad. I warrant now if Claude had been with us he would have detected Phillip's disguise."

"He might. But the game is over for to-day, Dick."

"It is, I fear; and yet if you have no objection we will wait here, as we are well sheltered by this chesnut tree, and see Phillip go home again, and then I should like to go down the turning opposite, and see what one can."

"And so should I, Dick. We shall see what sort of a place it is, and where it leads to, at all events."

Phillip emerged from the cottage in his usual apparel in much less time than it had taken him to put on and perfect the disguise that had been good enough to

deceive Jack and Dick. He did not look about him at all, but banging the door of the cottage to, he made the best of his way to town again, by the same way he had come.

When he was fairly out of sight, Dick and Jack emerged from the sheltered spot they had found among some chesnut-trees, and looked at the cottage.

"I would not disturb that place," said Dick. "If there be any one there, it may have the effect of putting Phillip on his guard; and if no one, all we could find would be his disguise, and that we know already. Let us go up the lane."

"Certainly,"

They had now no trouble in looking after Phillip, so they could pay the most undivided attention to the place they were in. It was a pretty rural lane enough, with, at the top part of it, that is to say that part at which they entered some small cottages that seemed to be in the possession of laundresses. Further on it seemed to straggle right away into the open country.

There was some open country at Islington then.

Feeling quite certain that none of the cottages at the entrance of the lane were worth their examination, Jack and Dick passed on at a quick pace until they got clear of the houses, and reached a stile that seemed to go into the meadows. There they both paused.

"This voyage of discovery," said Jack, "does not seem to promise many results, Dick."

"It does not, indeed. I can see chimney pots among the trees, yonder; but it is rather an awkward thing to go to a house, and say, 'Have you got a young lady a prisoner here? and does a man, disguised as an old woman, come to see her?'"

"Rather awkward, indeed," said Jack. "It is tolerably clear to me, Dick, that our best course most decidedly is to wait until to-morrow, and then come here and follow Phillip. We know he comes down this lane."

"Yes, and the plan will be to wait in the lane, Jack. Let us pitch upon some spot now that we are here, that we can come to direct to-morrow, and wait at until the rascal arrives."

They crossed the stile with this intent, and soon found a kind of copse, in the intricacies of which they could be effectually concealed, while it did not prevent them from looking out and keeping a good watch upon the stile, over which they had very little doubt that they should, on the morrow, have the satisfaction of seeing Phillip Manning get.

Having settled all this, then, as far as they could, they felt that their presence there was no longer required, and that their best way was to proceed to London again at once. They made for the quaker's house in Dean Street, Soho.

They fond the "friend" anxious concerning them, as they had been absent for a much longer period of time than he or they had expected; for when Dick had gone to wait for Jack in the square where the judge lived, he had no idea that he should so readily light upon Phillip Manning.

"Friend," said Franklin, "I began to think thee and thy friend Jack had fallen into the hands of the Philistines."

"Oh no," said Dick, "we are making progress of a satisfactory kind, as you will admit when you hear what I have to tell you."

"It is ill talking upon an empty stomach, and with a dry throat, friend," said the quaker—"if thou will permit me, I will provide thee with a resource against both of those evils."

He rang a bell, and ordered a substantial repast for Dick and Jack, together with a couple of bottles of rare old wine, and he would not permit them to fatigue themselves by telling him their news, until they were thoroughly refreshed.

"I am, no doubt," he said, "friends, anxious enough to hear all that thou mayst have to say, but I am much more anxious that thy strength and thy courage should be kept up, for really now there are so few good men upon the road, that I cannot afford to lose either of thee."

Neither Dick nor Jack could help laughing at the business-like views which

the quaker took of the affair, and at the way in which he accounted for his profuse hospitality, which many men would have tried to make a kind of merit of facts own sake. Franklin however was far above any such petty feelings, and he found his account in letting the highwaymen and crackmens who dealt with him know that the assistance he rendered them was merely a matter of business, and had no other support or foundation.

When one of the bottles of wine was gone, and the other dipped into, Dick recounted to him all that had happened, to which he lent the most attentive ear; and when Dick had finished, he said—

“Thou must be cautious, friend.”

“How?”

“Why from all I can hear of this Phillip Manning, he is one who will kill.”

“Kill!” exclaimed Dick, “kill! And do you fancy for one moment, Mr. Franklin, that I am afraid of his killing propensities? and I am sure I may say as much for Jack here. We don’t care one straw about the malice or the resistance of such a fellow as that, I assure you.”

“Now, friend,” added the quaker, “that thou hast had thy say, allow me to state that I was not afraid of Phillip Manning killing thee or thy friend Jack of the Sixteen-strings. It was the young maiden called Grace that I spoke of.”

“You are right, Mr. Franklin,” cried Jack. “The same thought has more than once come across me, giving me a cold shudder as it did so. I think he is just the man to murder the young thing, if he found all his villany upon the point of being discovered.”

“I really did not think of that,” said Dick. “Pardon me, Mr. Franklin. It is a thing of great importance, and I thank you for the hint. I will take good care it is well seen to. It would be too terrible.”

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## CHAPTER CLIX.

### AN ADVENTURE AT THE QUAKER’S.

TINGLE! Tingle! Tingle!

“What’s that?” said Dick.

There was just a slight change of colour upon the face of the quaker for a moment, and then he said, in a quiet voice—

“It is a warning, that’s all. It is only a warning. You have been traced here by some means: you are either known or suspected, I cannot say which. Truly the Philistines are at hand even now.”

“The deuce they are!” said Dick, as he sprung from his seat. “What’s to be done?”

“Nothing, friend, just now, by violence,” said the quaker. “Everything, probably, by discretion. Please to remain precisely where you both are, until I come to you again. You will consult your safety by so doing, whereas, by removing from this room, thou may’st remove to thy own destruction.”

With these words, the quaker rose, and left the room in a moment, Jack and Dick remaining, staring at each other, rather in a state of amazement.

“What shall we do?” said Dick.

“As he says,” replied Jack.

“But—but I don’t like this state of inaction. Did you see his face change colour when the bell rang? Do you know, Jack, I begin to have my suspicions.”

“I have none. You ought to know Franklin much better than I do, Dick, so that of course, so far as that goes, you are the best judge by a great deal; but I do not myself entertain anything in the shape of a doubt of his fidelity to us. I feel that all his interests must be the other way.”

“You have convinced me, Jack. We will wait here, although I had rather know what was going on below. Let us listen at the stair-head. There can be

no harm in that you know, Jack. Come on. Are you a good one at overhearing anything some distance off?"

"Pretty well."

They opened the door of the room quite carefully, and crept on to the landing-place of the stairs. Even to do this much was in contradiction to the express recommendation of Franklin; but something must be allowed for men placed in the exceedingly ticklish situation of Dick and Jack. They could hear nothing for some time below but the murmur of two voices; but then they found Franklin and some other person were ascending the staircase together, and talking as they came on. They both turned into a room before they got to the height that Dick and Jack were.

"Did you know the companion of the quaker?" said Dick, in a low, hissing whisper, to Jack.

"No."

"It was Granby, the informer. He is an officer, but he goes by the name of Granby, the informer, because he makes all his captures and transacts all his business by treachery. He is rich, and he will pay two-thirds of what he will get by the job for the apprehension of any one by treachery, rather than attempt it openly and by force."

"Say no more," said Jack. "I have heard of the man. What do you suppose his errand is here?"

"Of course to see if he cannot make terms with the quaker. Stay here, Jack. I have more than once, perhaps very wrongfully, had a slight fancy—suspicion one can hardly call it—that Franklin may, upon some odd occasion, retire from business, and that, preparatory to so doing, he may want to dispose of his stock in trade: do you understand me?"

"Ay; and his stock," said Jack, "you would say, consists of such men as we are."

"Yes; cracksmen and knights of the road, as we are. Once for all, then, I should like to satisfy myself; so I will step down and listen to his conversation with Granby if I can."

Dick took off his boots, and went very softly down the stairs on his stocking soles. He reached the door of the room into which the quaker and the officer had gone, and applying his ear quite close to the keyhole, he found that after a few moments, he could hear pretty nearly every word that was spoken by the parties within.

The officer was speaking, and Dick heard him say, in a clear and very earnest tone of voice—

"Now, Mr. Franklin, it is quite needless to tell you that the police have had an eye upon your house for some time; and strange as you may think it, it is I who have saved you. You may look incredulous. Perhaps, if I were in your positon, I should likewise; but there is a why and a wherefore for everything in this world, and I will soon explain it all to you."

"Really, friend," replied Franklin, "I shall be much indebted to thee, indeed, to explain it to me, for, as yet, friend, I am most truly and lamentably in the dark with respect to thy reasoning."

"Are you?"

"Yes, friend; and I beg that thou wilt go on with all convenient expedition with thy promised explanation."

"Ah, you are a deep card," said Granby.

"Eh, friend? A card?"

"Well, well, I don't expect that all at once you are going to drop into my mouth, Mr. Franklin. I tel' you that more than one officer has had his eye upon this house, but I have always fobbed them off in some way or another, so that you have really hardly been at all disturbed—eh?"

"Humph!" said Franklin.

"Well, well," continued Granby, "I see you are a man of business, and I like you all the better for it. You will understand what I have got to propose in the

right spirit. I have looked upon you as a nice little piece of property in my way for these last three years, and I think the time has now come, do you know, to realise you. Ha! You understand?"

"No, friend."

"Come, come, Mr. Franklin—you are joking."

"Friend, I can conscientiously aver that I never made a joke in my life, and that, knowingly, I never shall make one. If thou art joking, friend, thou hast come to the wrong party to show thy wit, for I assure thee thou wilt not get from me the ghost of a smile, friend."

"Ha, ha!" said Granby, with a forced laugh; "upon my life you are a strange man—you are, indeed; but come, you and I must understand each other soon. If you don't make terms with me you will have a rough search in your house at all sorts of odd times when you least expect it. All the officers have great faith in what I say. They think I have means of getting information that they know nothing of. And they are right. I have such means. You are all right and snug now, I tell you, for I have fobbed them off just because there being no one to settle with but me, you might afford to be liberal."

"If I were assured of that——" said Franklin.

"Oh, that's the point, is it?" cried Granby. "Well, I hardly know how I am to assure you of it. But you must see by my way that I am no fool, you know, and is it likely that I would let any one else have a share in the affair, when I could keep it all to myself? Now I tell you I know you harbour the great guns here now and then; fellows with £500, and, at odd times, £1000 reward hanging over their heads. The small pay don't come to you, and that's why I want to transact business with you. Now, at a word, I will go your halves."

"Halves in what, friend?"

"Hang it! you understand. How jolly green we are all of a sudden.—Ha! ha!"

"Thy saying 'Ha! ha!' and talking about green affairs, friend, does not enlighten me in the least."

"Don't it? Well, then, when you have a fellow snug here, for whom there is a good reward—anything over £100 will be worth while—you give me the office. I won't take him in your house or near it, but you give me sufficient information, and when I nab him you shall have your half down."

"Down, friend?"

"Yes, down."

"Before you get him tucked up, friend?"

"Yes. I'll give you a cheque for the amount. Everbody knows Jack Granby's cheque is a bank-note."

"Humph!"

"Is it a bargain?"

"Wilt thou stand half the forty-pound blood-money likewise, friend, when the individual whom I may be instrumental in giving up to thee is duly suspended by the neck until he be dead, friend?"

"I will—I will. That will be twenty-pound more always. Come, is it a bargain? I will stand half the blood-money, though it is rather a hard bargain to drive."

"Down, friend?"

"Yes down. Down on the nail."

"Of course, friend, then I consent. How could you doubt for one moment that I would? Good gracious, friend, I think the offer a most liberal one, especially as I am to get my half down; and of course, friend, as my house is to be the great rat-trap, you will be careful not to let the animals suspect it."

"Oh, trust me for that. It's a bargain? Give us your hand upon it!"

"Friend, I do not see the least occasion for giving thee my hand because we have agreed to be two thundering rogues, friend. Let us profit by our internal iniquity, friend, and have, at the same time, if it be all the same to thee, friend, the most hearty contempt and abhorrence for each other, verily."



"Well, you are one of the oddest fellows, if not absolutely the very oddest, that I ever heard of."

"Do you really think so, friend?"

"In faith I do; but that's nothing. We have made our bargain, and I am glad enough of it for one. It will be to the profit of both of us; and if in the next twelve-months we don't make an outrageous good thing of it, I am much mistaken."

"Truly, friend, the speculation looks well," said Franklin; "and I should like a little memorandum of it, for the purpose of making which, friend, I will presently get pen, and ink, and paper. But yet I have many doubts."

"About what? Not about my good faith towards you, I hope? for if you have, the sooner you dismiss them the better. There is nothing so well calculated to keep men faithful to each other as mutual interest."

"No, friend Granby, I have not the least doubt of thy good faith, so far as thy intentions go; but, even now, I fear that thy visit may bring down upon me and my house inquiry; and induce, perhaps, other of your fraternity to visit me.—Nay, the mere fact of thy visit to-day will act as a kind of provocation to induce some one else to come."

"Make yourself easy about that."

"But how?"

"Well, I will tell you. Thinking of course that you, as a man of business, would have the good sense to make a proper arrangement with me, I took the greatest precaution to induce everybody to think I was going somewhere else.—Even my wife thinks I have gone down the river upon some business. I believe you will admit that I am cunning enough, Mr. Franklin?"

"Indeed, friend, thou art as cunning as a badger."

"Ha! ha! Then all your scruples are removed now?"

"Completely, friend, and I am quite decided. I may almost say that I look upon thy visit here as quite providential, and the pains that thou hast taken to conceal it, so that thou shouldst not be traced to this house, are really, friend, quite delightful to think of."

"Well, well," said the highly gratified officer. "All's right. I rather think that when you and I combine for any purpose, it would take the devil himself to get the better of us. Ha! ha! ha! I am so glad I came, you can't think; I never felt so pleased with myself, or so comfortable in all my life, really, upon my word."

Dick thought now that it was high time to get up the stairs again, for he expected the quaker might come up for pen, ink and paper, with which he wished to make the memorandum he spoke of to the officer. When Dick reached the landing, he whispered to Jack,—

"We are sold."

"Sold?" said Jack. "What do you mean by that?"

"Simply that our friend, Franklin, has even now made a bargain with an officer to give us up for one-half of the reward. You look to your pistols, Jack, and I will look to mine. They shall find that two to two is no odds; and if they don't bid the world good night, it shall be no fault of mine this day."

## CHAPTER CLX.

### GRACE MANNING'S GREAT DANGER.

WHILE Dick uttered these words, Jack looked at him in perfect astonishment. He found the greatest difficulty in bringing himself to believe in the perfidy of Franklin, and he said with earnestness—

"It's a fact. I heard it with my own ears: It is no opinion, no surmise. It is a fact. We are bought and sold."

"Then, Dick, I think we will make them repent of their bargain. Only say what you think is best to be done, and I will place myself entirely under your direction in the matter."

"Are your pistols fit for active service, Jack?"

"They are. I have only fresh-primed them a little while ago, and my hand is unusually steady. Dick, I feel that I am fit for anything, for if we fall, of course poor Claude falls likewise, for who will find out Phillip Manning, and restore Grace to her father, if we do not?"

"You are right enough there, Jack. What I propose is, then, that we go down stairs, and shoot them both. The quaker has gone to get writing materials to make a memorandum of his infamous bargain with the officer, respecting not only a treacherous giving up of us, but of all who may come here, relying upon him for safety. He has himself said, that this house shall be a sort of rat-trap; but I think he will find that we decline being the rats. Come on. I will shoot the quaker, and you may shoot the other."

"Agreed—agreed. It is for Claude as well as for ourselves."

If it had not been for his feeling towards Claude, there can be very little doubt but that Jack would have shrunk from this deed of retributive justice, which the sterner nature of Dick suggested; but he felt certain that Claude's fate would be sealed if he and Dick were not at liberty to trace out Grace Manning, and so triumphantly vindicate him from the charge brought against him by Phillip Manning. Hence, then, although with a certain degree of reluctance, Jack followed Dick down the stairs with a well-loaded pistol in his hand.

When they reached the landing below, Dick whispered to him—

"It would be a great thing, Jack, would it not, to get the document, which will at any time prove the treachery against which we are now armed. Would it not?"

"I should like by all mean," said Jack, "to have such a written justification of this fearfully necessary deed, Dick."

"You shall have it. We will listen a moment."

They did listen, but rather to their surprise, all was most profoundly still within the room where the secret conference had taken place between the quaker and the officer. After a few moments, both Dick and Jack began to think that their prey had escaped them.

They looked at each other for a moment or two, as though each were anxious to read what the other thought by the expression of his face, and then Dick laid his hand upon the handle of the door, and whispered—

"Come on."

He opened the door, and at once dashed into the room with the pistol in his hand. The quaker alone was there. He was standing by the window, very quietly and composedly washing his hands in a basin that, when the hinged-top of the window-seat was down, was completely concealed. The expression of his countenance, as he glanced round upon Dick and Jack, was appalling. All the mild, quiet, firmness of look, which was his usual characteristic, had fled, and his every feature was indicative of passion. His eyes were flashing, and indeed, as he then stood with his coat off, no one not well acquainted with his features, could for a moment have ventured upon his recognition.

"Well," he said sternly. "Is this obeying my orders?"

"You are a villain," said Dick.

"Villain in your teeth, highway robber," he replied. "How dare you apply such a term to me? You are only existing upon sufferance."

"Where is your companion in guilt? Where is he with whom you have made an alliance for our blood?"

"Oh, you are a listener at keyholes, are you?" said Franklin. "Only wait until I have washed my hands, and I will soon answer you."

"I came here," said Dick, "to shoot you, and I don't know what hinders me at this moment."

"You are afraid," said the quaker, drying his hands very deliberately upon a

large towel. "You are afraid—that's the reason, friend, why thou dost not do it."

He was rapidly recovering his usual manner.

"Afraid?" said Dick, as he advanced two steps. "Afraid?"

"Yes, friend. A brave man is always afraid to do a base and cowardly action."



THE RETURN OF GRACE MANNING TO HER DISCONSOLATE FATHER.

Dick slowly lowered his hand, as he said—

"You are a riddler. What am I to think? I heard enough to convince any one of your treachery; even now, for all I know, the officer, Granby, may have left the house, only for the purpose of concocting measures for our apprehension."

"He has not left the house, friend."

"Where is he then?"

"Through that half-open door, friend, thou wilt find him."

"Jack," said Dick, "he is your victim. Shoot him if you see him there, while I keep an eye upon our friend here."

Jack passed through the half-open doorway, and then in a moment he came back with agitation in his looks—

"He is there, indeed," he said, "but he is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, Dick. He lies in his blood."

"And this, friend, is some of it," said the quaker, as he pointed to the water in the wash-hand basin, which was of an ensanguined tinge. "This is some of it!"

At that moment the face of Franklin again changed to the awful expression that it had worn at the moment that Dick and Jack had made their way so roughly into the apartment; but it was but transient; gradually subsiding, he looked cold and quiet as usual. Dick hastily made his way to the adjoining room to make sure that Jack had not been mistaken, but there he saw Granby lying in a pool of blood, although he could not well perceive by what means he had come by his death. The face was uninjured, but it had upon it an awful expression of agony, as it was upturned to the ceiling. The eyes were fixed and opaque, and the hair hung in disordered masses, partially dabbled in blood.

Dick made the best of his way back to the other room, and in a voice indicative of emotion, he said—

"Franklin, what is the meaning of this?"

"He," said the quaker, proceeding towards the dead body, "he would tell you if he had a tongue that he could wag now."

"But—but——"

"Tush! The explanation stares thee in the face, friend. That man insulted me by an offer, that it appears you overheard. Well, he has signed and sealed it now with his blood. Are you satisfied?"

"I am, indeed. You have killed him instead of allowing him to betray us. We are safe, and we owe it to you. How can I, for it was all my saying, how can I sufficiently apologise to you for my most unjust suspicions of you?"

"Say no more about it. It was very wrong and very imprudent of you to come out of the room above at all; but as you did come, and it has turned out that no particular mischief has resulted from it, let it drop. Our friend, Granby, still has to be disposed of. He was the most dangerous man to me in all London; and now I can breathe a little freely that he is no more. Mark me, friends, I do not consider this to be a murder, although the law would. Come."

Dick and Jack followed the quaker with amazement at his calmness so immediately after such an act. He pointed to the body, saying—"Drag it aside."

Although with reluctance, Dick took hold of the heels of the dead man and dragged him aside, when Franklin, by stamping upon one of the floor-boards where there appeared only to be a simple joining of two pieces, caused it to lift up at the other end, and after displacing that one board, he lifted several others with ease, disclosing an opening right through the floor to an immense depth below.

"This goes to the cellars, friends," he said, "and there Mr. Granby may lie and rot, or be food for rats. I hear them at times screaming and fighting far down below. Be so good as to pitch him down, friend Jack of the sixteen strings."

"Don't ask me," said Jack, "I could not touch him for the world. If he were alive you would not find me backward in grappling with him; but now that he is no more, I should not like to touch him with the top of my boot."

"Nay, friend, I particularly wish you to do it. I killed him. Dick, here, has already dragged him from above the trap, and it is thy duty, friend, to poke him down."

"If it come at all in the shape of a duty," said Jack, "I'll kick him down; so that you shall not say that I had no hand in the business as well as yourself."

With this, Jack urged the dead body to the opening with his foot, and soon overbalancing it, away it went out of sight into the depths below. Franklin carefully replaced the boards, and then remarking that he should have to get out the stains of blood, and that he knew a mode of doing that, he led the way to the other apartment.

"How did you kill him?" said Jack.

"Do not trouble thyself, friend, to ask unnecessary questions," replied the quaker. "Let it content thee that he is dead, friend."

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While all this was transacting at the quaker's house in Dean Street, Soho, the situation of Grace Manning was getting most critical. If any one had peeped into a small chamber in the house where Phillip Manning had a private lodging in the city, somewhere at the back of where the post office now stands, they would have seen that he was rather singularly occupied.

This lodging of his consisted of but one room, in which was a sofa bedstead; and there it was that, known only by the name of Smith, he used to commit his villanies. At this time, however, he was very differently employed, and he is worth looking at.

At a table by the window he sits, with before him a small glass apparatus for distillation, such as is used for chemical purposes, consisting of a retort and a receiver, well supported by a stand. Under the bulb of the retort was a spirit lamp, flickering and burning with its peculiar faint flame. Phillip was resting with his chin upon his fists, and his elbows upon the table. He was watching the boiling up of some liquid in the bulb of the retort, in which, too, there were some herbs.

"This will do," he muttered. "As soon as a great part of the water has gone over in vapour, what remains will be a tolerably concentrated production from the poisonous herbs I have collected; and they must destroy life. Ha! ha! I am not so foolish as to purchase poison—I make it!"

His face at that moment was perfectly diabolical in its satanic expression.

After a time he removed the spirit lamp from under the retort, and put upon it its glass cap, and extinguished it; then he poured cold water over the bulb of the retort to cool it, and was soon able to handle it. He took from it three drops of a greenish thick fluid, and poured them one by one into a pint bottle of wine. He then held the wine up to the light, and looked at it scrutinizingly.

"No," he said, "it is to the full as clear as it was, and yet what a deadly draught it will be. What an enemy to life would but a small portion of the liquor now become. She shall bid adieu to the world by its means. I will not try to induce her to take it, but I will leave it with her, and at some moment when she feels faint both in body and in spirit she will fancy that a glass of the wine will revive her; and then, Grace, you will be no more, and I shall escape from the perplexity of an affair which, if it go on much longer, will be certain to end in my destruction."

He carefully corked the bottle, and then dashed dust upon it to give it an appearance of age. He dragged it through a cobweb that was in a corner by the roof of his room, and then he said—"This shall be the death draught of my fair cousin, Grace."

## CHAPTER CLX1:

### PHILLIP'S DISGUISE.

WE will take a look at Grace Manning in the prison-house to which the villany of her cousin Phillip had consigned her in that sweet spring-tide of her existence. She almost began to despair of aid.

It was a room in which she was now confined. Phillip had blindfolded her thrice, and changed the apartment in which he kept her prisoner. He was

afraid to let her be long in one place, partly for fear she should concoct some plan of escape from it, and partly lest some one else might find her. Each of these times that he had changed her abode he had taken her into the open air to make her believe that she had gone to another house entirely; but she had smelt the odour of flowers, and she felt quite convinced from the feel of the ground, and the character of the air, that she had only been traversing a garden, no doubt attached to the house in which she had been in the first instance brought.

From all this manœuvring one thing was quite evident, if even other circumstances had not tended to confirm it, and that was, that Phillip Manning was in a state of the greatest fear and tribulation for the consequences of his criminality.

Upon the occasion of his last visit to the house in which he had her in durance—that visit, in the making of which he had successfully foiled both Jack and Dick—he had used the most awful threats towards her.

“Your life,” he said, “is in your own hands. You will, if you please, easily force me to become your executioner. If you are so vindictive as still to assert you will ruin me with your father, by telling him all that has really happened, what can you expect but that, in common self defence, I should prefer to kill you in this place?”

“I will tell the truth, and the whole truth,” said Grace; “nothing shall induce me to depart from it.”

“Wretched girl, do you not tremble?”

“No, Phillip; but I can well perceive that you do so.”

“And so, you even dare to taunt me?”

“It is not taunting. I tell you that I will intercede for you with my father, if, even now, you restore me to him. I will say for you, in asking him for mercy, what I can.”

“Mercy! What do you mean by mercy? What do you expect as the result of your intercession? tell me that; and let me judge of what I am to expect from you. Speak to me fully—your life hangs upon a thread.”

“By my intercession I hope that my father may be induced to spare you from that legal prosecution which your crimes merit. I do not know what the laws of your country would condemn you to for this great iniquity, but I would make an effort to spare you that.”

“Yes, and leave me to disgrace and destitution!”

“It is you, Phillip, who will leave yourself to disgrace. No one can lift the disgrace of such acts as yours off the shoulders of him who perpetrates them. As for destitution, I do not think that my father would let you starve; whatever might be his abhorrence of your crimes. Perhaps in some other land you might live a life of repentance.”

Phillip laughed loudly and discordantly.

“No, girl,” he said; “upon one condition only will I place you in your father’s arms: it is, that you will point to me as your preserver, and accuse that man who is now in Newgate upon the charge of your abduction, of really being the person who tore you from home. I will then ask your father for a sufficient sum of money, which no doubt his grateful feelings will prompt him to give me, and with it I will leave England for ever. When I am gone you can tell what tale you like; so that, after all, it will only be costing your father a few thousands, and that is no harm to him.”

“No, Phillip, no.”

“You will not?”

“I dare not.”

“What do you mean by dare not? Who is to hinder you, fool that you are? What do you mean by dare not?”

“I dare not go to my father with an untruth upon my lips, even for one hour.”

“Then die in you obstinacy, idiot, for die you shall!”

“Heaven help me!”

"Heaven! Ha! ha! Wait for Heaven to help you until you lie and rot. Ha! ha! I have you now; but it is only to bind more tightly around you the meshes of my power, and to take more effectual steps for the destruction of him who had the audacity to interfere with me in the country lane. To-morrow I will visit you again, and if I do not find you more tractable, that day will be your last in this world."

With these words, and without waiting for an answer, for anything she said was gall and wormwood to him, he left the house, and full of dark and evil thoughts he made his way to London again.

It was after this visit to Grace, that feeling how utterly impossible it was to move her from her fixed integrity of thought and action, he fairly made up his mind to her murder. Then it was that he drugged the wine, which he hoped would be a speedy means of relieving him from her presence in this world.

But notwithstanding all that was happening to them, in the meantime Jack and Dick were not unmindful of the principle business they had in hand, namely, the rescue of Claude from Newgate, by the thorough establishment of his innocence as regarded the abduction of Grace.

By establishing that fact, they not only anticipated an instant order from Judge Manning for his release, but they hoped that in the judge they should make for him (Claude) such a friend, as upon some other important occasion might really stand him in good stead.

They were both at the spot in Islington, from whence they could command a good view of the cottage, where Phillip Manning went to put on his disguise, long before the hour at which they expected him to make his appearance there.

"Do you know, Dick," said Jack, "I scarcely ever felt so nervous in all my life as I do now, about the probable fate of that young girl. It seems as if something whispered to me, that to a certainty that rascal would take her life in spite of us."

"No, no, Jack, if he come here, you may depend she yet lives; and so sure as he does come she shall be saved, for we can then take pretty good care not to lose sight of the villain. I grant you if he were not to come, I should have the most dismal forebodings upon the subject."

"Alas! Dick, if you began to have forebodings, I should feel and have certainties. I hope to God it will not be so. Ah! what a delightful thing. There he is, Dick."

"Sure enough. All's right. Yes, that is the fellow. What has he got in that bag, I wonder?"

"Some provisions, or a fresh disguise for himself."

"Perhaps both, Jack; but as we are pretty sure there is no one in that bit of a crib, which we may call for convenience sake Phillip's cottage, but himself, we will follow whoever comes out of it, let them be in appearance what they may. We have already had evidence that Master Phillip is a skilful actor, and we positively must not let him do us again, Jack."

"We will not."

Phillip advanced with the utmost possible caution. He seemed quite to have some sort of notion that he was being followed, for he looked many times behind him, and passed the cottage twice before he ventured upon going up to the door of it, and opening it with the key he took from his pocket.

When he did open the door though, he disappeared within the cottage, and closed it again with truly marvellous celerity.

"Good," said Dick. "We have him now, Jack, as safely as though he were in our hands. I will now go up the lane opposite and hide for him, while you come after him, but at such a distance as shall take off all idea that you are after him. Don't you look for me, as I will keep an eye upon you as you come up the lane, and join you in good time."

"That will do, Dick. Good luck go with you."

"That it certainly ought to do now, Jack, for this is, to tell the honest truth, rather a difficult sort of adventure to those that generally engage our attention."

For the love of everything now, mind whatever you do, that you don't follow Phillip too closely."

"Trust me."

Dick at once started over the way, and in a careless manner, for fear Phillip should be looking from the window of the cottage, he stalked up the lane. It is highly probable, however, that he might have gone in any way he liked, for Phillip was by far too busy with his own disguise, to pay the remotest attention just then to anything else.

We will in the forthcoming adventure watch the conduct and proceedings of Phillip, leaving our friends to act as their good feeling and judgment may direct them in the defence of the beautiful young girl who was in such danger.

Phillip then quite satisfied himself, before he went into the cottage, that nobody saw him, so that when he did get in, he thought he had nothing in the world to do but to put on the disguise with which he was in the habit of going up the lane; but upon this occasion, having a horrible guilty knowledge of what he meant to do, he shook to that degree, that it was with the greatest possible difficulty he could put on the apparel, which was to make such a transformation in his appearance.

In about double the time, however, that he usually took to make the change, he did at length effect it, and then placing the drugged bottle of wine in a small hand-basket, he, with that upon his arm, left the cottage.

Now he did not look to the right or to the left, for he felt confident in his disguise, and he really believed that the only person he had to deal with was Grace herself. He went across the road quickly and up the lane as fast as it was at all prudent to go, considering that he personated an old woman, and perhaps a little faster.

The inhabitants of a few of the cottages at the commencement of the lane, had got to know him through seeing him several times, and one said, as he went along—

"Well, old Goody, how are you to-day?"

"Poorly, poorly," replied Phillip, in a very well acted voice indeed, as he went on.

He then pursued his way until he came to the pailings of the garden of the large house that was to let, and then he slackened his pace and only crept along. He pretended to be gathering something in the hedge, but in reality he was carefully looking about him to see if any one were at hand. After getting in this way a handful of chickweed, he quickened his pace a little, still skirting the pailings.

It was well that Dick was capitally hidden, and it was well that Jack was not too hasty in following Phillip, so as to come into sight before the rascal got housed; for if he had, without the smallest doubt, Phillip would have turned back, and postponed his visit to Grace for that day.

Everything, however, happened as it was wished to happen, and after a few minutes more skulking along the pailings, he suddenly whipped a little key out of his pocket, and opening a small door in it, disappeared in an instant.

"I am safe here," he said, as he closed the little door, and locked it on the inside.

It was rather curious that at that moment Dick popped from behind a haystack in a meadow on the other side of the lane, and said—

"Now he's nabbed."

The place where Phillip now found himself, was in truth a neglected garden. The trees had grown tall and strong, the shrubs had got wild and straggling, and the flowers had run in all directions, disdain<sup>ing</sup> cultivated art, and rapidly lapsing into their original wild habits.

To him the place had no charms either of retrospection or anticipation. All he knew and felt was, that he had come there to commit a murder, and that each moment, although he felt his nerves fearfully shaken, he likewise felt more and more inclined to do the deed.



There was nothing whatever to interrupt him, and he made his way, regardless of the remains of the old pathway, towards the house, which, with its weather-stained walls and its closed windows, looked grim and desolate.

"There was a murder, they say, committed in this house once," muttered Phillip Manning, as he reached its threshold; "and so no one will live in it. Now there will be two. Yes, now there will be two; for nothing can, and nothing shall, save Grace Manning from death to-day. She shall never be a witness against me."

## CHAPTER CLXII.

### STARTLING INCIDENTS.

So said Phillip.

"She shall never be a witness against me; and nothing can, and nothing shall save Grace Manning from death!" Impious man! did he think that Heaven slumbered while he was about to destroy one of its masterpieces of creation?

Before he crossed the threshold of the house, he placed his hand up to his eyes, and took a long look around the garden. He felt quite satisfied that he had it all to himself. Like Alexander Selkirk, the original Robinson Crusoe, he might have said—

"I am monarch of all I survey."

"'Tis well," he muttered. "I always thought that even the highest crimes could be committed with perfect ease if people were but commonly careful. I shall do this deed and no one will be a bit the wiser. Indeed it is as good as done, and beneath that mulberry-tree I will bury the only mute witness of my crime. Yes, there shall the body of Grace lie and rot while I comfort her father's and my uncle's declining years, bidding him look upon me as a son, although he has lost his only daughter. Then of course grief will soon kill him after he has made a will in my favour, leaving me all his property, which is truly immense, and I shall have my heart's desire—unbounded means of enjoyment. Oh, how I will play the tyrant and trample on all who come within my power."

While he indulged in this day-dream, he was fumbling in his pockets for a key to open the door of the house with. He found it at last, and then he disappeared when the ill-omened structure that had earned so bad a name and which he fully intended should from that day be entitled to a worse one.

He did not fasten the door behind him. What was the use? He was so very safe.

The hall in which he now was consisted of a large space, paved with alternate black and white marble squares, and from the centre of this hall sprang the principal staircase of the house. There was, however, numerous rooms opening from the hall itself, and into one of those he went. Phillip never appeared in his disguise before Grace. He always felt that that would be useless, as a tone—a look—a gesture might discover him, and probably would do so to one who knew him so well as she did. Into one of these rooms, then, leading off from the hall, he went, to get rid of his disguise. Wrapped up in the bottom of the basket he had brought with him from the cottage was his coat, and that was the only article he found necessary to alter his present appearance with.

In that side room, which had been a pretty enough looking breakfast-room, he quickly effected the change in his apparel which he thought necessary, and then, with the drugged bottle of wine and some biscuits he crept up the staircase. Concealed in his breast was a double-barrelled pistol loaded carefully.

"Should she refuse the wine," he muttered, "she shall die by a more violent means; but in all cases die she shall."

The whole of the upper part of the house was in darkness, for Phillip had taken great care to close all the shutters so that no ray of light should by any sort of

accident reach the room in which poor Grace was kept a prisoner. That room was an inner one, with but a small window to it.

"Now," he said, as he began to make his way towards her by unlocking the door that led to the little room in which she was, "now I have a part to play and we shall see whether the complaints that have been paid to me on the score of my acting be genuine or not."

By the aid of a phosphorous match he got a light in the outer room. A half-burnt candle stood in a piece of wood, by way of a candlestick, on the floor. He ignited it; and then waiting a moment until it had burnt sufficiently to be beyond the danger of sudden extinction from being moved, he crept towards the actual door of the room in which Grace was a captive.

He unlocked it and flung it open. Then shading the light from his eyes with his hand, he called—

"Grace! Grace!"

There was no reply for the moment, and the idea that she had fled from the house came across him like a death-pang. He rushed into the room.

"Grace! Grace! Speak! Speak, I charge you. I pray you do not drive me mad by this silence! Oh, you are there!"

She stood at some few paces from him, calm and still.

"Well, Phillip Manning," she said, "what would you with me? I am here, as you see."

"Yes," he said, and he trembled violently. "I now see that you are here. But—but why did you not speak to me at once? It is no matter though. It is no matter. Oh, Grace! Grace! Pity me!"

"I do pity you."

"You do pity me?"

"Yes. Guilty creatures surely may well be pitied. May they not, Phillip Manning?"

"Well, well, Grace—perhaps you are right. I have come to-day to you with very different feelings from what I had when last I saw you. Then all the evil passions of my soul were up in arms; but better thoughts have since come over me, Grace; and if a true and a sincere repentance for what I have done, and such atonement as I can make will—will——"

He affected that his feelings would not permit him to finish his speech; but placing the candle upon the chimney-piece he audibly sobbed.

"Is this change indeed sincere?" said Grace.

"You may well, indeed, doubt it," added Phillip, pretending to speak with great difficulty, and to gulp down his sobs as he did so. "You may well doubt it, Grace; but it is sincere; and you cannot see a more wretched man than I. Some demon surely must have possessed me to make me behave to you as I have behaved. I cannot myself understand it."

"If, indeed, Phillip," said Grace, "I could think that you had awakened to a proper sense of your wickedness, it would not cost me an effort to forgive you."

"Ah, can you be so good—so angelic?"

"You may prove to me your repentance by the commencement of your atonement. When you restore me to the arms of my father, I shall then, indeed, believe that you are sincere."

"I will do so. I have come now to do so. Without condition other than a claim upon your pity, and your mercy, I have come now to take you from this place, and to restore you to your father. In some other land, as you yourself suggested to me when last we met, I shall hope to find that peace of mind which will now for ever be denied to me in my own. You, Grace, will be my intercessor with your father; and while I feel that it will be impossible to say one word in extenuation actually of my offence, still my bitter and heart-felt repentance may be pleaded."

"And it will not be pleaded in vain."

"Ah, think you so? What happy words!"

"I am certain of it. But do not delay, Phillip. Take me home at once, and

for yourself fear nothing. I will make it the first of my requests to my father to forgive you, and to make some sort of provision for you out of England. Let us go now at once, I implore you. Every moment that I remain here is another moment of misery to me, and of deep anxiety to my father."

"Ah!" said Phillip, wiping his eyes, "how well I can understand this anxiety



CLAUDE, WHILE ESCAPING FROM NEWGATE, FINDS PHILLIP MANNING A PRISONER.

Come, you shall take a biscuit and one glass of wine to strengthen you, my much injured cousin, and then we will be off."

"No, no ; I want nothing."

"Yes, you do : I feel certain that after even the few days on'y that you have passed here you must be weak and ill. You will find that when you get out into

the fresh open air you will be ready to faint away. But one biscuit, soaked in a drop of wine, will restore you, and keep up your strength and courage."

"I have no need of courage now, Phillip, that you have repented; and strength I feel I have enough."

"Nay, but ——"

"Excuse me, Phillip; I will not drink; I have a great objection to wine—I do not like it. Do not ask me."

"To oblige me, Grace. Only one sip—just a sip will be sufficient. You will not, surely, make a quarrel between us at such a moment as this, and for such a trifle as the taking or the refusing a glass of wine? Surely you would not run the risk of throwing me back again into my former frame of mind regarding you for such a trifle?"

"Your repentance, Phillip, must be but skin-deep, indeed, if it can vanish because I refuse a glass of wine."

"Well, well, that is an uncommonly true remark. But yet you will take the wine?"

"No, Phillip."

"Curses on you! You shall take it!"

"Ah, Philip, now I know you again!"

"Know me again? What do you mean?"

"I mean that from the first I knew that your pretended grief and repentance only served as a cloak to hide some object. Why, you cannot even deceive a poor simple girl like myself. Your grand object to-day is to get me to drink that wine, and I will not take one drop of it. No, Phillip, I tell you, no; I will not taste it."

"Wretched girl! Have you twenty lives, that you feel you can afford to trifle with them in this way? If I be not a repentant man, you shall, in good truth, find that I am a desperate one. The question between us is your life or mine; and I tell you now, Grace, that, with all your youth and all your beauty, your last hour has now come!"

"If it be the will of Heaven, it has."

"It is my will—that is now sufficient."

She burst into tears.

"Oh, Phillip," she said, "you cannot be so very wicked as to take away life. If even now there are times when you feel as though you would give anything for innocence of mind and purpose, what will be your feelings when you have done murder? Ordinary crimes may, in some measure, be atoned for; but who shall restore the dead? Who shall bid the grave give up its tenant, because the murderer is repentant? Pause, Phillip, for your own sake, pause, before you commit an act that is, in its awful consequences, irrevocable. Spare my life—oh, spare me, Phillip!"

"No; curses on you! You have yourself goaded me to this act, and you shall die."

"No, no—oh, God!—no."

"I say yes. There is no help for you. You are shut out from all the world. If you and I were upon some desolate island in the midst of the great sea we could not possibly be more isolated than we are from all human nature. You may cry, pray, rave, and shriek, but there is no help for you. You are my victim—it is a settled thing. You have rejected the terms upon which I offered you your life and freedom, and I will kill you. You have your choice—poison or a bullet?"

He took the pistol from his breast-pocket as he spoke. The young girl clasped her hands before her face, and sank upon her knees in a paroxysm of terror.

"Spare me!—spare me!"

"Will you drink the wine?"

"I cannot. I dare not."

"Then there is but one other alternative—you will die a more violent death; but die you must, and shall. I say, that there is but one other alternative—"

"Liar!" cried a voice of thunder; and in a moment Dick Turpin, as though he had been shot out of a cannon, sprang upon Phillip, and knocked him to the floor.

"Hush!" cried Jack. "Have you got him?"

"All's right," said Dick. "Twist the pistol out of his hand. That will do, Jack. Why I do believe I have knocked all the breath out of him. Cheer up, my lass—cheer up."

"Grace has fainted," said Jack.

Dick got hold of Phillip by the throat, and there he held him, while Jack tied his hands securely, so that he was quite incapable of further mischief. He did not speak a word, but looked from one to the other of them, like a man only half awakened from some dreadful dream.

"Murder!—murder!—mercy!" he cried. "Oh, murder! Help!—help!"

"Why, you vagabond!" said Dick, "it is we who ought to cry murder. But your career is over now, and you may as well take your fate easy, for hung you will be to all intents and purposes."

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### CHAPTER CLXIII.

#### A MOST UNEXPECTED CATASTROPHE.

PHILLIP MANNING was not the sort of man to attend to Dick's advice, of taking his fate easily. So long as he was at all successful in the prosecution of his villany, he got on amazingly, and was upon the most capital terms with himself; but the instant any reverse happened he was lost to all firmness, and gave himself up to despair.

"Kill me—kill me, at once!" he cried. "It will now be nothing but slow death to me for the time to come."

"Very well," said Dick. "I will blow out your brains in a moment, since you are so good as to request such a thing, which is very liberal upon your part; for it certainly will save a deal of trouble to society at large, and cheat the hangman."

"Oh, no—no—no!" shouted Phillip Manning, when he saw Dick draw a pistol from his pocket. "Oh, no—no, I did not mean it—indeed I did not mean it. I cannot die. Let me cling to life while I may. Oh, spare me!"

"Miserable wretch!" said Dick. "Do you fancy for one moment that I would have your death upon my shoulders? No, I know well enough that you would not have the courage to allow me to do more than to show you the weapon of death. The law will wind up the miserable thread of your existence."

Phillip licked his lips, and with a groan he spoke to Grace, saying to her, whose life by that time he would no doubt have taken, if he had not been hindered from so doing by Dick and Jack—

"Oh, cousin Grace, say something for me. Tell them to let me go. I—I did not intend to harm you. It was only a joke, after all."

"The best joke will be when you are hung," said Dick. "Don't speak to him, Miss Manning. You should not condescend now to say one word to such a man. His murderous intentions as regarded you were only too apparent."

Grace shuddered as she replied to Dick—

"Yes," she said, "but for you and your friend he would have no doubt have killed me; I feel now like one rescued from the grave, and can hardly believe in the reality of this scene."

"I don't wonder at that, Miss Manning," said Jack; "but you will soon be in the arms of your father, and then you will, indeed, feel that, in reality, you are rescued from this bad man, who would have murdered you, merely to cover his lesser crime of imprisoning you in this dismal place."

"Yes," said Dick, "in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, murder is done to

cover the consequences of some other crime, which, compared to it, is a piece of the most unblemished and spotless innocence. But come, Jack, let us be going; I will take care of Master Phillip, and do you escort Miss Grace."

This was, no doubt, a politic arrangement, as far as it went, for he, Dick, was much better qualified to hold a tight grip of Phillip Manning than Jack was, while Jack could very well escort Grace.

At first Phillip could not be got to move. He flung himself upon his knees, and, in the most abject manner possible, begged for that mercy and consideration which he never yet showed to any one.

"Spare me," he cried, "and you will not—you shall not repent of doing so. Only let me go, and I promise you all most solemnly that I will leave England at once, and no one shall ever hear of me again. In some other country I will bitterly repent of my past errors. Oh, what will be the good, now that Grace is rescued, of bringing me to justice?"

Grace would willingly enough have listened to the appeal of the abject wretch, and she looked at Dick, as much as to say, "Shall it be as he says?" Dick understood her, and, shaking his head, he said,—

"No, no, Miss Manning, you leave this fellow to your father; he will do what is right and proper; but at present I consider that, until he decides what is to be done with Philip, we ought, none of us, to interfere in his fate. It is our duty to give him up to your father, whom he has so bitterly offended, and he alone should decide upon his fate."

This reasoning was so clear and conclusive, that it quite convinced Grace, who no longer looked imploringly at Dick, in favour of Phillip. She carefully avoided the looks of Phillip at all; and Jack offering her his arm, they all left the room together. To be sure, Dick had some difficulty in making Phillip walk, but finding such to be the case, he whispered to him,—

"If you positively will not come along, I can only tell you that my friends tell me I am a very short-tempered man; and when you or I least expect it, I may lose patience, and blow your brains out; so be warned. I won't answer for myself; and after this, whatever happens in that sort of way, you have only your own obstinacy to thank for it, and you lose your chance of the judge acting with any degree of clemency towards you, on account of your relationship to him and his daughter."

"Oh! yes, yes," said Phillip, catching, or pretending to catch at the idea; "how very good and kind you all are to me!"

"Hold your row," said Dick.

"Yes, but I was only saying how very grateful I am to you. It is such a good idea, that of yours, about the relationship. Of course, it would not be pleasant to the judge to have his nephew hung—would it?"

"It would be to me, if I were he. There's nothing would give me so much real gratification."

"You don't mean that—you really don't mean that?"

"Indeed, but I do, though."

"But I thought you thought the judge might be merciful to me, on account of my being his nephew?"

"Yes, he may do such a foolish thing as take that into his account, but I would not; and all I said to you was that if I had to blow your brains out previously, you lost the chance—that is all."

"Oh, yes, my dear sir, I quite understand you; and how very facetiously you put it too."

"I put it facetiously! Now, I consider that to be an insult, Mr. Phillip. I never was facetious in all my life."

"No, no, certainly not. I did not mean facetious, my dear sir—not at all. God bless me, no. I meant that—that you put it quite—quite——"

"Seriously?"

"Yes; ah! seriously, to be sure. That was it—that was what I meant, of

course. I'm so much obliged to you, you can't think, for being so good as to suggest to me what I really did think."

Dick made a gesture of impatience. The fulsome and disgusting adulation of Phillip was too much for his patience.

"I wish I had given him to you, Jack," he said, "to take care of; you would, perhaps, have had more patience with him than I am blessed with."

"No," said Jack, "I really don't think I should. I have a tolerable stock of patience under ordinary circumstances, I fully admit; but I think it would fail in the company of such a man as Phillip Manning. So do you keep him, Dick, to yourself, for, in good truth, I don't at all want him."

They now made the best of their way out of the house, and Grace could not refrain from shedding tears of joy, as she once again found herself in safety and in the garden. The sight of the trees and the flowers—always agreeable and affecting objects as they are to the sensitive and educated mind—was to her one of the richest of treats; and notwithstanding that garden had gone to such decay as it had, she saw a thousand beauties in every struggling plant that spent its luxuriance in that deserted place.

"They say a murder was committed in the house long ago," said Jack; "and that that is the reason why it is deserted."

"Alas!" sighed Grace. "The poor murdered one had not such friends as Heaven sent to me."

"Yes," said Jack; "no doubt Phillip would have added to the evil repute of the place by your death likewise, had not our anxiety, both for you and for our friend, brought us early upon his track."

"Anxiety for your friend? Can it be true, as Phillip told me, that the gentleman who rescued me from Phillip in the country lane is prison on my account?"

"It is too true."

"That gives me truly a heart-pang. Oh, let us hasten that we may rescue him. My father will not lose one moment in procuring his release; and such rich compensation as he can make to him for the great injustice that has been done him, he will make, you may be assured."

"Of that," replied Jack, "we are quite certain."

By this time they had got into the little lane, and they soon emerged from that into the high street of the then suburban Islington, where Dick's object was to procure, as quickly as possible, some conveyance to London. They stopped at an old inn—then it was an old inn, but now, to the regret of all lovers of the past, it is gone—and inquired for a post-chaise.

The Angel, for that was the name of the inn—it was no where near the site of the modern Angel Inn at Islington—could only produce one vehicle of the sort; and as Jack did not choose that Phillip should ride in the same vehicle with Grace, they had to get another chaise from another inn, and so, the two vehicles keeping tolerably close together, they set off for the house of Judge Manning: Grace and Jack being in one, and Dick with his prisoner in the another.

The greatest depression seemed to seize hold of Phillip as they neared London. He began to reflect upon the rigidly just character of the old Judge, and to fear that, notwithstanding the relationship, he would let the law take its course as regarded him, Phillip. His principal hope rested in the expectation that, despite the character of his conduct to her, the gentle disposition of Grace might induce her to plead for him to her father. Of course, anything like a re-installment in his former condition he now felt was impossible; and, like some ruined and disappointed gambler who has played a stake with fortune and lost, he let his head rest upon his hands, and groaned aloud.

"Those who commit such acts as yours," said Dick, "should make up their minds to the consequences of detection. Whining will do you no good."

"I am lost—lost!"

"Probably enough;—but here we are at the house of your uncle, and to him I will deliver you. If he like to let you go, well and good. I shall consider it no affair of mine, although I shall think it a scandalous shame."

## CHAPTER CLXIV.

CLAUDE IS FULLY LIBERATED, AND YET CHANGES HIS CONDITION FOR THE WORSE IN ONE HOUR.

THE two post-chaises stopped simultaneously at the judge's door, and one of the drivers knocked loudly. The agitation of Grace was extreme, and she at once sprang from the vehicle, crying, in a voice shaken by her feelings—

"Father! father!—Where is my father?"

The servants in the hall were delighted to see her; and for some few moments they were so astonished at her sudden arrival, that they could do nothing but crowd around her, without answering one of her anxious questions as to whether her father was within or not. She could bear the suspense no longer, but breaking away from them she rapidly ascended the staircase. She knew that if her father were within he would be in his study, which was a small room at the back of the house, for quiet sake, where he spent a great portion of the time that he had to spare from his official duties.

It was thither, then, that on the 'wings of affection' she sped.

The door of the little study was shut; and, overcome for a moment or two by her feelings, Grace was compelled to pause at it before she could summons strength enough to open it. It must be recollected too, that she had been greatly weakened by the few days imprisonment she had endured in the deserted house. Indeed, nothing but the natural elasticity of youthful strength and spirits had kept her up so well as she had maintained herself. After a few moments she recovered herself sufficiently to open the door gently.

Her father was there!

The old judge was leaning upon the study table with his head resting upon his hands. He did not hear the study-door open. His thoughts at that moment were with his child; and he was asking himself if he should ever in this world again have the joy of looking into her eyes, and of blessing her.

Grace gently touched his arm.

"Father!" she said.

If a spark of electricity had produced the effect the judge could not have started from his seat with greater precipitancy than he did.

"Do not mock me!" he cried. "Oh, do not mock me. Who called me father? I have, alas! no child now."

"Yes, yes!" cried Grace, as she flung herself into his arms. "Yes, father, yes. I have come back to you. I am your own child. Your Grace. Look at me."

There are scenes and situations which it would be profanity for the pen of the novelist to linger to depict. Such scenes should be sacred. In the deep recesses of every human heart there are affections and passions which no language can paint. Over the interview between the father and child so happily restored to him, we draw for a time a veil.

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While this was going on within the judge's house, Dick and Jack had dismissed one of the coaches, and both of them sat in the other along with Phillip Manning, who, now that he found himself fairly at his uncle's door, appeared ready to go mad with shame and vexation.

Had he not been well secured there is no knowing what act of desperation he might not have been guilty of.

"I envy the feelings of Judge Manning, now," said Jack to Dick. "It is almost worth while to have suffered what he must have suffered, to feel the joy that he must now feel, in the restoration of his child."

"You are right, Jack; it is really worth while. We never know real joy but by its contrast with some previously experienced misery, so you see, Jack, these folks who tell us that pleasure in this world, is of itself merely a negative, imply—



ing the absence of pain, as night implies merely the absence of day, are about right."

"I think they are quite right," said Jack.

"Listen to me," said Phillip.

"Well, say on," replied Dick.

"You have now restored Grace to her father. By her testimony, of course, your friend who is in Newgate, will be free, and so you will have accomplished all your wishes. I will give you £100 if you will let me go."

"No," said Dick.

"No," said Jack.

"I will give you £200.—Yes, I will make it £200. I have some little savings and I will make it into £200.

"I would not let you go," said Dick, "if you were to make it two hundred hundred, so you may spare yourself the trouble of increasing your offer."

"Lost! lost! lost!" cried Phillip.

"You may be lost. But if you are hanged, society will be considerably the gainer in the long run by your loss, I only wish your uncle would come out and say what is to be done with you, now at once."

"He comes," cried Jack. "He and Grace. Look Dick, look at the old man's face. Did you ever see such an expression of satisfaction? I'll warrant now that Grace has told him all."

"Not a doubt of it."

Jack was right; Grace had in a few words told her father all, and he was coming to the chaise to thank and to welcome those who had brought back the joy of his heart to him, by bringing back his child.

They both, that is Dick and Jack, alighted to meet him, and he embraced them, while with tears standing in his eyes, like sentinels over his feelings, he thanked them over and over again.

"I do not know," he said, "I cannot know how I shall be able to repay to you the obligation I owe you, but be assured that you will not be able to draw too largely upon my gratitude. Come in both of you; come into this house, which at all times, I beg you to consider your own."

"Phillip, is in the carriage, sir," said Dick.

"Yes, I have given orders concerning the prisoner."

"Uncle, uncle!" cried Phillip, from the carriage, when he saw that the judge was fairly going away without so much as exchanging a word with him. "Uncle! uncle! I want to speak to you!"

"Yes," added the judge, continuing his conversation with Jack and Dick, as though there was no such person as Phillip in the world. "Yes, I beg that you will both henceforward reckon me as a friend who may always be relied upon."

"Uncle—uncle! Good God, uncle!—will you not speak to me?"

"And likewise your friend, who is now so unjustly confined in Newgate. It will be my study to make him the most ample compensation."

"Grace—Grace! Oh, speak for me. Uncle—uncle! you will drive me mad if you say nothing to me."

"And believe me," added the judge, as they all four reached the door of the house together. "And believe me, the unjust detention of your friend shall terminate within the succeeding hour to this."

Phillip raised his voice to a shriek, but the judge would take no more notice of him than he did of one of the post-horses. A couple of stout lackeys came out of the house, and one got on the box of the coach with the driver, to whom he gave some directions. The other sprang into the vehicle and seated himself opposite to Phillip, and then away they all went, Phillip's cries and shrieks to his uncle, to take some sort of notice of him, dying away in the distance.

Both Jack and Dick were inexpressibly amused at this mode of treatment to Phillip upon the part of his uncle, for it was certainly the very best that could have been devised, inasmuch as any conversation or altercation with him would really have been a humiliation to any one. They would neither of them say one word

to the judge about him, and if Grace had in any way interceded for him they were quite delighted to find that such intercession had had no effect upon the just resolves of the father, for that Phillip had gone off to prison they did not for one moment doubt.

Refreshments were immediately ordered for Dick and Jack, but the former spoke to the judge, saying—

“In truth, sir, the most refreshing thing to us in all the world now would be to see our friend free from prison.”

“That you will see shortly,” said the judge; “but you know that, in all these affairs, there are certain forms to go through, which even I cannot dispense with. I have, however, sent my secretary to see into the matter, with instructions that there should be no delay.”

“That is sufficient, sir.”

“Make yourselves quite easy. You will soon be introduced to your friend.”

Both Jack and Dick fully expected to see Claude come into the house soon, but presently the sound of carriage-wheels without sounded upon their ears, and the judge rising, said—

“Will you now accompany me upon the business of taking your friend from durance?”

They were both willing enough to go upon such an errand, and would have bidden adieu to Grace, but the judge interposed, saying—

“No—no. You and your friend, who will soon be a free man, shall come back here and pass a few hours with me. I want to learn, so far as you will tell me, who and what you all are, in order that I may best know in what way I can be of service to you.”

Dick and Jack exchanged significant glances at this. It would be no easy matter to say to a man in Judge Manning's official position, “Why, sir, we are highwaymen; and the only good you can do us is not to give us into the hands of the police.”

They both felt that this explanatory and confidential interview that the judge promised himself with them was to be coursed, at any risk; but at that time they said nothing, hoping that Claude, when they were once more united to him, would think of some mode of getting handsomely away.

With this feeling, then, they got into the judge's carriage, which they found was waiting at the door for them. They fully expected to find themselves trundling along towards Newgate, so they did not take any particular notice of the route they were taking, until suddenly Jack looked out of the window, and said,—

“Why, this is Bow Street!”

“Bow Street!” said Jack. “What do we want in Bow Street?”

“I have yet to do an act of justice,” said the judge. “As your friend was by me publicly accused of the crime of carrying off my daughter, I think his exculpation from the charge ought to be public likewise. He will be brought from Newgate to the police-office here, and I will publicly proclaim his innocence.”

Dick and Jack looked at each other, but they did not say anything, although if the truth were told they felt very uneasy at the idea of this public exculpation, and would have rather met Claude at the door of Newgate, and been off with him at once to the country.

“Our friend,” said Dick, “is very much obliged, and I am sure he will be just the man to appreciate such a very delicate attention from you, sir; but as I know he has friends in the country, who are so anxious concerning him, I feel assured he will esteem it a great favour to get away from the police-office as quickly as may be consistent with your feelings on the subject.”

## CHAPTER CLXV.

THE POLICE OFFICE.—AN AWKWARD RE-ENCOUNTER.

THE judge replied to Dick in the most courteous manner in the world, and made a gratuitous offer of his own carriage to convey any or the whole of them where they pleased, as soon as they had been at his house for some time and



SEIZURE OF CICELY AT THE FARM-HOUSE.

refreshed themselves, and he had fully arranged with them what he could do for them, out of gratitude for the immense service that they had rendered to him.

There was, under the very peculiar circumstances of the case, no such thing as gainsaying what the judge thought proper to do. Had Claude been actually

there and then with his friends, the police-office business might easily have been avoided; but as he was not, but, on the contrary, had to be fetched from Newgate, both Dick and Jack felt how utterly helpless they were just then. At one moment entertaining the desperate expedient of making the judge a confidant at that the eleventh hour, as it were, and letting him know exactly who and what Claude was, came over Dick; but he did not like to do that while there was a chance of the affair settling itself comfortably and safely another way; so he let things take their course, comforting himself with the idea that the explanation in the police-office would not last many minutes, and that then it would be much better the judge should know nothing more than he did know, and that was little enough.

A glance at the countenance of Jack was sufficient to tell Dick how full of apprehension he was for Claude; and indeed he, Jack, was so much affected at this abominable idea, as he thought it, of going to Bow Street, that the judge could not help observing it, and said kindly to him,—

“You seem indisposed, my friend?”

“No,” said Jack, making a desperate attempt to rally his spirits, and smiling in a very strange and grave kind of way; “no, thank you, sir, I never felt better in my life, I a-sure you—never better.”

Dick gave him an admonishing kick to say as little as possible, on the good old principle that the least said is the soonest mended; and then the judge's coach drew up at the door of the Bow Street police-office. Poor Jack could not suppress a groan as the vehicle stopped.

“I am certain you are not well,” said the judge, “but the great natural courage of your character will not permit you to admit as much. Is it not so?”

“Oh! dear, no,” said Jack; “I—I am quite well and delighted; only I am so much attached to my friend, who is about to be liberated to-day from his unjust imprisonment, that I own I feel a little nervous and excited.”

“The feeling does you honour,” said the judge, as they alighted.

The officers and other official persons about the police court soon found out that it was one of the judges that had come; and they were painfully profuse in their attentions both to Dick and Jack, as well as to him; for they could not but see the very friendly and familiar terms upon which the old judge treated his two companions, different as they looked from him.

“If there be no immediate recognition,” thought Dick, “all will be well, and we shall pass through this rather troublesome affair with flying colours; but from my heart I do wish it were all well over.”

The judge was accommodated with a seat on the bench, and both Dick and Jack would, if they had chosen, likewise enjoyed that honour; but their natural modesty must have stood wonderfully in the way, for they both positively declined; and far from wishing to make themselves at all conspicuous, they took up a very retired position near the door of the court.

“I don't like this at all,” whispered Jack to Dick.

“Nor I, Jack. But what are we to do, old fellow? We are in for it now, and we must just go through with it.”

“Yes; but really it's very uncomfortable.”

“Rather so. Hush! There's Claude coming. I hear a coach stopping. I hope, now, that five minutes more will see us all out of this confounded place, the very air of which appears to me difficult to breathe.”

“It's the same to me,” said Jack. “I feel as if I were half choaked.”

“Hush! don't say any more. There's a fellow with as long ears as a donkey, trying might and main to listen to what we are saying.”

“The devil he is! Can't you—?”

“Tattle him?”

“No—no. Can't you say something a little louder to allay any suspicion?”

“It ain't worth while, Jack. Here is our friend. Hush—hush! It will soon be all right now, I hope.”

Claude was brought into the court by two of the official personages from Newgate, and placed at the bar ; but the judge immediately rose, and said—

“ No, no. That is not the place for an innocent man. Let me beg that he may not be made to stand there for one moment.”

Claude was removed to where the witnesses stand usually, and then the magistrate said to him —

“ It is with peculiar satisfaction that I see you here to-day, John Smith, as an important, a very important communication will be made to you by this gentleman on my right hand.”

“ My entire innocence,” said Claude, in a calm, clear voice, “ of the charge brought against me is fully established ?”

“ It is,” said Judge Manning, rising. “ It is more than established ; for not only, your worship, am I now in possession of ample proof that this gentleman had no hand whatever in the abduction of my daughter, who is now most happily restored to me, but I am satisfied that in the most gallant manner he rescued her once from the real criminal, and protected her well up to the moment when low cunning and most unheard-of villany got the better for a time of truth and justice.”

Claude bowed.

“ I have come down here purposely,” added the judge, “ to make my retraction of the false charge against Mr. Smith as public as I can, and I feel, at the same time that I declare his entire innocence, that I owe him every reparation and apology, as well as a heavy debt of gratitude, for the gallant manner in which, while it was in his power, he protected my daughter, who is now safe and well at my house.”

“ You have found the real criminal, sir ?” said the magistrate.

“ I have ; and to-morrow, when my child is sufficiently recovered from her alarm and her fatigue, she will be able to appear before your worship to depose to such facts as will bring him within the grasp of justice.”

“ So much for Phillip,” said Dick to Jack.

“ Well,” said the magistrate, “ this is one of those gratifying occasions which very seldom occur in the course of magistrate experience. When we are forced to discharge a prisoner, I am sorry to say that, in the vast majority of cases, it is not from any doubt of his moral delinquency, but because the circumstances attendant upon his crime are not such as to bring him fairly within the operation of the law ; but in this case it is to me a sincere pleasure to say that you, John Jones—”

“ Smith,” whispered the clerk.

“ Yes. John Smith leave this court without a blemish upon your character. and you are discharged forthwith. Mr.—a—a—Smith, I have very great pleasure indeed in discharging you.”

“ Sir, I thank you,” said Claude, “ for the kind expression with which you accompany this act of justice. The consciousness of my innocence, and the firm conviction that it would very shortly become apparent, have supported me during my most unjust incarceration in Newgate ; and I beg to assure you, sir,” turning to Judge Manning, “ that the pleasure I feel at hearing that your amiable daughter is restored to you, is much greater than my satisfaction at my own release from imprisonment.”

The judge stretched out his hand and shook hands cordially with Claude, while the magistrate nodded his head, and smirked and smiled in the most amicable way he could command at a short notice. Everything seemed to be going merry as a marriage bell upon that really pleasant and auspicious occasion.

“ Fully discharged,” said the magistrate.

“ And nothing to pay,” said the clerk.

“ Now then,” said Judge Manning, “ allow me the pleasure of calling you my friend, and of conducting you to my house, where my daughter will herself thank you for your chivalrous conduct towards her.”

The last few words which the judge uttered were nearly drowned in the sound of some riot that was taking place at the door of the court. It seemed as if

the officers were trying to keep some one out who would not be kept out on any account, and a loud voice cried—

“I have been robbed—robbed on the highway. Robbed of all I had in the world, and now I am a miserable wretch again. I want to see the magistrate.—I want money.—I wan’t justice.—I wan’t somebody to be hung for robbing me.—Let me in, I say.—I will have justice.—I’m a miserable wretch now, for I have lost all my money, and I will come in.”

“What is all that, officers?” cried the magistrate. “What is all that?”

“A man who wants to lodge a complaint, your worship; but we thought he would be intruding just now, your worship.”

“No—no. This case is over. Let him come in, and put a stop to all that clamour at the door, will you?”

His hair in disorder—unshaven, and his clothes in a state of the greatest neglect, who should rush into the court but Tom Brereton, who had been so successfully stopped on the highway by Jack and Dick, so short a time before. He made his way up to the magistrate, gesticulating furiously as he came, and exclaiming—

“My money—my money. It was all I had, and nobody knows what I had to go through to get it. I want justice. I want my money, or to see somebody hanged for taking it!”

“Well, well, sir,” said the magistrate, “I will take your complaint in a moment. Don’t make such a noise in the court. I have the honour, my lord judge, to bid you good-day—silence there—and you too, Mr. Smith. Good-day.—Silence! This is a most delightful occasion, I assure you, Mr. Smith—

“Smith!” cried Tom Brereton, as he pointed with both his forefingers at once in the face of Claude. “Smith!”

“Yes,” said Judge Manning; “Mr. John Smith, my friend.”

“And an innocent man,” said the magistrate.

“Who has nothing to pay,” said the clerk

“Smith?” raved Tom Brereton. “Smith, your friend, sir?—An innocent man, your worship?—Who has nothing to pay, your idiot? Why—why this is the notorious highwayman, Claude Duval!”

Judge Manning staggered back to the seat on the bench that he had occupied, and sunk into it with a groan. The magistrate turned as white as a sheet, and propped himself up against the wall; and the clerk put his head under the table, and pretended to be looking for something in the waste basket, while in reality he thought he was keeping out of danger.

“Yes,” roared Tom again, “that’s Claude Duval, and I shall get the reward, and make up all my losses. Ha! ha! I shall get the reward. That is the notorious Claude Duval. Seize him, or he will murder all of us rather than be taken. Lay hold of him. Ha! ha! I shall get the reward, I must have the reward! Oh, what a lucky dog I am!”

Half a dozen officers made a rush upon Claude and laid hold of him, but he raised his voice, speaking quite calmly as he said—

“Hold off! I am indeed Claude Duval, and I am notorious. I did not think to be ever taken with a breath of life in me. I did not mean that it should ever be so, but then I did not calculate being in the toils like this. It would be suicide now to resist to death, and that is the cowards resource. I yield, and proclaim myself, as you shrieking coward names me, Claude Duval!”

“Alas! alas!” cried Judge Manning.

“Hold him tight,” cried the magistrate—“hold him tight. Ah, something kept running in my head that his name was not Smith. For the love of goodness hold him tight.”

“You need not be afraid,” said Claude; “I shall make no foolish attempt to escape. I congratulate you, Tom Brereton, upon your cleverness; and remember, you don’t get all the reward until I am hanged.”

“And you will be,” answered Tom, “so it’s as good as in my pocket, Duval. I’m as pleased as possible that after the way you have served me out at different

times, I am able to be down upon you at last, that I am, and especially as I shall make a good thing by it, too."

"Well," said Claude, "of what am I charged with? Is it of robbing this man while I was a close prisoner in Newgate?"

"No," said Tom Brereton, "but it was some of your sort."

"This may be all wrong after all," said Judge Manning; "where are the two friends of the prisoner whom I brought with me in my carriage?"

"Officers," cried the magistrate, "take them both into custody, and bring them before me at once."

The most active search was made for Dick and Jack, but neither of them were to be found. Upon the first appearance of a recognition of Claude, on the part of Tom Brereton, they had made their escape. They felt that they could possibly do something for him while they were at liberty, but shut up with him in separate cells in Newgate, they knew that they could do nothing.

"They have escaped," said Claude. "Misfortunes have all some bright side, if we will but look for it."

"We will soon have them, your worship," said one of the officers. "We will be off after them at once, and soon have them both in custody."

Claude smiled faintly, and then turning to Judge Manning, who was evidently very much affected by what had taken place, he said—

"Do not fancy, my Lord Judge, that because this cross accident has happened I am, or shall be indifferent to the kind and honourable motives which prompted you to bring me here this day. You could not know that this was an atmosphere dangerous to my liberty and life, and in the public capacity which you stand, I had no right to perplex you, and place in opposition your duty and your feelings by any such confidence. What is done is done; and, at all events, come what may, I am delighted to think that your daughter is restored to you."

Judge Manning wrung his hand as he said—

"Oh, if you had been anything but what you are—if you had been ever so lowly or ever so poor, I could have done much for you; but now my hands are tied, though my heart continues open, and I can do nothing—nothing."

"I know it, my lord, and feel it keenly," said Claude. "There is a gulf now between you and I, which you dare not and I cannot cross; but from my heart I still thank you, sir. That is all I can say; and I will not let the issue of this adventure be what it may, I will not regret the cause of it, since it has restored Grace to your arms."

The old judge seemed upon the point of saying something, but he suddenly checked himself, and merely bowing to the magistrate, he at once left the court.

"A-hem!" said the magistrate, clearing his throat, "it is my pleasing duty, John Smith—that is to say, Claude Duval—to commit you to Newgate, until I can have an interview with the Secretary of State, and ascertain from that distinguished personage in what manner you are to be disposed of. I say it is my pleasing duty. Clerk, make out a warrant of committal to Newgate. A-hem! It is my peculiar and pleasing duty."

## CHAPTER CLXVI.

### CLAUDE'S DANGEROUS POSITION.—JUDGE MANNING'S GRATITUDE.

CLAUDE stood in the place assigned to witnesses still, and of all the persons in that now crowded court, he really looked the least concerned or interested.

No one would have fancied his life at stake, and that he was the person around whose fate the whole of the agitation of those who were so fully betraying such agitation revolved. And yet there was not one present who would not have wagered £100 to £1 that he would be a dead man within fourteen days from thence.

And there he stood in the very prime of life, looking so calm, so thoughtful, and so full of real courage, that he enforced the unwilling admiration of many a one who would not have expressed the feeling. The coarse and vulgar exultation of Tom Brereton became loathsome.

"Ha—ha!" he cried. "He's nabbed now, and I shall see him hung with all the pleasure in life, though he is now a sort of relation of mine by marriage. You would hardly think it now, would you, to look at him and to look at me, that we were relations at all?"

"No," growled an old officer. "I should as soon think of a relationship between a monkey and a fine old English mastiff. Can't you hold your stupid tongue? We ain't all such curs as you are. If a knight of the road is taken at last, he meets his fate and there's an end of it. I never heard much very bad of Claude Duval yet, and between you and me and the post, I think he was hunted on that last affair when he went to Southampton."

"And so do I," said another. "I wouldn't a-gone on that job for I don't how much, and I'm glad it turned out a failure."

"So am I."

"Silence in the court," cried the magistrate. "Now, officers, get a coach, and take your prisoner to Newgate as quick as you can. Keep an eye upon him, for they say he is as slippery as an eel, and has as many tricks as an old fox."

"Now, Duval," said the old officer, as he touched Claude on the arm. "If you are ready for a start, we are."

"Quite," said Claude. "They will stare to see me again at the old jug, I think. Good-day, Tom Brereton; you and I will settle the reckoning of to-day some other time."

"Pish!" said Tom Brereton, snapping his fingers, "I don't value you that, now you are taken care of. I could find it in my heart to give you a good kick, if they would let me."

"Well," said one of the officers, "I have heard o' a *hass* kicking of a dead lion. Haven't you, Morgan?"

"Often—often," said Morgan, as he trod heavily on Tom Brereton's toes; "often. Lor, my little man, I hope as I haven't smashed you, really!"

"You are a set of rascals," growled Tom, "and you are all out of your minds almost with rage, because none of you will get the reward, and I shall. That's it."

Tom Brereton was so delighted with this discovery of the selfish motives of the officers in sneering at him, that if they had said ten times more to him than they had, it would have produced no effect upon him; and it was truly ludicrous, now that he had an expectation of filling his pockets by the reward he would be entitled to on account of Claude's apprehension, to see him arranging his hair and rubbing his chin with an idea of getting shaved.

"It's all right," he said. "It's all right. I shall make a capital thing of it now; and what is as good, I shall get rid of that abominable fellow, Duval, who has really been quite, as one may say, a kind of ogre to me, for I don't know how long. Wherever I went, I was perpetually frightened of him, and at every corner I ever turned, I used to shake at the idea of coming face to face with him; but now he's in Newgate, and done as brown as a cinder:

Hurrah! hurrah! for the old stone jug,  
And its massive walls so strong.  
Who picks his way to the outer day,  
His nails must be rather long.

Upon my life, I am becoming quite a poet, and I didn't know it. I shall be rich as a Jew, with guineas not a few; and to be sure I'd no call, to let off Claude Duval."

In this happy frame of mind, Tom Brereton left the police-office, after registering his address in the clerk's books. Whether he found any very continuous cause for so much self-felicitation, will be quickly shown as we proceed with a narrative



of the events of this most eventful and extraordinary portion of the life of Claude Duval.

In the course of the next half hour he was an inmate of one of the strongest cells of Newgate, and the whole prison was full of gossip upon the extraordinary way in which he had been discovered and denounced to justice.

Some of the turnkeys were almost ready to tear the hair out of their heads, at the thought that Claude Duval, for whose blood, as it were, there was such a handsome reward offered, had actually been for days within the walls of the prison, and they not to know it. It was really almost enough to make a turnkey weep, and after that, it might very well draw tears from a stone.

"The idea," said one fat man, wiping his bald head. "The idea of me letting of him out at this very lock, and thinking as he was John Smith only, when he was as good as £1500 to anybody as could only have laid hold on him and said, 'I have got you, Claude Duval!'"

All the others groaned in unison, so that upon the whole, there was anything but a feeling of exultation in Newgate at the capture of Claude, for, as one officer said—

"He'd a thousand times better have got away, because then he would still have been to be nabbed by somebody in the 'purfession;' whereas, now the game was up, and that prize was drawn out of the wheel of Fortune."

The number of extra pots of beer brought into Newgate that day, was something prodigious, and previous to the vanishing of each of them, some very elaborate maledictions were heaped upon the head of Tom Brereton.

The fat turnkey whispered to the officer who had made the speech we have recorded—

"Sup with me in the larder to-night, off of some tripe, and we will talk it over. I'll have Bill Flukes, and Solomon Bones, and Morgan, to meet you. We will talk it over then. It's a robbery."

"So I think, Mungo. But can anything be done?"

"Mum is the word! We will talk it over. Why should the 'purfession' be done brown in this sort of way? If anybody had shot him, we must have grinned and borne it; but he aint dead yet. He's alive, and kicking, Mr. Wilks."

He's alive, certainly; but about the kicking, I don't think he'll find kicking of much use against the stone walls of Newgate. However, I'll come, and as you say, we can talk it over. Mum's the word!"

"It is—it is. I feel a little better now."

They separated with mutual winks and nods, and what all this winking and nodding meant, we shall find out when we introduce the readers to the supper in the larder of Newgate. This was a kind of indulgence that the turnkeys did not often treat themselves to, as it was rather against the rules; but, then, the governor was ill, and confined to his house, so that a great many little liberties were taken by the lower officials of the prison.

Dick and Jack no sooner found that the game was up for the present, as regarded Claude, than they left the court at the Old Bailey, and in that noiseless manner, without being missed until they were actually asked for, they made the best of their way to the quaker's, in Dean Street, Soho. To him they related all that had happened, and he listened with a face of grave apprehension. When they had come to an end, he said,—

"Truly, friend Dick and friend Jack, I consider the situation of our friend Claude, as rather critical."

"Rather critical?" said Dick; "is it not fatal?"

"No, friend."

"I only wish you could give me anything like a substantial reason for that," replied Jack. "You would be conferring upon both me and Jack no insignificant favour, if you could convince us that there was anything like a rational hope of Claude's getting over this affair. If you have anything cheering to say to us, pray say it at once, Mr. Franklin, if you please."

"I will, friend Dick. In the first place the greatest exertions will be used to

get Duval hung, for he has many enemies on account of his gallantry to the ladies. Every husband—every father, and every lover who has suffered a pang upon that account, will prosecute him to the death. Moreover, he has robbed a bishop; and churchmen never forgive anything or anybody.”

“Why,” said Jack, “you are giving us all the reason you can for despairing of Claude’s life.”

“Yes, friend Jack, I am; but I shall come to the other part of the question directly. I think I have said all that need be said about the great jeopardy in which Claude stands; and now, on the other side, he has a great friend in Judge Manning, who will do all that he legitimately can do, to save him; and he has a great friend in Grace Manning, who will do all that she can do, legitimately or otherwise, to save him. Then, the whole of the officers will be as mad as fury at his being caught by any one out of their profession; and then he has you two, and then he has me to befriend him; and he has a couple or three thousand pounds to pay his way to liberty, if that amount should be wanted, and should be likewise sufficient for the purpose.”

“What,” cried Dick, “two or three thousand pounds? What do you mean by that? He has not a tithe of the money, although I and Jack may be likely enough to get him a good round sum by our exertions on the road.”

“There is no occasion, friend Dick, for any exertions on the road just now. They would be dangerous; and neither you, friend Dick, nor you, friend Jack, are in a fit frame of mind to follow the business just now. I will produce all the money that can possibly be wanted; and I will trust to the honour of all of you to repay me when it may be convenient.”

“We are indeed immensely beholden to you,” said Jack; “you shall not lose a farthing by the transaction if I live. And so you really think that there is a hope of rescuing Claude even yet?”

“I do. At present I make it a particular request that neither you nor Jack will attempt anything or stir out of this house. I will now go forth and get all the information I can about Claude’s position. I will even find out to a square foot in what part of Newgate he is placed, I will know who attends upon him, and what he says, and how he looks, before I see thee again.”

Both Dick and Jack could not but stare at the quaker to hear him talk in such a strain; but they well knew that in his case it was no boasting or vain assumption. The extent of his resources they had had reason to believe were extraordinary; and if he had said “I will bring you back Claude Duval to supper,” they would have been tempted to have believed him; although they knew that the massive locks and walls of Newgate were between them and the realisation of such an event. But the quaker never promised more than he could perform, and when he said what we have worded, he had certain means of getting the information he desired.

Truly, gold will do wonders in this world. It melts the hearts of gaolers—it opens prison doors with its master key—and it throws down stone walls without so much as touching them.

Mr. Franklin did not delay a moment longer, but very calmly taking his broad-brimmed hat from a peg in the hall of his house, away he went, leaving Dick and Jack in a state of puzzled expectation.

There was now but one other person upon whom the discovery and identity of Claude and his consequent committal to Newgate produced a powerful effect; and that person was Judge Manning. We have recorded how abruptly he left the court, and when he did so, he hastily entered his carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive him home.

On his route all he said was—

“I must save this man! I must save this man!”

The moment he reached his own house, he repaired to the library, and then summoning Grace to his presence, he said to her—

“My dear, now sit down by me, and from first to last, give me as clear and tailed an account as you possibly can, of the whole of your recent adventure.

I want particularly to know every word that this Mr. Smith said to you, and I want a very minute detail of his actions towards you.

Upon this, Grace related all to her father, and the whole narrative said so much for the courage, and the chivalrous honour and delicacy of Claude, that the old judge was compelled to rise and pace the room to and fro to recover his equanimity and at last pausing before Grace, he said—



CLAUDE RETALIATES UPON TOM BRERETON.

“ And this man—and this man, Grace, who rescued you from Phillip in the green lane—this man, who with the utmost delicacy brought you to town—this man, who protected you all the way, and who only left you at the door for a moment because he would spare my feelings too sudden a shock from the joy of your recovery—this man, my dear, did all this at the risk of dying on a scaf-

fold, for he is no other than Claude Duval the celebrated highwayman; and now stands committed to Newgate, from whence he will only step forth to death, and a terrible death, at the hands of the hangman!"

Grace uttered a cry of despair, and sank fainting on the floor.

"No! no!" cried the judge, "rise my child. Comfort yourself. It must not be, it shall not be! He who has done so much for you, shall not suffer death in such a shape. It is our duty to save him."

"Ah, father, and you will?"

"I will."

"I breathe again. Oh, would it not imbitter the remainder of our lives to think that because he was so self-denying, so kind, so generous to me, he met with death. No, no, it must not, shall not be. You will save him father?"

"I will, my child."

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## CHAPTER CLXVII.

### THE OFFICIALS OF NEWGATE SUP IN THE LARDER, WHICH IS IMPORTANT TO CLAUDE.

THAT night at ten o'clock, when all the cells were closed and the most active business of the day was over, the old larder in Newgate was worth looking at.

This larder was a place of some extent. The unhappy wretches who are to expiate their crimes upon the scaffold, are brought through it on that, to them, fearful morning, when they find no sympathy within Newgate, and when they know that there is a glaring crowd without waiting to see them die. But upon these occasions they do not absolutely see the larder.

No, a portable partition, for the reception of which there are grooves in the ceiling and on the floor, converts their progress, instead of being through a room, into one through a narrow passage, and then they step out to die, without having taken a last look, in their immediate progress, of pots and kettles, and coffee stew-pans, and all the etceteras of a large kitchen. But upon this present occasion the larder is in all its integrity and beauty. A rousing fire is in the ample grate, and some most appetizing steams fill the ambient air. You would not suppose yourself in Newgate at all were you there, which proves satisfactorily, that one kitchen is very like to another.

We have before stated that this supper in the larder was contrary to rule, and that it would not by any means have been ventured upon, if the governor had not been known to be confined to his bed, or all but that; so that he could not pounce upon them at unawares; and as regarded each other, and the minor officials, they had too good an understanding among them to fear any treachery at all.

By a quarter past ten, then, they were assembled—only five of them; but then that five consisted of men who, if they pleased, could do something in Newgate, and from their looks it was pretty clear that something they meant to do. The cook was accustomed to these little gatherings in his domain; and as they always resulted in providing him with an unlimited amount of strong drink, he never made any kind of objection to them, but bustled about, and took good care that the solid portion of the entertainment should be none of the meanest the prison stores could afford.

Now, this cook had a failing, which was decidedly to take what folks call the other glass, which is generally considered to be the glass which is over and above that one at which a man may still preserve the equilibrium of both mind and body. Upon this occasion it was the special object of the officers and turnkeys to give him that other glass as speedily as possible, for they had matters of deep moment to consider of which it would not be wise to trust to cooks.

"Come, Bill," said Morgan, as he pushed a dish of exquisitely stewed oysters towards his friend, "you don't eat, man."

"Don't I?" replied Bill. "It's Jukes who takes nothing; and as for our good friend here, the cook, he is the most abstemious man in the world, and won't drink."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the cook, as he pushed his white night-cap up upon his brow, "don't I drink. Come, Mr. Morgan, pass the bottle, and I'll drink to your very good healths, all of you. Here's lots o' luck, and may business never fail. Ropes will be cheap when all the world grows honest, I think."

"When all the world grows honest, they won't want cooks," said Bill. "But you don't eat anything."

"Why, as to eating," said the cook, "I can't say I do in a regular way eat much. I now and then take a taste of one thing, and a taste of another; but what with the fire, and the smother, and one thing and another, I don't give way to eating."

"And the bottle?" said Jukes.

"No—no, Mr. Jukes. There you do me an injustice. I take a little, only a little, to keep me up agoing, that's all, gentlemen; so here's good luck again; and all I can say is, that you are as welcome to a quiet little feed in the larder as can be. You have only to tell me before-hand that you are coming, and it will be all right. So here's to all again, and—and I only wish you all luck—I—luck, I—do. This is not bad brandy, wherever it came from. Hurrah for the Road. That's a Highwayman's chaunt ain't it, Mr.—Mr.—Ju—Ju—Jukes?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"I—I thought so, and as I was saying, here's better luck still. God bless you all—all the lot of you. I'm a poor fellow in my way, but I know—I—I—know—yes, that's it, I know. It's enough to make anybody cry it is. I—I—God bless you all."

"That will do," said Morgan, as the cook suddenly, losing his equilibrium, fell into a corner. "That will do. And now friends and mates, lets to business."

"Ay, ay—to business," said the other.

"What do we live by?"

"Why, by grabbing the gentry and the cracksmen, to be sure. By the family, take 'em all in all, we live," said Bill, "and that's a fact. Now the idea of a parcel of rascals, out o' the profession, grabbing of a cove is 'promiscuous'—it is. They might as well grab us. I tell you what it is, mates—Claude Duval must get on the road again."

The others nodded.

"He's the chap for us. He belongs to us," said Morgan. "It's a robbery for anybody to meddle with him but us, and they shan't. The profuse rewards belong to the profession. I'm not a chap to say, let me have everything, but I don't like to see things go out of the profession. Are we agreed, comrades—are we agreed?"

"We are—we are."

"That's all right. Suppose Claude Duval escapes from Newgate? It will be no more than other folks have done before him; and if we choose to wink at things, why off he is. He's just the sort of chap to make the try at it."

"He is."

"And if he can be given ever so slight a hint that on some particular night we shall all be remarkably blind and deaf, don't you think he'd be likely to take advantage of it?"

"To be sure he would. Why not? If ever there was a man in Newgate likely to get out his own way, it's Claude Duval; and if we choose to say yes to it, it's as good as done. How is it to be managed? that's all we have got to consider now. Who is to let him know? for, after all, it must be only a broad hint."

"That's all. But Duval is no fool. I will see him when I am on duty to-morrow, and I'll be bound he will quite well enough understand then which way the cat jumps. Only, of course, he mustn't get out by the regular way."

"Confound it all!" said Bill, "we are making a trouble about nothing at all. Trust him, I say, and take him clear out, and give him a fair start. It can easily

be done through the chapel, and over the wall, by the corner of Newgate Street, if he has anybody to help him. I know it can't be done otherwise; but I will see him off the first regularly dark night, if you like."

"But what can you say to him?"

"Say to him? Why, the exact truth. If we don't, Claude Duval is the man to guess at it; and it is always better to tell a fellow what you really mean, than leave him to find out, and know it when you have said something else to him."

The others seemed to think this rather a bold proceeding on the part of Bill; but the more they considered of it, the more they felt induced to come into it; and at last it was fully and completely agreed that upon the first occasion when it could be done, Duval was to be offered his freedom from Newgate upon the express ground that he had been taken by one who was not in the profession; an argument which, knowing the amount of rewards offered for him, he would be able fully to appreciate.

How far this might have the effect of interfering with Tom Brereton and his claims to the reward they did not stop to inquire. It was for them sufficient that Claude should once again be in "the market."

By the light of the lantern that swung above their heads they saw that their friend, the cook, was still in the land of dreams; and then having made a very tolerable clearance of the supper, they left the larder to the cook and to repose.

If the reader will now please to reflect for a moment or two, he will not fail to perceive in how singular a situation Claude is placed, and how strangely that situation contrasts with his position but a short time previously.

Here was the man who had been hunted almost to death—who had not been permitted to leave for ever the scene of his crimes, and lead a different life in another land—who had been interrupted in every way—whose life had been a darling object to extinguish—a man who had been pursued by fire, and secured at last in the very grasp of the authorities—enclosed within stone walls, and yet how many now were plotting and planning his rescue!

Truly may we say

"All the world's a stage,  
And men and women merely players;"

for who could have supposed or expected for a moment to find the very turnkeys of Newgate and the officers of the police to come out in so very different a character?

But it all only goes to prove what Claude had himself, upon more than one occasion, asserted, namely—that he was simply and only pursued for the price that was set upon his life. It became a matter of business to hunt him down. It was now equally a matter of business to let him go.

Of course Judge Manning, who was as truly anxious as any one could possibly be for the release of Claude, felt and acted from pure motives of deep, heartfelt gratitude towards him. He had, perhaps, promised his child more than his cooler judgment could tell him there was a possibility of performing, when he said that Claude should be freed; but if that promise be qualified by saying that he would do all that he possibly could to bring about such a result, there is no doubt but he will keep it, both in the spirit and to the letter.

But the struggle in the mind of the judge between his sense of public duty was long and severe. The feelings of the man and the father, however, triumphed over those of the judge, and he said to himself—

"I will, if it be in my power so to do, rescue him who was the champion of my child, and then it will be fit that I retire from the performance of those public duties which my private feelings have stepped in to nullify."

After once coming to such a conclusion as this, it may be very well guessed that the judge would not allow any circumstance to prevent him from doing his very utmost in the case; and accordingly, within one hour after the conversation with his daughter, which we have recorded, we find him closetted with a small, prim-looking man, dressed in most plain black, and with such a quiet manner about him, that one would have supposed him quite incapable of anything in the shape of either mental or bodily resistance to anything.

This individual was the private solicitor of Judge Manning, and one upon whom he knew he could thoroughly depend. The subject upon which he had summoned him will be quickly apparent, although to judge from the faint look of surprise upon the attorney's face, one would fancy it was something much more out of the common way than it really was.

"And, my lord," said the attorney, "you really mean that you will do anything to rescue this man?"

"I do mean it, Mr. Sago. I do mean it; and I sent for you to entrust you with the affair. Mind, I do not mean to be so absurd as to say that I will force this business on you. Far from it. If you have any disinclination to it, say so candidly and at once, and I will seek some other less scrupulous practitioner."

"My lord—my lord," said Mr. Sago, placing his hand upon that part of his waistcoat, beneath which he presumed his heart was situated, "it is quite impossible you could find a less scrupulous attorney than myself. I am strictly and entirely professional."

Just the faint ghost of a smile crossed the face of the judge as he heard these words from the lips of the attorney—words which he so well knew how to interpret; and then, after the pause of a few moments, he said to him—

"We perfectly understand each other, then, Mr. Sago, upon this case. You will do your very best in it, and you will charge me with the expenses, together with £500, for your own professional services."

The attorney bowed, made some important remark about the weather; and then, without once again recurring to the subject, he took his leave of Judge Manning.

When he was alone, the judge leant his head upon his hands for a few moments, and then said, in a desponding tone of voice—

"I have done all that I can do, and more than I ought to have dared to do. I may be successful, and yet much do I doubt it. Time—time alone will show. I will now tell Gace that I have set this matter in motion."

It was strange that at the very same time that the judge was in consultation with his solicitor, concerning the saving Claude Duval in any way, both Dick and Jack were in deep and solemn converse with Franklin the quaker upon the same subject, and the turnkeys and officers of Newgate had as good as agreed that the highwayman was to be free in a short time.

Franklin had, with amazing tact, found out all that there was to know about Claude's present position. He could tell the two friends that he in whom they were so deeply interested, was committed to the prison of Newgate for safe keeping, until the authorities had fully decided upon what was the course they should think proper to pursue towards him. He could further tell them that Claude was in a strong cell, but that he was not ironed, although, no doubt, he would be, and that he would be carefully watched. He could not, however, with all his cleverness, and all his means of information, tell them that there was actually a conspiracy within the very walls of Newgate to set him (Claude) free.

"We then," said Jack, "are utterly hopeless; for, alas! what can we do in the matter?"

"Little enough," said Dick. "All we can hope to do is to convey to Duval some tools which may help him to make an escape from Newgate, or to attempt to do so."

"We will easily enough let him have tools," said Franklin. "I will hand them to him when I see him in his cell."

"When you see him?"

"Yes. There is no difficulty in that. I will show you how I can procure an interview with him, if you will be guided by me."

## CHAPTER CLXVIII.

CLAUDE, BY GENERAL CONSENT, COMMENCES HIS ESCAPE FROM NEWGATE.

"You rather astonish me," said Dick.

"And me likewise," said Jack.

"Oh, poh!" said the quaker; "nothing can be easier than that. You know that the only person from without who is allowed to visit a prisoner in Newgate, without hinderance, or being well searched at the lobby, is the solicitor whom he may pitch upon to conduct his case, and who must produce a written retainer from him."

"Yes—yes."

"Well, then, you, Jack, or you, Dick—it don't matter which—must write to Duval in Newgate, urging him to send a written retainer to a Mr. Alfred Jones, addressed to this house. With that in my hand, and properly made up, I will present myself at the gate of Newgate, and I have no sort of doubt but that I shall at once get an interview with Claude, and of course I can then carry him in anything I please."

"But will they if I write," said Jack, "deliver to him my letter?"

"They must, as it will contain nothing but what is perfectly unexceptionable in every way."

"Then let it be done at once," said Dick, "and you, Jack, can write it more perfectly than I, as you are by far the oldest friend of Claude; and when you go to him, Mr. Franklin, you can tell him all the news, and how gladly we would do anything in the world that he can think of to procure his freedom."

"Truly, friend, I will," said Franklin.

The letter was speedily written by Jack, and although it contained not one word that could be construed by the prison authorities into anything that it would be improper or imprudent to communicate to the prisoner, yet, from the style of it, Claude would have no difficulty in seeing that Jack wished him to send the written authority to Mr. Alfred Jones, for a very special reason.

The address, too, to the quaker's house, which would be sure to strike him, would of itself be sufficient to assure him that the missive came direct from his friends, and meant more than met the eye.

In two hours the answer came back. It merely contained a few lines to Jack, and kind remembrances to all friends, and the order of retainer to Mr. Alfred Jones, solicitor.

"Now my friends," said Franklin, "you may wait here while I pay a visit to Newgate, and tell me before I get ready what out of all this box of tools and implements you think will be most useful to Claude Duval."

As the quaker spoke, he dragged from under a table a small chest, which, upon being opened, disclosed a beautiful collection of house-breakers tools of all kinds and descriptions, most of them being of the most exquisite workmanship and the most ingenious design.

Dick and Jack made some selections, and handed them to the quaker, Dick saying—"There, if you can manage to give him only these five tools he will not be kept in Newgate by the power of locks, or hinges, or fetters, I'll be bound."

"He shall have them, friend. He shall have them. I do not in the smallest degree anticipate any difficulty, for the name of Alfred Jones, as a solicitor, appeareth in the law list, and it is most unlikely that they should know that individual at the gate of Newgate; but as in all human enterprises, friend Jack, there is some little chance of failure, I will risk that much."

With this the quaker went off to Newgate capittally dressed in black, and looking so cool, and so collected, that no one for a moment could possibly have suspected him of any ulterior designs, or of being anything but what he represented himself. With that easy confident air, which a man has who goes upon an errand that he knows and feels he is all right regarding, Franklin ascended the steps of Newgate and rapped smartly at the half-door.



"Well, what now?" said the man who was on the lock, as it is technically termed.

"Open the wicket," said Franklin, with an air of authority. "I am a solicitor. Open the wicket."

The turnkey mechanically obeyed, and when he was in the lobby, Franklin took out a large pocket-book, and after a pretended search among its multifarious papers that nearly exhausted the patience of the turnkey, he affected, at last, to find the written authority from Claude, constituting Mr. Alfred Jones his solicitor.

"Oh, here it is, at last," he said. "Be so good as to get some one to show me to Duval quickly, for my time is of importance."

"Oh. This here ought to go to the governor," said the turnkey,

"Well, be quick about it."

"Yet, I daresay it's all right. Joe, look at this. You are more of a schollard than I is. Is this a proper *torney's thority*?"

Joe looked at the paper as wisely as possible, and then in a very oracular kind of manner, declared his opinion that it was as right as ninepence, and that he'd better show the gemman the way.

"That's the thing, my good fellow," said Franklin, "and if ever I am in here for anything, I'll be as liberal among you all as a prince."

"Ah," said Joe, "catch you lawyers a-coming here, 'cept on a visit only, that's all. You knows how to manage things, you does. This way, sir, this way. We hasn't no objection to drink your health, though, for all that."

"I always do things regular," said Franklin. "Wait till my client has paid me something, and without it I don't come again, I can tell you, and then I'll stand a crown."

"Ah," said Joe, with a look of admiration, "I never seed you here afore, sir, but you is one of the deep ones; I can can see that any way. This here's the way, sir. Hilloa, Foxey. Here's a lawyer come to see Duval. Just show him in."

Foxey, who was enjoying a quiet snooze in a little watch-box sort of place, jammed up into a corner of a narrow passage leading to the range of cells in one of which Claude was confined, awakened, and growled out—

"What is you arter now? Can't a man shut his eyes for a matter of a minute, but you are forced to come with your larks and botherations? Be off."

"Not till I have seen my client, Mr. Foxey," said Franklin. "Then I shall be off as quickly as I can, but not before."

"Eh? oh, eh? I begs your parding sir. I thought as it was only a bit of Joe's gammon, that's all; 'cos, you see, sir, they often pokes fun at me, pretending as I'm give to going to sleep, when all the while there ain't a wider awake follow than me in the whole stone pitcher."

Foxey led the way to Claude's cell, and opening the door, he said—

"A wisiter," and then he banged it to again upon the quaker, who stood a few paces within its threshold. His first act was to place his ear against the massive door at which the officer had departed, to be sure that he was gone, and then being quite clear upon that head, he turned to Claude, saying—

"You know me, friend?"

"Ah," said Claude, springing up, "Mr. Franklin?"

"The same. Dick and Jack are at my house. I find I have been misinformed regarding your condition."

"Misinformed? As how?"

"You are in fetters, and I was told that such was not the case."

"They only put them on a quarter of an hour ago, because they found me examining the stanchions of the window, and they have a perfect horror of my escaping."

"And yet it may be done."

"Of course it may. What has been done may be always done again, and many things that never were done at all will be done in the fulness of time. But tell me—how is Jack, and how is Dick, and what has become of Phillip Manning? Grace is, of course, in perfect safety with her father?"

"Jack is well," said the quaker, answering all the questions of Claude in the most methodical manner; "and Dick is well. Phillip Manning is in this building and Grace is happy with her father."

"Thank God."

"Your own situation is now of the greatest impertance. Do you despair, or do you hope, Claude Duval?"

"Despair? Who that knows anything of me ever found food for the opinion that I should despair? Who that ever heard of Claude Duval, accused him of abandoning hope even under the most cheerless circumstances? Do not, Mr. Franklin, ask me such a question. Something seems to whisper to me that my time has not yet come."

"I do not think it has."

"I thank you for that thought. No, I shall, I think, sniff the night air again, and breathe the soft odour of fruits and flowers; I do not think that I shall only pass from this cell to death."

"Nor do I. I have promised Jack and Dick that all that man can do to save you, I will do, and I will keep my word. Here is a plan of Newgate, accurately laid down, for your information; and here are such tools and implements as no doubt you know well how to use."

"Let me see them."

Claude ran over with an eager eye the five exquisitely made tools that the quaker had brought him, and then with a deep sigh, he said—

"Yes, these will do much, but there is yet something wanting."

"What is that?"

"Rope. I can do nothing without a good coil of rope. If I had that I do think that, adopting the quaker phraseology. "'Tis well, friend; and truly it giveth unto me some gratification to be able to say to thee, friend Claude, here is the rope that thou seekest."

"You really think so?"

"From my heart I do."

"'Tis well, friend," said Franklin, suddenly, as at times only it was his humour to do, adopting the quaker phraseology. "'Tis well, friend; and truly it giveth unto me some gratification to be able to say to thee, friend Claude, here is the rope that thou seekest."

As he spoke, he unbuttoned his top-coat and exhibited, nicely wound round his waist, a complete coil of rope, of evidently many yards in length.

"Thee will find, friend Claude," he said, "that this is a bit of good stuff, and will not fail thee. Double, ay, treble thy weight and mine together, might hang to it without fear, slender as it looks; and now what dost thou think of thy chances?"

"Think? Why I think I can almost say, that I know I shall get out of Newgate. Have you any small grapples or hooks to give me to fasten to the end of the rope?"

"Yes, friend Claude, I have not forgotten those; and it striketh me that thou art as well provided as any man can well be, friend Claude. What thinkest thou?"

"I think, Franklin, that I shall owe my life to you, and that the time will come when you will not look back with any regret upon having done me this favour."

"Then, friend Claude, I will bid thee good day, and remember I am Mr. Jones thy solicitor; and if thou shouldst want to see me again, pray send to me in that name at the address in Dean-street, which thou knowest. And now, dost thou want money? for if thou dost, thou hast only to name the sum, and it is now at thy disposal."

"No," said Claude. "I think I will try this escape quite unaided by any one in the prison. If a trial to bribe a man fails, one's situation is only much worse, for he gains information, and that begets increased caution, and perhaps they might find somewhere to place me which would preclude the possibility of getting away at all."

"Thou art right. I wish thee all manner of luck, friend, and wish thee good day."

The quaker tapped at the door, which had been locked upon him; and as the sound reverberated through the passage that communicated with the cells, the turnkey heard it, and came up with his huge bunch of keys.



CLAUDE PAYS HIS DEBTS AT NEWGATE, AND MEETS TOM BRERETON.

"Your client, Mr. Lawyer," he said, as he preceded Franklin along the passages to the lobby; "your client is booked, I take it."

"Very probably," said Franklin.

"Ha! ha! He will dance upon nothing."

"Yes, friend, I do not think that either you or he need fear drowning, even

"Me? What do you mean? Why should I be hanged?"

"That, friend, is best known to yourself; but I have had such immense professional experience, that I am enabled to say at a glance whether a man is bound for the gallows or not."

"But—but you don't mean to say that I look like it?"

"No, friend, not like it, but it itself. I don't entertain the smallest doubt upon the subject."

"The devil!"

"Yes, the devil is the ultimate distinction, but comfort yourself, it may be a year or two yet."

"A year or two? What a comfortable idea, to be sure! Confound you, I wish you would keep your mighty cleverness to yourself. Who asked you to be so wonderfully prophetic?"

By this time they had reached the lobby, and Franklin then saw a small thin man who was conversing with one of the officials, to whom the quaker heard him say—

"You will perceive that this is an order from Judge Manning to permit me to see the prisoner Claude Duval. Pray satisfy yourself that it is all regular."

"Oh, I dare say it's all right enough," said the turnkey. "Here, Foxey, you have been once to the cell; just show this gentleman Claude Duval's lodgings, if you please."

"Humph!" said Franklin, as he passed out of Newgate. "That, then, is a messenger from the judge. What does he want, I wonder?"

## CHAPTER CLXIX.

MR. SAGO HOLDS OUT PROMISES TO CLAUDE, AND DOES A LITTLE BUSINESS FOR HIMSELF.

CLAUDE was rather surprised at Mr. Sago's appearance, and he looked all the surprise he felt. The manner of the cautious attorney was certainly not in any way calculated to decrease that surprise. The first thing he did upon getting into the cell was to place himself in a crouching attitude, and to listen attentively to the retreating footsteps of the turnkey. He even went the length of counting them upon his fingers as the man slowly tramped down the narrow stone corridor into which the cells opened. Then he went all round the walls, examining them up and down with the greatest attention.

"Pray, sir," said Claude, for the attorney had not spoken one word to him, "pray, sir, is it usual to send lunatics into the cells of Newgate, to annoy prisoners?"

"Hush!" cried Mr. Sago. "I really do think that it is all right and safe, I do, indeed."

"What is all right and safe? What do you mean?"

"Why, sir, I mean that I think there are no ear-trumpets, or peep-holes, from this cell."

"Ear-trumpets and peep-holes! Are there are such things in Newgate!"

"Bless your innocence, yes. Lots of 'em; but, I say, I don't think that there are any such here, so we may speak freely, although in a low voice—mind you, in quite a low voice. We cannot be too cautious in these sort of communications, and when I have anything very particular to make you acquainted with, I will use this."

As he spoke, the attorney took a little slate from his pocket, and a pencil, and then he sat himself down opposite to Claude, and rubbed his hands together like a man thoroughly satisfied with himself, and with what he was about.

"If," said Claude, "it is all the same to you, sir, I should be glad of some little hint as to what you mean by all this."

"My dear sir, you shall have not only a hint, but the fullest and most complete information. Do you know——?" Here he wrote the name of Judge Manning upon the slate, which Claude replied to with a nod. "I come from him, my dear sir, so far as an order to see you goes, and he wishes me to tell you that situated as he is, he don't see how he can do you any good."

"Nor I neither," said Claude. "Pray give my best respects to him, and say that I feel I ought not, and cannot, expect anything from him in the way of aid, situated as he is with regard to his public office."

"Good, my dear friend; but I—I—" Here Mr. Sago put his finger by the side of his nose. "I have an idea."

"You don't say so?" said Claude. "Pray, what is it, sir? I shall be much obliged by your letting me know it as quickly as possible, so that I may have the pleasure of bidding you good day, as I prefer being alone."

"Good. Of the two I am a man who generally prefers being alone; but my idea is, that for a consideration I could put you in a way of bidding good-by to Newgate, and you will recollect that in so doing, you include the gallows in the tender adieu."

"True," said Claude.

"Well, sir, about the consideration. Can you manage the insignificant sum of five hundred?"

"It gives me great pleasure," said Claude, "to hear that five hundred is to you an insignificant sum; and if you will tell me in what way you prefer assisting me to escape, I will give you an answer."

"I shall open the front door for you, my dear sir, and let you walk out at your ease."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. That is the way I will manage it. I will find some one, for a consideration, who will come here and let you go out in his clothes. For a consideration I will so blind the eyes of the turnkeys with gold dust, that they will suspect nothing until you are off and away upon the road again; but it will, to pay everybody, take about five hundred."

"I will think of it," said Claude.

"Very good. My name is Sago. I will call upon you to-morrow at this hour, and then you can give me a definitive answer upon the subject. Remember, if you cannot find the money at once, I will advance it, until, from the profits of your business, you can conveniently repay me; for I really do think that to hang a man for doing a little business on the highway, is nothing better than murder. You will easily comprehend that my feelings alone have prompted me in this affair. I do not, of course, expect to get for myself one penny piece of the money. But no matter: while I have the approval of what is here—" Mr. Sago gave his chest a thump—"I shall be satisfied."

"You are quite a remarkable man," said Claude. "Be assured that I shall be in a situation to give you an answer to-morrow at this hour, if you can get at me."

"Humph! I will try that. My dear sir, I wish you a very good-day, indeed. Keep up your spirits, and hope for the best, my dear sir. I have been keeping an eye upon the walls of this cell, and I really do believe it is a genuine one, and that there are no ear-trumpets or peep-holes about it."

With this Mr. Sago left the cell, rather congratulating himself upon the idea that with what he would get from Judge Manning, and what he would get from Claude, he should be able to make a pretty good job of the escape from Newgate, always provided the officers were not such miracles of virtue as to resist bribery. When he reached the lobby again, he took from his pocket rather an elegant snuff-box, and handed it to the man on duty at the wicket gate, for him to take a pinch from, at the same time saying—

"I think there are seven of you altogether, on and off duty, about the lobby here, and the stone passage leading to Duval's cell?"

"Exactly seven," said the man, "and werry good snuff this is, sir."

"Seven," added Sago. "Humph! seven times twenty makes one hundred and forty, which, in guineas, has a nice bright look. I am now going to the Ram's Horn and Cartridge Box, opposite, to take a quiet glass. I shall be there for half an hour; and if you and the others have a fancy that twenty guineas apiece will be pretty for merely dozing a little, and running any risks, why one of you can come over, and say as much to me there. Ask for Mr. Sago."

The turnkey, with a grin, as he opened the wicket to let the attorney go, said—"It's about Duval?"

Mr. Sago nodded.

The turnkey nodded; and then they both winked; and Mr. Sago, as he walked over the way, said to himself—

"It's a done job, and very cheap, too; very cheap, indeed. Well, I rather think I shall make a good thing of this; and everybody will be so much interested in keeping the affair snug, that the judge will never be a bit the wiser. Sago—Sago, you are a genius, that you are; and you always were, from the first day that you began life by sweeping out the office of Shark & Co., in Gray's Inn; and studied law by listening at the-key holes to their private consultations."

We need not follow the officers—two of whom went within the ensuing half hour to the public house—in their bargaining with Mr. Sago. Nothing pleased them better than to find that some one was willing to pay them for what they had made up their minds to do for nothing, namely—to set Claude Duval at liberty.

With their motives for so doing gratuitously, the reader is already fully acquainted; so that, what with one thing and another, Claude found himself thoroughly surrounded by persons not at all anxious to keep him in Newgate; but plotting and planning in every shape and way for the best means of getting him comfortably and quickly out of it. The only thing the officers made as a special bargain with Mr. Sago was, that they were to have the twenty pounds apiece, provided Duval got clear away, let it be done how it might. They had their own reasons for preferring a different mode to that which Mr. Sago proposed. They much preferred a regular prison-breaking to the substitution of another person for Claude in his cell, in whose power they might all be to an inconvenient extent.

It was the gentleman named Bill, who, about two hours after the visit of Mr. Sago, made his way into Claude's cell, and gave him a hint of what he might, if he chose, set about; and as Mr. Bill's mind and perceptions were not of the most delicate or highly cultivated order, the hint was a pretty broad one.

"I tells you what it is, Duval," he said; "you haven't been nabbed in the riglar way, and fair play is a jewel whether in or out of Newgate; so, you see, if so be as you thinks as there is a chance of giving the old stone jug the go-by, don't say that me or any of my mates stood in your way, nor don't say that any of us stood out of it either, that's all I have got to say to you."

"I understand," said Duval.

"Very good. A nod is as good as a vink to a blind oss. In course, you'll want tools. Well, perhaps this here bag will be left here by me quite promiscuous. Perhaps you will want to know the way; well, it's through the chapel, which is at the end of this here passage, then into the yard, and over the wall by the corner of Newgate-street. But, perhaps you will say, how are you to get on the wall and down on t'other side? Well, perhaps you'll find a rope a-hanging, and when you climbs up by it, you can pull it up and let it down on the other side. But don't be fancying that I am telling you how to get out of Newgate."

"Oh dear, no," said Claude. "That would be very absurd. You may depend upon it I shall not take anything so ridiculous into my head as a consequence of your visit."

"And you never will, so help you, let out a word about it?"

"Upon my life I will not. There's not a man living who can say Claude Duval ever broke word or paltered with it in any shape or way."

"I believes it," said Bill, giving the table a thump in the enthusiasm of the moment; "I believes it. Look you here, Duval. You are took—nabbed—

grabbed—flummoxed—and nailed; but it was not in the fair and regular way of business. I hate that sneaking rascal as peached upon you at Bow Street. It's a wrong thing, and we of the purfession is biled at it, and can't stand it, and won't stand it, as you see, Duval; we have made up our minds that you shall go to the road again, for you haven't been took off of it in the proper way, not by no manner o' means."

"I quite understand you," said Claude, "and know your sentiments. Only tell me one thing. Will Tom Brereton get the reward?"

"He will."

"I am sorry for that."

"So am I; and so are all of us; but we can't help it. It's only a clear five hundred pounds for lodging you in jail. He'd get a thousand pounds more if you were turned off some fine morning, but that he'll lose. The five hundred pounds though he'll have, and nobody can help it."

"Then listen to me," said Claude. "When I am free, as I suppose now I may conclude I shall be, I will haunt Tom Brereton like his shadow. He can't get rid of five hundred pounds all at once, and I'll have it from him again as sure as my name is Claude Duval; and when I get it, I'll come to the lobby of Newgate and share it among you, if you will pass me your word that I may do so with scooty."

"Done!" cried Bill. "If anybody lays a hand upon you, or says a dangerous w'rd about you when you come, they shall walk through me to do it."

"I am satisfied," said Claude.

"Werry good," added Bill. "Perhaps you'd set to work as soon as it's eleven o'clock to-night? You have got a ticker in your fob, and will know the time."

"I have. All's right."

"Good again," said Bill; and having thoroughly concluded his mission in what he called a highly satisfactory manner, he abruptly left the cell.

"Truly," said Claude, when he was alone, "for strangeness, this beats all my adventures put together. Here, I may say in a manner of speaking, I am almost jostled out of Newgate and forced upon the road again, whether I will or no. Alas! alas! what a world is this! Here am I made the puppet of circumstances, all because a price is put upon my head. The very thing which was intended to crush me, and destroy me, conspires now with other circumstances to save me. Yes, Cicely, I shall see you once again. Fate has not entirely separated us in this world. My own Cicely, if now, after this escape, I could but find a means of quitting England for ever we might be happy; but no—no. Fate, after all, is but a dream. Fate has in too unequivocal a manner pronounced a negative upon my adopting such a course. I must remain in England and fulfil my destiny, let it be what it may."

From this time until eleven o'clock at night, the minutes seemed to lag very slowly with Claude. He did not think proper to make any attempt to move from his cell previous to the arrival of that hour; for he knew that the officer must have had some sufficient and ample reason for naming it; but he employed the time in freeing himself from his fetters, which, with the admirable tools brought to him by the quaker, he found no difficulty in doing.

The only thing he took from the basket of tools left him by Bill, was a small wrought-iron crow-bar of about fifteen inches in length; and then, for fear of accidents, coiling the rope the quaker had brought him round his waist, he waited for the hour of eleven to come.

## CHAPTER CLXX.

CLAUDE MEETS AN ACQUAINTANCE IN NEWGATE, AND THEN ESCAPES,

ST. SEPULCHRE'S clock struck eleven. Even in his cell, so still was the prison, Claude could hear the faint drowsy echo of the chimes, and then the more full sound of the hour striking.

"It is time," he said.

For fear of an accidental visit from any one, Claude had kept his fetters in such a position that they did not look to have been disturbed at all; but now that the hour for action had come, he at once shook them off, and they fell with a clatter to the ground.

He then took up one of the tools that had a sharp point, and, upon the wall of his cell, he wrote the following lines:—

"Claude Duval was in Newgate thrown,  
But he laughed his fill at iron and stone;  
He broke many locks, and he cleared the wall:  
Heigho for the saddle! says Claude Duval."

"There," he added, "that will be something of a memorial of me in time to come; and may it put heart to attempt his liberty into any poor devil who may occupy this cell after me."

Among the things brought to him by the quaker, were matches of phosphorus, then pretty well understood by what was called "the family," *i. e.* cracksmen and knights of the road; and those matches, together with a small lantern which he could darken at a moment's notice, were likely to be eminently useful to him in his progress through the dark passages of the old prison.

"I almost regret," he said, as he lighted his lantern, "that these rascals of turnkeys and officers have made up their minds to wink at my escape; for I should have liked to get away in spite of them all, which I do think I could have done; but, perhaps, it's as well as it is, for I am now, in a manner of speaking, sure of my success."

His first task now was to unlock his cell door, and this he did not find to be a very difficult task, for he had the very finest tools for such a purpose that London could furnish him. The door soon yielded, for as Bill had been his last visitor, he had forgotten (?) to put up an iron bar that was behind it.

With his lantern in his hand, Claude traversed the corridor in which he now found himself, and he was upon the point of commencing an attack upon one of the double-doors leading into the chapel, when he was arrested by hearing some one weeping. The sound appeared to have come from one of the cells opening from the corridor.

"What shall I do?" said Claude. "Ought I to trouble myself about any one else at such a time as this? or ought I to reflect that I have it, perhaps, in my power to restore some one to life and liberty, who may either be wholly and completely innocent, or not very guilty?"

Such a discussion was not likely to last very long in the mind of such a person as Claude. His feelings soon carried the day against his judgment. He made his way to the door of the cell from whence the sobs issued, and placing his mouth to the key-hole, he said, in a low but distinct voice—

"Who are you?"

The sobs suddenly ceased, and all was perfectly still, until Claude repeated his question, and then a voice replied—

"I am a most unfortunate person indeed. Who is it that speaks to me in such a place as this?"

"One who can give you your freedom," replied Claude, "only he is not quite sure that you deserve it."

"Oh, do not say so," replied the voice; "I am merely placed here out of spite on account of some family differences. There is not in all the world, I assure you, be you whom you may, a more innocent person than I am; and if you can only restore me to freedom, you will earn my everlasting gratitude."

"I have no means," thought Claude, "of testing the truth of this man's assertions, but I will run the risk, and let him go with me as far as the street, poor devil."

With this determination, Claude took down the bar of the cell door, and speedily unlocked it. When he flung it open, he said—



"Make as little noise as you can, and follow me; I am, like yourself an escaping prisoner, and we shall require all our skill and caution yet to succeed."

The inhabitant of the cell now came crawling out upon his knees in the most abject manner. The light of the lantern fell upon his face, and Claude recognised Phillip Manning! At the same moment the wretched man caught a sight of, and recognised Claude Duval.

"Mercy! mercy!" he cried.

"Villain!" said Claude, "had it been any other man in Newgate I would not turn my back upon him, but you——"

"Oh no—no—no!—Spare me. Take me with you! Only free me from this dreadful prison, and I will be your servant—your slave. Oh, have mercy upon me!"

Claude turned away in disgust.

"Duval, Duval, do not leave me here. My uncle is cold, and stern, and harsh; he has made up his mind, notwithstanding all the exposure and all the relationship, to leave me to my fate and to the law. Oh, take me with you. You are bold and vigorous, and the stone walls of Newgate cannot hold you. Have pity upon me."

"No," Phillip Manning, "fight your own battles. Remain where you are, for me."

"But I cannot fight my own battles. I have already written a letter to my uncle threatening him that if I am put upon my trial, I will insinuate so much against the purity of Grace, that it shall stick to her while she lives, and he took no notice of the letter at all. Oh, save me! save me!"

"You consummate scoundrel! To your cell again!"

"No—no. I have once left it, and I will not return to it. If you will not save me by letting me go with you, I will raise the whole prison by my cries, and swear—for I am am ready at any time to swear anything—that I caught you in the act of escaping, and that you were trying to persuade me to go with you and rob on the highway."

Duval had only just patience enough to hear the end of this speech, and it was truly wonderful that he had so much, considering his temperament, but the last words were no sooner out of Phillips lips, then clapping the lantern to the floor, Claude sprung upon him, and lifting him bodily up with both hands, he flung him into the cell again as though he had been some piece of old lumber, and then banging the door to, he put up the bar again in a moment. All was still. Master Phillip had in all probability been too much stunned by the vengeance with which he was sent back again into his old quarters, to give any immediate alarm of what Claude was about.

Claude was really much more annoyed at this little incident than he chose to confess to himself, and he muttered as he set to work upon the door at the end of the corridor—

"Confound it, who would have thought of lighting upon that one rascal out of all the folks, good, bad, and indifferent, in Newgate? But it serves one right for at such a time meddling with the affairs of anybody one did not know."

The door he was engaged upon soon yielded, but that immediately behind it, which opened into the chapel, was secured by two strong bolts, one at the top, and one at the bottom of the door, so that he had his work before him to get that one undone.

It was only by boring a hole right through the door, and with the powerful tools he had, sawing a piece out of it both at top and bottom, that he succeeded in overcoming this obstacle of the bolts, and then having previously shot back the lock, he found himself within the chapel of Newgate, which, by the uncertain light of his lantern, looked of treble its usual size.

He knew that he could much easier leave the chapel, by a door immediately opposite to the one at which he had entered, than he had entered it, for now the bolts were upon his side, and he could withdraw then in a moment. The

locks readily yielded, and he then found himself in a corridor, very similar to the one from which his cell had opened. It was at the far end of this corridor that he expected to find a door that would lead him immediately into the court-yard that he sought, and which was bounded by the wall, close to the corner of Newgate Street.

He found the door without any difficulty, but to get it open was rather a serious task. The lock was one of a peculiar character, and none of the implements that he, Claude, had, would in any way touch it as regarded opening it. He felt that there was no resource but to set to work getting the lock off bodily; and without a moment's delay he commenced operations. By dint of great labour, he succeeded, in the course of a quarter of an hour, in getting the wedge-end of the wrought-iron lever he had with him about an inch beneath the plate of the lock.

Slowly and cautiously he applied his strength to the other end of the crow bar and it was pleasant to him to hear the creaking and springing of the yielding lock. Then with a sudden bang, like the muffled report of fire arms, the lock-plate came off, and there was no longer any difficulty to contend with, as regarded opening that door, so far as the lock was concerned. Duval did not expect that that door had any other fastening, and he was most disagreeably surprised to find that it did not yield. By a little shaking at it, he found out that there was a bar across it.

This was a serious obstacle, not as regarded the difficulty of removing the bar, but as regarded the time it would take to do so. There was no earthly resource but to absolutely saw through it, and that he immediately set about. Fortunately there was just sufficient space between the door and the wall for him to introduce one of the fine and exquisitely-tempered saws with which he was provided, so that he could begin the work at once.

Rapidly the sharp teeth of steel cut into the soft iron of which the bar was very injudiciously composed, and at length the last obstacle was removed, and the door creaked open upon its massive hinges. Then came a rush of cold air, which was sufficiently convincing to Claude as regarded the immediate proximity of the court-yard.

"Now," he said, "I have but the wall of Newgate to surmount, but that is not the easiest thing in all the world. I must trust to good fortune, however, and a stout rope. I wonder if the officer has been as good as his word, and left a rope hanging from the spokes conveniently?"

Claude thought it was expedient to put out his lantern; for although the night was dark it was not so dark but that with a little practice he could see objects generally in the prison-yard, and there might possibly be some official who, not being in the plot, would consider it a wonderfully meritorious thing to discover him. Besides, if a rope were there at all, it must be hanging close to the wall, so he could not miss it.

The court-yard was small, and Duval soon reached the wall, but scarcely had he done so, when he was somewhat startled by the ringing of a loud bell in the prison. He paused a moment to listen to it, and then suddenly from the deep shadow of an angle of the wall there came a man, who in a low voice, said—

"Quick, Duval, quick. Why, isn't you off?"

"Is it you, Bill?"

"Yes, to be sure; I've been awaiting for you this half-hour. Don't you hear the alarm-bell a-going? Somebody has found out that you are missing. Five or six minutes ago, they said there was a shouting from one of the cells, but that can't have anything to do with you, surely?"

"It's Phillip Manning," thought Claude, "who has given the alarm."

He did not think proper to say as much to Bill, but in the same cautious tone in which he spoke, he said—

"Show me where the rope is, and I'll be off, if I break my neck in the venture."

"This way—this way."

Bill led Claude to the rope, and then holding the end of it, he said—

"You get up it as fast as you can. I'll steady it here below, which will be half the battle. Confound that bell."

The alarm-bell was pulled by one who was not at all niggardly of his labour; and from various close-y-barred casements that looked into the court-yard, lights began to flash, while the murmur of loud voices came plainly upon Claude's ears.



THE ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE CLAUDE IN SMITHFIELD.

He sprang several feet up the rope at a bound, and then with great agility commenced climbing hand over hand to the top of the wall.

It was a capital rope for climbing, thick enough, so that Duval was at the top of the wall in an incredibly short space of time. There he found that two strong hooks at the end of the rope had taken a capital hold of the *chevaux de frise* that was upon the top of the wall. It was a dizzy thing to look down upon the lights

in the Old Bailey, and to see from that height and that frail, very frail, standing-place, the long perspective of lamps down Skinner Street and up Holborn Hill. He had to hold on to the complicated iron-work as best he could. To cross it was a matter of great danger and difficulty.

## CHAPTER CLXXI.

CLAUDE ASTONISHES TOM BRERETON AND PLEASES HIS FRIENDS.

THAT was not exactly the time for reflection; and Claude, after shading his eyes with his hand, and taking one long look upon the streets below, from which rose up to him the roar and the clash of life in the countless crowds of London, proceeded to let the rope down on the outer side of the wall.

He tore his clothing and gave himself some slight scratches from the spiked iron-work at the top of the wall, and then he succeeded in fairly launching himself on to the rope. All he required now to do, was to keep himself from any too rude concussion against the wall, and that he managed tolerably well, by pointing his toes against it. In the course of two minutes he was in the Old Bailey.

A man having the dress and appearance of a porter, was the only person passing at the moment, and he, after pausing for a moment with a look of astonishment as Claude descended and reached the pavement, suddenly rushed forward and seized him by the collar, saying—

“Hilloa, my jail bird, you are taking to your wings, are you?”

“Yes,” said Claude, “and my claws likewise.”

Drawing in a full breath as he spoke, he struck the man such a tremendous blow in the face that he fell to the ground as though a cannon-shot had felled him. Duval started off then at a brisk trot, and making his way down Skinner Street he soon gained Holborn-bridge. As he ran he heard the sound of the great bell of Newgate, as though it were pursuing him, but he was resolved to go the nearest way he could to the quaker’s in Dean Street, and without deviating from his path in the least, he ran up Holborn Hill.

“Stop him!” cried a voice. “Stop thief!”

Claude glanced behind him and saw some men running. He had his doubts whether they were after him or not, but he did not think it worth his while to throw a chance away, and being close to Southampton Buildings he darted down that turning, and then taking the first turn he came to, to the right again he emerged into Chancery Lane. Not wishing then to make his way into Holborn or down the lane to Fleet Street, he thought his best plan would be to get through Lincoln’s Inn, and so on by a back route to Soho.

Claude knew that the Inn was closed to all but its inhabitants after nine o’clock, but he crossed over the road and boldly knocked at the old gate.

In the course of about a minute the wicket was unbolted, and a surly-looking man with a nightcap on his head and a lantern in his hand, made his appearance. A sharp scrutiny into Claude’s face satisfied the porter that he, Claude, did not belong to the Inn, and he said in a tone of passion—

“What the devil do you want here? You can’t come in, I tell you.”

“But you can come out,” said Claude.

As he spoke he darted in his right hand, and seizing the porter by the throat, he dragged him through the wicket and hurled him into the middle of Chancery Lane. To step into the Inn and to bolt the wicket on the inner side was Claude’s next step.

“Daniel!” cried a woman’s voice from the lodge. “Daniel, what’s the matter? What’s the matter, Daniel?”

“Nothing,” said Claude. “You be quiet, or I’ll soon make you.”

Without waiting for any reply, he darted across the old square and so on to the new, and then making his way up Cook’s Court, he was duly let out by the porter there, for it is a rule after hours at the Inn to let everybody out but nobody in.

The cries of the men in Holborn, whether they had been directed at Claude or not, had long since died away, and he walked with a deliberate step through the silent purlieus of Clare Market. Drowsy watchmen calling the wrong hour, and asserting the weather to be anything that came uppermost to their minds, were the only persons he met, with the exception of some nymph of the pave who occasionally applied to him an endearing epithet or an abusive one, as her humour at the moment dictated; and so, in less than half an hour after leaving Newgate, he stood upon the quaker's doorstep in Dean Street.

Instant admission was granted him, and he found his hand grasped in that of Jack, who cried—

"Claude, Claude, this is indeed a happy meeting. Both Dick and I said we would meet you, but our friend Franklin declared you would be safer by yourself!"

"Thank you all," said Claude, "I am safe enough, and glad to see you all.—I don't think either—indeed, I may say, I am sure that there is no one upon my track, so all is right so far,"

"Then, friend, Claude," said the quaker, who had been fastening up the street-door, "let us to supper, for we have waited for you. I said you would be here, friend, at half-past twelve, and it is now not above twenty minutes to one. Didst thou meet with any cross accident?"

"Nothing to signify," said Claude; "but you shall have all the particulars while we are at supper. I feel as though I could do justice to it; let it be as good a one as it may, Mr. Franklin."

"Friend, there are four roast ducks, and a Westphalia ham, together with all sorts of varieties in the way of drink."

"Good; and now can anybody tell me what has become of my horse?"

"I can," said Dick "He is all right, and as fresh as a daisy on a Spring morning, Claude. You have certainly got the better of the Philistines this time, and no one can rejoice at it more than I do."

"I thank you all," said Claude; "and does Cicely know nothing?"

"She knows nothing," replied Jack; "but suspects much."

"Then, that shall be seen to after supper; I will ride to the farm, and set her heart at rest: Oh, how I long to be in the saddle again, and among the trees and meadows. God, I think I should die soon in the city. Short as has been my stay in Newgate, there have been times when I felt as though I should have gone mad; but that is past now, and in good truth I don't think they will take me again with the breath in my body. This time it was an extraordinary accident, or they would not have had me within the walls of Newgate."

They were now seated at the supper-table, and they all did ample justice to the good cheer of the quaker, after which Claude related to them what had taken place in the prison, regarding the interview he had had with Sago, the attorney, and the singular determination that the officers and turnkeys had themselves come to, to let him escape.

"Friend," said Franklin, "thou wert in luck's way. I know that Sago very well, and thou needest not trouble thyself about any arguments or promises with him. I will give him a call."

"Thank you; but can any of you now tell me anything of Tom Brereton, for I am resolved to keep my word with the officials of the prison, and whatever I can wrest from him of the reward I will take to them. It may serve me in good stead at another time, or a friend, if not myself, may profit by having well-disposed people to me within the four walls."

"That is true, friend," said Franklin; "and I very much applaud thy resolution; I can tell thee where thy old acquaintance, Tom Brereton, is; and I can likewise tell thee that he has only received £750 for thy capture. The Secretary of State raised a quibble with him that thou wert already in custody, and kindly added, 'that if he did not like to take the £750 in full, they (the government) were quite willing to meet him in any Court of law upon the subject, for the term of his natural life;' so, with a rare wisdom, Tom Brereton took the money."

Claude laughed, and then he said—"And where may I have the pleasure of finding the rascal?"

"He has taken a lodging, friend Claude, at the next house to the corner one of the Edgeware road, and there, most undoubtedly, thou will find the rascal; for he makes no secret of his name or his whereabouts, as he looks upon thee as most comfortably bestowed in Newgate, and that thy first appearance in the open air therefrom will only be to be hanged."

"I am very much obliged to him," said Claude, rising. "It will be quite a charity to undeceive him. Mr. Franklin, I am extremely obliged to you; and for myself and my friends, I feel myself very much your debtor, indeed. I will take good care that you lose nothing by your share in these transactions."

"Friend, I am quite satisfied," said Franklin, rubbing his hands together. "Business is business, and I am quite sure that I shall see thee all again very often. I wish thee all manner of luck, friend."

The servant of the quaker made his appearance, and casting up his eyes in a sanctimonious manner, he said—"Truly, the three animals are at the door."

"What the duce does he mean?" said Dick.

"He means," said Franklin, "that your horses are ready."

"And, am I, Dick," said Claude, "to have the pleasure of your company? Jack, of course, I counted upon."

"Even so," said Dick. "I am something like you, Claude. I am half dead for want of a sniff of the country air. I am for the road, again, and will ride with you some miles; I then think of going a good many miles off, and trying some of the first-class roads, some hundred miles at least from London. I think there is some fair business to be done."

"Probably enough," said Claude; "but don't let me keep you off Hounslow Heath, if you have any fancy to it."

"No, thank you. I shall try the great north road, for a few weeks, and then who knows but we may meet again. However, I will now ride with you as far as the Edgeware Road, for I presume that is the direction in which you purpose going now?"

"It is; and I will drop in upon my friend, Tom Brereton, as I go along. I am very anxious to get that little piece of business comfortably settled; and I don't think it will take me very long to do it."

"Truly, friend," said Franklin, "you will find him in the first floor of that house that I have named to you; and as he certainly does not expect thee, the surprise will be all the greater, and, of course, quite an agreeable one."

"Very agreeable," said Jack.

They all mounted, and the only person who watched them do so was the drowsy looking guardian of the night, who threw the glare of his lantern upon them, and then as they were just moving off, cried—

"This is an odd time of night to ride. Who is you?"

"Just run on a few miles, and we will tell you," said Claude. "You can hold on to my horse's tail."

The watchman was waxing very wroth, as they trotted down Dean Street, and then emerging into Oxford Street, they went on at a brisk canter to the west.

"Ah," said Claude, "this is life, again. Now, indeed, I feel that the blood circulates in my veins. What a different creature to be sure I feel upon my gallant steed in the pure open air. That infernal cell of Newgate would have killed me in another week. Why, I can smell the fresh and beautiful vegetation of the country, already."

"Yes," said Jack, "so can I. I love the trees, and the fields, and every sight and sound of the open country. When death comes to me, let it come far away from the smoke and the din of London. But here we are, Claude, at the Edgeware Road. Do you still hold to your intention of dropping in on Tom Brereton, to night?"

"Certainly I do. The sooner the better. By to-morrow at noon the news of my escape from Newgate will be all over London, and upon the very first intima-

tion of such a thing, he will assuredly be off, and I don't want a tedious dance after him. It must be to-night or never that he and I come to a reckoning."

"Here's the house, then," said Dick, as they all three paused opposite to the house that had been mentioned by the quaker as that in which Tom Brereton had taken a lodging, upon the strength of his seven hundred and fifty pounds. It was a respectable enough looking building, and the first floor was adorned by a pretty balcony, that ran all along the front of the house, and around the wooden rails of which some creeping plants were rather tastefully trailed and trained. The most profound stillness reigned in and about the place.

"I have an idea," said Claude, "that by standing on the saddle of my horse I can reach the balcony."

"Of course you can," said Dick, "and it will be, by all means, the best way of getting into the house. We will take care of the horse, and see that all is right below here."

"Thank you. I don't anticipate the smallest trouble in the affair. I know my customer pretty well."

Claude walked his steed to a spot exactly under the edge of the balcony, and then admonishing it by his voice to be still, he got upon the saddle and found he could reach the balcony easily enough. After, then, trying some of the bars, to see if they would stand his weight, and finding that, so far, all was right, he drew himself up in a moment, and was fairly in the balcony, somewhat to the detriment of some plants in pots that were placed there.

"All right?" whispered Jack, from below.

"Yes—yes; you need not keep the horse there, or stay there yourselves exactly by the house; it may attract attention, and when I have done all the affair I can jump down."

Jack took Claude's horse by the bridle; the creature knew Jack very well, and would go with him; and then he and Dick walked off some twenty or thirty yards, and waited the issue of Duval's adventure in the lodging of the man who had placed him in such peril.

There were two windows to the room which opened from the balcony, but as they both belonged to one room, it was of no sort of consequence which one he, Claude, opened; so he began operations upon the one that happened to be the nearest to him, and soon found that the fastenings were singularly insufficient.

## CHAPTER CLXXII.

TOM BRERETON FINDS THAT LIGHTLY COME, LIGHTLY GO, IS A TRUE PROVERB.

IT WAS a French casement, and in the course of three minutes Claude had open one of the halves of it, and stepped into Tom Brereton's drawing-room noiselessly.

It showed what an amount of confidence both Claude and his friends had in the accuracy of any information that might come from Franklin, the quaker, that he should make his way thus into a house, and not feel the least doubt upon the subject of his being upon the right track to find the man whom he sought. And he was quite right in this great confidence that he bestowed upon the word of the quaker, for he was sure enough then and there in the lodging of Tom Brereton, who would as soon have expected a visit from the Pope of Rome upon that night as from Claude Duval. The room was very dark, for it was the most obscure portion of the night; but Claude had with him some of the matches which he had used in Newgate upon the occasion of making his escape from that prison, so a small blue flame quickly made itself visible in the drawing-room of Tom Brereton, and illumined by its faint radiance every object.

The first thing that met Claude's gaze, upon the table in the centre of the room, was a decanter half full of wine, with an overturned glass by the side of it.

Two candles, very roughly put out, were likewise upon the table, so that there were pretty evident tokens that Tom Brereton had been enjoying himself a little freely during the evening.

Claude lit one of the candles, and then seeing a door a few inches open, which he judged rightly enough led into the bed-room, he cautiously and very noiselessly advanced, and pushing the door wide open, entered the sleeping-chamber of the man whom he had come to seek.

Claude need not to have been at all careful in his approach to Tom Brereton's bed-side, for that individual had taken sufficient wine to steep his senses in forgetfulness; and he was snoring at a furious rate, as he lay upon his back with a flush of unusual colour upon his vulgar and most menacing face.

Claude placed the candle upon the dressing-table, and then sat down very composedly by the bed-side. Tom Brereton had a nose in the full acceptation of the term, and it looked so convenient and handy a means of awakening him, that Claude reached his hand towards it, and taking hold of it with his finger and thumb, he gradually tightened his grasp of it.

Tom Brereton moved uneasily, he coughed, shook his head, tossed his arms about, and finally opening his eyes, he beheld, seated by his bed-side, his arch enemy. It is doubtful if he would not rather, at that time, have seen 'sitting by him the arch enemy of mankind, than Claude Duval, with his stern composed-looking face glaring at him.

Claude let go his nose, which was squeezed perfectly flat, and seemed as though it would never recover its former rotundity, and then in quite a casual sort of tone, he said—

"Well, Tom Brereton. Here I am, you see."

Tom Brereton rubbed his nose, and rubbed his eyes. He got half up upon his elbow, and then he rubbed his nose and his eyes again.

"A dream?" he said.

"Look again," said Claude. "Do I look very visionary? Were those fingers that compressed your nose those of a vison? I repeat, Tom Brereton, that I am here to pay you a visit and to square accounts with you."

The agonised coward fell back upon his pillow, and uttered a cry of horror and alarm. Claude drew a pistol from his pocket, and placed the cold muzzle of it right within the cavity of Tom Brereton's ear, as he said—

"Another such cry, and it is your last in this world. You know me, and that I keep my word. Answer me what I shall demand of you, and speak in a low tone, but clearly and distinctly; and as you value your wretched existence let me have no prevarication."

"The Lord help me!" groaned Tom. "I'm a dead man now—Our father which art in Heaven—For what we are about to receive the Lord make us truly thankful—Amen!"

"Peace, idiot!"

"Yes—yes. I—I—am—peace. Oh, dear! Oh—oh!"

"How much did you get for denouncing me at the police office?"

"How—how much? Oh, my dear sir, you can't believe how very unhappy I have been ever since I had the misfortune to say it was you. Oh, dear, I regretted it so very much, for you know how very fond I am of you. I could quite cry, I could to think of it."

"My patience," said Claude, "is fast leaving me. I ask you how much you got by way of reward for denouncing me at the police office? I warn you now. My finger is upon the trigger of the pistol, and if you tempt me too far by any lies, you are a dead man, and the wall there will be plastered with your brains, if you have any."

"Oh, gracious, I got seven hundred and fifty pounds. Here's a horrid fix."

"It is a fix. Where is the money?"

"Where is the money? Oh, don't I wish it was here, I'd give it all to you in a moment. It's in banker's hands."

"What banker? Quick—quick."



"What banker? Oh—why, it's in the hands of—of Smith and Company I assure you, in Lombard Street, No. 22 and a half, next door to a cake-shop. Oh, dear."

"Tom Brereton!"

"Yes, my dear, sir. Yes, I am paying all the attention in the world."

"You have told me a lie about the money."

"Oh, no—no—upon my honour—upon my soul. I have told truth."

"Well, I am sorry for it. I have come here with a determination to have that money or your life—do you hear that?—or your life, Tom Brereton, and I will keep my word. Do you understand that, Tom Brereton?"

"Oh, don't—oh, don't. Look in the carpet-bag. Look in the carpet-bag. It's hanging up behind that cupboard door. Only spare my life. I have not had time to repent yet. I know I'm a sinner. We are all sinners, my dear Mr. Duval; so spare my life do—Amen!"

"If I find the money I will," said Claude. "But first let me secure this pistol, the muzzle of which is in your ear, in such a way with a piece of whip-cord to the side of the bedstead, that if you make any movement it will go off, and blow your brains out. I shall so myself escape being your executioner."

"Oh, don't—don't. Oh, dear. You will find the money, all but about twelve pounds, in the bag, indeed you will. I'm a miserable sinner."

Claude saw upon the dressing table a large pair of steel snuffers, and an extinguisher of the same metal. The latter he pushed into Tom's ear, the largest part forwards, so that it felt like the barrel of the pistol, and he wedged it with the snuffers pretty tight.

"Now," he said, "your life is in your own keeping not in mine, and we will see what is in the bag behind the door."

Tom Brereton lay flat upon his back with his mouth wide open, and almost afraid to breathe, from the idea that the pistol was ready to go off, and blow his head to pieces upon the smallest amount of provocation so to do, while Claude hastily examined the carpet-bag, in which he found a pocket-book containing notes to the amount of seven hundred and twenty pounds. The deficiency was not of much consequence.

"Hark you, Tom Brereton," said Claude. "Your life is spared because I have been successful in finding the money. If I had not, you must have died. I shall now leave you to your own reflections."

"But you don't mean to take it all?" groaned Tom.

"No. I shall leave you the remainder of the thirty pounds. You will then have had much more than I intended to give you."

With this Claude blew out the light, and was proceeding into the other room in order to leave by the balcony in the same way that he had made his way into the house, but Tom Brereton called out to him in the most piteous manner, saying—

"Oh, gracious! You are not going to leave me here with this horrid pistol sticking in my ear, that may go off when I least expect it? Only take that away with you, and you may rely on my not making the smallest alarm: indeed you may, my dear sir. Oh, take it away!"

"Ah," said Claude, as he shut the bed-room door; "very likely."

He was not a moment now in reaching the balcony; and then swinging himself over it, he dropped easily to the pavement below. Both Jack and Dick made their way up to him, leading his horse.

"Is it all right?" said Jack.

"Quite," replied Claude. "I have got £720 of the money, and left Tom Brereton in such a fright as he will not get over for some time now, I think, and it has all been done without giving the least alarm. I shall be off now to the farm where Cicely is."

"And I," said Dick, "will bid you good night, or rather good morning, 'for I see a faint light in theeast at this corner. Claude, I dare say fortune, good or bad, as the case may be, will throw us together again some day."

"I hope so," said Claude, as he wrung his hand.

"At all events," added Dick, "if I ever hear that anything has gone amiss with you short of your getting a bullet in your brains, I will come to you, and do you all the help I can."

"And I promise the same," said Claude, "if there should be a thousand miles between us. There is no doubt now but that Jack and I will keep company upon the road together, and you may count upon us both at any time, Dick. We shall be only too happy to do you a service."

"I know it," said Dick, as he waived his hand. "Farewell!"

They parted, Dick pursuing his route alone up the Edgware-road, and Claude and Jack trotting together through Tyburn-gate, and making their way towards Notting-hill, then a very rural district indeed.

There is something indescribably painful in parting for an indefinite period of time with any one with whom we may have been upon a footing of social intercourse; but when danger such as had hovered about the career of Dick Turpin and Claude Duval had been shared together, and when, under circumstances affecting their lives and mutual fidelity, and a mutual friendship had been relied upon, to say "Farewell!" became, indeed, a saddening and a painful thing.

Claude and Jack rode a good mile before they exchanged one word with each other. It was Jack who broke the silence.

"It's very like death," he said, "to part from a friend in this way."

"It is," said Claude. "And yet something seems to tell me that I shall see Dick Turpin again, and that he and I will have yet together some strange and moving adventures. I am seldom wrong in these kind of presentiments."

"Success and good fortune attend him," said Jack; "and who knows, after all, but that he, and I, and you, and Cicely, and Mr. Mark Brereton, may not all get off comfortably from England, and be quite happy somewhere."

Claude shook his head.

"You doubt it, Claude?"

"No, Jack, I do not doubt it. I feel certain now about it. Fate—destiny—the will of Heaven—give the necessity whatever name you will—compels me to run out my allotted course in England. I have tried to get away, as well you know, Jack. I have tried as no man ever yet tried, and I have been foiled. You know I have been cast back as if by the hand of fate. You know that I have been held to England as though by some chain, the firm though invisible links of which are around every limb."

"Yes, it was so," said Jack, mournfully. "I admit that it was so."

"I will not try it again, Jack."

"Well then, we will run our race here, Claude. For myself I care little, so that we run it together; but yet I will confess, it has been often a pleasant day-dream to me, to think that some day, with Cicely, you could sit down and be serene and happy, and free from the constant alarms of this kind of life; but if it cannot be, why there is no help for it."

"None whatever, Jack. So don't let us make ourselves gloomy about what cannot be helped. I am free, and we are once more upon the road together, so let us be as light-hearted as possible. It is the parting with Dick that put us both into this serious strain of thinking, but we will yet hope that this parting will not be for long. We are sure to hear of him, and a dash across the country now and then, to shake hands with him and ask him how he is, although it may cost a hundred mile canter, will not be a very great object."

"I should never grudge such a ride, Claude."

"Nor I; but here we are at the old farm. It's an unlikely sort of hour to rouse people up at, but I know that here I am welcome at any time I like to show myself."

We need not particularise Claude's reception at the farm. We need not say that Cicely was delighted to see him, although his cheek was a little pale. How little did she guess that he owed that transitory loss of colour to a residence in

Newgate! We need not say how very welcome Jack was made for Claude's sake.

During the remainder of the night, Claude gave to Cicely a complete history of all that had happened to him since he had seen her, to which she listened with a breathless and soul-absorbing interest. At the mere mention of the dreaded word, Newgate, her colour fled.



CLAUDE COMES ACROSS AN OLD MISER IN THE PINE-APPLE INN.

"Ah, Claude," she said, "how truly wretched I should have been had I only guessed one half of this. I should have gone distracted."

"There you see, Cicely, how much you have been spared by not knowing it; but the result ought to teach you never to give way to despair, let you hear what you may of me; for you will be able to say to yourself, 'Was he not in a cell

of Newgate one night and was he not the next night restored uninjured to my arms?"

"Yes, yes," said Cicely, as she sank sobbing upon his breast; "and how can I be sufficiently thankful to Heaven that you are here, Claude?"

## CHAPTER CLXXIII.

### THE ROAD AGAIN.—A REMARKABLE ADVENTURE.

THE morning was misty, but yet fresh and beautiful, and Claude, as he sat at breakfast in the ample kitchen of the farm-house, could not help contrasting with a sigh, his mode of life with that of one who, apart from the din and turmoil of huge cities, lived a life of primitive simplicity, and was content to be a waiter upon Heaven's bounty, in the produce of the earth, for his chief good.

"I have often thought, my Cicely," he said, "since fate, or fortune, call it what you will, forbade us to leave England, that we might yet find some quiet rarely-visited spot, where we might almost fancy ourselves amid the wilds of nature, and there live a life of rural peace."

"Ah, Claude," said Cicely, "if such a dream as that could only once be realised!"

"Do you like the picture?"

"Yes, Claude; with you, it would, indeed, be happiness; but, alas! how is such joy to be ours? Should we not live a life of continual apprehension? Would not any chance passenger, who should look at our abode, humble though it were, with more than usual interest, be to us an object of dread?"

"Yes, Yes."

"That life of uncertain peace I almost think would be worse than the present one with all its terrors. And yet, it might endure until we both sunk into the grave, where at least we should know peace."

"I will think of it," said Claude. "I will think of it. But now I have yet something to do, which must be done at once."

"What is that, Claude?"

"Nothing of danger, dear one, but something of honour; and there is Jack, I see, coming from looking at our horses. Pardon me a moment, Cicely."

Claude left the room, and met Jack upon the lawn in front of the house. "Jack," he said, "I must go to Newgate with the money that I took from Tom Brereton, and which is justly enough due to the officers, because I promised it to them; notwithstanding, I will admit that their assistance in my escape was little or nothing."

"I approve of the payment," said Jack, "and yet——"

"I know what you would say, Jack. You don't like the idea of my going to Newgate with it?"

"In truth, I do not."

"You think that that there is danger, but I differ from you," said Claude.

"While, of course, I shall take what precautions I can as regards putting on an efficient disguise, in case anyone should see me who is not in the plot, I do not think if I went as I am that one of those to whom I really shall take the money would denounce me."

"I don't know," said Jack. "My faith in the fine feelings of police-officers, Claude, is not great."

"And I, Jack, have no faith in their fine feelings at all, but I have some faith in their cupidity and in their judgment. If they were to play any tricks with me, the affair would altogether come out in some way; but I will be well upon my guard. Get the horses ready, and let us be off to London."

"So soon, Claude?"

"Why, I don't quite expect to get to London very quickly, for to tell the truth,

I shall loiter on the road with the hope of an adventure ; but be that as it may, I somehow feel that I wish to be on horseback. I will be with you in a few moments."

"Very good," said Jack, "I will bring the horses round, and if we must be off—why we must, that's all. But, Claude—"

"Yes, Jack."

"Would it not be the wisest plan to adopt some disguise at once, so that you would get into London without any news of your being in its neighbourhood getting ahead of you."

"I hope to be able to pick up some disguise on the road, Jack. The only person I have much to fear is Tom Brereton. He, I have no doubt, by his clamours will raise a pretty hue-and-cry at my heels ; but I hope to outwit him yet. He is too contemptible to fight and kill, or that would long since have been his fate, Jack. I cannot bring my mind to do it."

"You are generous to your enemies, Claude, and ever were ; but it will stand you in better stead in the long run to be so, than to kill all who stand in your way, I feel assured."

"I think so too, Jack."

Claude took a brief farewell of Cicely, assuring her, that now he was not going upon any undertaking of danger, but merely to pay a little debt that he owed, which would be thankfully received ; and then, after a hearty shake hands with all at the farm, he mounted, and with Jack by his side, took the London road again.

Suddenly Jack laid his hand upon Claude's bridle, saying—

"Just look down the road, Claude. What crowd of horsemen is that that I see yonder?"

"Crowd of horsemen—where?"

"Don't advance. We are under the shelter of the trees here now. Do not advance another step, or they will see you. There are some ten or twelve of them, and they are apparently in deep consultation about something."

"It is necessary, Jack, that I should see who and what those men are. Hold the horse a moment, while I scramble up upon this bank and have a good look at them."

Jack held the horse, and Claude having dismounted, got up upon the bank that was close at hand, and being so elevated, he was able to take a good look at the party of horsemen, who certainly, as Jack had said, appeared to be in deep consultation about something. From the glances they repeatedly cast towards the farm-house, and from several of them actually pointing in that direction, Claude had very little difficulty in convincing himself that it was their destination, and such being the case, whom could they seek but himself?

It gave him a pang to think that that place of refuge for Cicely should have been discovered ; and it was an additional pang to him to fancy that some evil consequences might possibly fall upon those kind friends who had from time to time, in some sort, jeopardised themselves by giving him shelter.

"Jack," he said, "we have been dogged. Some active enemy has been upon our track. We are not abroad a bit too soon this morning. Those men are after us, or, I should rather say, they are after me, Jack."

"No. Say us, if you say anything, Claude ; for your fortune shall be my fortune—your prison shall be my prison ; so, if they bode harm to you, it is to me likewise. Thank the fates we are out of range of their vision here."

"I think we are. But it will be prudent to keep a little back among the trees. Ah, they have determined to go by the meadows to the homestead, and they are leading their horses through a gap they have made in the hedge-row yonder.—Now, I'll be bound but those fellows think they have the reward for Claude Duval in their pockets already virtually."

"Not a doubt of it, Claude, and you may owe this speedy pursuit, you may depend, to Tom Brereton."

"Of that I feel assured. Dismount, Jack ; They are looking well and sharply

about them, and they may chance to see your head among the trees if you continue mounted."

Jack was off his horse in a moment ; and Claude, although he still wanted to watch the movements of his foes from the top of the bank, crouched so low among the blackberry bushes that grew in great luxuriance upon the top of it, that it was next to an impossibility that they should see him.

"They near the house, Jack," he said. "They near the house now. They place sentinels around it. I can see the flash of arms. They have cutlasses and pistols. Ah, how sure they now make of their prey."

"Come down. Come down, Claude."

"Nay—no—no—not yet. Yet a little, Jack."

"Oh, come down. Mount and fly. When they find you are not there, they may be upon your track, and a mile between you and them may be worth your life. Come away, Claude, oh, come away ; I implore you now at once."

"Jack ! Jack ! Cicely is there."

"I am answered, Claude—I confess it, I am answered. We will stay. I had forgotten. Yes, Claude, Cicely is there, and we will stay until you see them leave. Then you will feel that all is right. You will fly then Claude—will you not ? Say that you will ?"

"I will, Jack, Hush ! They have surrounded the farm-house on all sides. They place their sentinels two together ; and now four of them climb the gate, and get into the yard. Ah, the dog flies at them ! They have killed the creature ! Oh, that I were there ! It fondled upon me but a brief hour ago !"

"It is a cowardly act, Claude. What are they doing now ? Tell me, or I shall go mad down here with the horses. What are they doing now, Claude ?"

"Hush—hush—don't be at all anxious ; I will tell you all, Jack. They proceed through the farm-yard. There—there—now they turn the corner of the large wheat stack you recollect, and I can see them no more. They are gone."

"And those who keep watch ?"

"They are as still in their places, but evidently full of fear. They seem to expect that at a moment we may pounce out upon them, Jack ; and then I'll wager my head to a goat, but they would run one and all of them as hard as their legs would carry them."

"They would, Claude, they would ; no doubt of that. But do not keep your eyes off them for a moment, Claude, I beg of you."

"Trust me, Jack. Ah ! what is that ? By Heaven, Cicely is out with them ; one of them threatens her. Bravo ! bravo !"

"What is it ? What is it, Claude ?"

"Only one of my friends at the farm has knocked the fellow down with a pitchfork, that is all—that is all. It was well and nobly done. How can they think of taking Cicely prisoner ? they can have no power to do that. Jack, my duty now is to rescue her. They are evidently bent upon taking her in charge ; they cannot have any sort of authority for so doing, and I——"

"Hilloa ! hilloa !" cried an angry voice close at hand. "Do you know, fellows, that you are trespassing ?"

Claude looked down from the top of the bank on which he was, and saw a stout man with a florid bloated-looking face, and a scrupulously cut coat of parson's black, a bob wig, and in fact the whole accredited costume of a churchman of the period.

"Hilloa !" he cried again. "Are you aware that you are trespassing upon my land ? Why the devil don't you keep the high road ?"

"We shall be off directly sir," said Jack.

"Ay, ay, I daresay you will be off directly, you vagabonds ; but that won't suit me. I believe that you are no better than you should be, either of you, if indeed you are not highwaymen. Of course you will be off directly if you can, but we will see about that. I don't exactly let fellows off directly that I find some twenty paces within one of my preserves, I can tell you. I am in the com-

mission of the peace, and I order you both to follow me to my house. We will soon see who you are."

Claude jumped down from the top of the hedge, and looked curiously at the parson. He walked quite round him once, and then suddenly sliding up to him, he placed himself back to back with him, and gave him a sharp rap on the back of his head with his (Claude's) head.

"The very thing," said Claude. "This is providential."

"You infernal rascal!" cried the parson, stamping with fury; "what do you mean by all this mummery!" If you think that impudence will serve your turn, you are very much mistaken. "I'll pretty soon have you both laid by the heels."

"Stop him, Jack."

Jack placed himself in the parson's way, so that when he turned off to go in quest of assistance, he fell right into Jack's arms.

"Gently, Jack," said Claude, "respect the church. I look upon this as a most providential occurrence, reverend sir."

"A providential fiddlestick, you rascal. How dare you detain me one moment? Do you know the consequences?"

"Yes," said Claude, "the consequences are of course all the mischief you can possibly do; and as for the right—I confess it is just now, as is too often the case, the right only of might. But you would be wise to submit, seeing that you are in a decided minority here."

"I will call for help—I will make myself heard. Help! help! hel—murder! murder! don't."

Claude had clutched him by the throat, and held him with a grasp that rather interfered with the reverend gentleman's breathing functions.

"Will you be quiet?"

"Yes, yes; but don't choke me—don't choke me. I will be quiet. Take your hand off my throat."

## CHAPTER CLXXIV.

CICELY IS RELEASED, AND CLAUDE PROCEEDS TO LONDON.

"CERTAINLY I will," said Claude, as he released the parson from the hold he had taken of him. "There is no occasion for more choking than is just sufficient, my dear sir."

"What—what do you want? Be off with you, both at once. I don't want to have anything further to say to either of you. Be off."

"Not quite yet," said Claude. "Bring him along, Jack, further among the trees. This place is rather too open,"

"If you intend to murder me, I may as well resist here as further on in the preserve. I may as well chance my life here, and cry again for what help I can hope to get."

"Hark you, sir," said Claude. "I am no murderer. I am not a man to do any deed of violence, unless much pushed to it by those who are imprudent enough to force me to it. You will not have a hair of your head injured, but peculiar circumstances make it a matter of necessity that I should borrow your wig, and your hat, and your coat, and possibly your breeches."

The parson's mouth opened to a ludicrous extent.

"What!" he cried. "Rob me of my clothes?"

"Oh, dear no, my good sir. I'd as soon rob a church, and walk off with the pulpit on my back. I will only borrow them for the occasion, and you may depend upon having them again. Bring him along, Jack, gently. Mark me, sir, you are in no personal danger unless you wilfully create it for yourself."

The parson seemed to think that submission was now decidedly his best policy. He was in the hands of two strong well armed men, and from the language used

by one of them it was quite clear, whatever might be his companions' mode of operation, that he was not to be trifled with.

"My good fellow," he said, "if this is a joke it has been carried far enough. I promise you upon the word of a gentleman that I will take no notice of what has passed, but you must permit me to go at once."

"Sir," said Claude, "I would take your word in a moment, but I really have an use for the things I mention. All I can promise is that I will take them in as little offensive a manner as I can."

By this time Jack had led the parson some paces further into the preserve, which was uncommonly well wooded. The two horses followed of their own accord. The example of Claude's horse was having a great effect upon the civilization of Jack's steed. Claude then hastily divested himself of all his upper clothing, saying as he did so—

"Now, sir, pray make your choice: shall my friend here help you off with your things, or will you oblige us by taking them off yourself? Time is precious. Jack, open the vallise, and get yourself into your groom's clothing."

"That's soon done," said Jack.

"The deuce take it," cried the parson. "How many of my things do you want, sir?"

"Only your coat, waistcoat, cravat, wig and hat; I have a dark silk pair of breeches on that will answer the purpose. Be quick."

Rather sullenly the parson took off the required articles, and flung them to the ground. In a few moments he was divested of them, and Claude, who was just about his size, looked amazingly well in them. The wig and hat completely altered the whole character of his physiognomy; and Jack having procured his groom's coat and hat from the vallise, crammed Claude's other clothes into it, and was quite ready to personate a respectable domestic.

"Now, sir," said Claude, "when you tell this story, as of course you will have the impudence to do, do not say that we used the smallest violence of an unnecessary character to you. From the moment of your submission not a hand has been laid upon you except in courtesy."

"Confound your courtesy!"

"As you please; but it is now necessary that for one hour I should not be interfered with in my movements. How am I to know that you will not, the moment my back is turned, emerge from this wood, and raise a hue-and-cry after me?"

"Don't you expect me to do so?"

"Certainly I do, but if you will give me your word of honour, as a gentleman, that you will not, I will take it."

"Oh, Claude," said Jack, in a low tone, close to him, "are you going to trust a parson?"

"I think me may, Jack."

"Let me go at once," said the parson, "and I give you my word of honour, that I will say nothing of what has happened here."

"I hope I shall not be deceived in you," said Claude. "It will be the worse for some unlucky man upon some other occasion, if you break your word."

"I will keep it. But will you tell me who you are?"

"Yes, if you wish it. I am Claude Duval."

"By Heaven, I thought as much. Your secret shall be safe with me, Duval. You stopped a coach once in which was a lady of my family, in delicate health. She told you as much, and you behaved with great forbearance. A fright would have killed her, but you did not alarm her. You may depend I will not say a word about you, and if I had but known it was you, I should not have interfered with you at first."

"Very well, sir," said Claude. "I am rejoiced that we part upon such good terms. Take your road home, sir."

"And with a price upon your head, you will really run the frightful risk of my



raising my servants, and the whole country about you, in the course of a quarter of an hour?"

"Yes," said Claude, with true dignity. "I feel and I know that I owe my safety to running such risks. I am in the habit of trusting all sorts and conditions of people, and to that trustfulness I owe that I am now alive."

"It may be so. Good-day. Ah, what throng of persons is this coming this way. I can see them in the road, through the trees, yonder."

"Go home, sir," said Claude, "and keep faith with me. I have some business with those people."

The parson made a slight bow, and in his shirt-sleeves, went a roundabout way to his house, where he knew he could pass through a private garden to his study without being seen by any one of his household.

"Come, Jack," said Claude. "Those with whom we must exchange a few words, are upon the road, I think, now: Do you not hear them?"

"I do, Claude, I do."

Claude and Jack led their horses to the margin of the road, and then they mounted. Jack, as he was bound to do, to be in keeping with his character of groom, fell back about fifty paces in the rear, and at a sober trot, Claude advanced to face the horsemen, who were the same that had by this time searched the farm-house for him, in vain.

What a pang it was to his heart to see that two of them were dismounted, and that they had Cicely between them, who had hastily thrown a shawl over her shoulders, upon being told that she must accompany the party.

Close by her, came the young man who had struck one of the officers with a pitchfork. He was guarded by two of the party; and following the whole came some members of the family, who were resolved to see the issue of the affair, and justice done to Cicely and their own reation.

One and all appeared thoughtful, though they rejoiced that Claude had got clear of the premises before the arrival of such a force to capture him.

When Claude appeared upon the road, the party came to a halt. Cicely and her friends knew him by his horse; but as they saw that he was disguised, they had the prudence to forbear from making any exclamation, or giving their captors the least idea that he was known to them.

Claude, when he saw that he was fairly seen, put his horse to a canter, and came directly up to the party.

"What is all this?" he said.

One of the men, a London officer, and as it appeared, the only real officer among the whole, for he had merely got those who were with him to assist for the occasion, rode up to Claude, and touching his hat respectfully, said—

"I presume, sir, I am speaking to the Reverend Peter Rickman?"

"Well, sir?" said Claude.

"Oh, very good, sir. I was coming to your house, sir, which they told me was near at hand. We have had a hunt for the famous Claude Duval, sir."

"And have you found him?"

"I am sorry to say, sir, that we have not. We had certain information that he was concealed in a farm-house, sir, close at hand to here, and we made sure of him, but, somehow; he eluded us."

"Who gave you the information?"

"Why, you will hardly believe it, sir, but it was Dick Turpin."

"Dick—Turpin!"

Claude at the moment nearly fell from his horse, so great to him was the shock of this information.

"Yes, sir. Here is the note. It came to me in London last night, and I, of course, acted upon it, as you see, sir, but missed the rascal. Of course, sir, I should not show the note to anybody but you, but it is quite at your service, sir. Here it is."

"Oh, certainly, certainly. Let me see."

Claude took the note, and read the following words:—

"Duval is at a farm on the Uxbridge road called Shaw Hill Farm. You will find him there for a surety. "DICK TURPIN."

"Ah," said Claude, as he put the note in his pocket, "so I see! exactly! Well, what do you want me to do now? You have not caught him, you say, so I can do nothing at all in the matter."

"No, sir, we have not got him, but we have got his wife, sir."

"Is she a highwayman likewise?"

"Oh dear, no, sir; certainly not."

"Then why have you taken her into custody?"

"Why, your worship, you see, I thought it would be just as well to commit her to prison for a week or two, and see if we could not get out of her, by frightening her, where Claude Duval was likely to be nabbed. That was my idea, sir; and besides, they say he is precious fond of her, and having her in the jail at Guildford would be sure to keep him in the neighbourhood."

"A very good plan, my friend, only illegal."

"Oh, sir, the London magistrates, with such sort of gentry, don't much mind whether they are on the right or the wrong side of the law. You know they are not the sort of people to bring their actions for false imprisonment and all that sort of thing."

"And do you fancy, sir," said Claude, in a tone of indignation, "that I am going to make Guildford gaol an Inquisition? Do you fancy I am going to expose myself to the censure of the Secretary of State by so glaring an act as sending a woman to prison because she was the wife of a man against whom I suppose you have a warrant?"

"Oh, yes, your worship; I have a warrant."

"For the apprehension of Claude Duval, but not for the apprehension of his wife, I presume."

"No, sir. I—I—certainly. A-hem! And your worship, then, thinks it's a mistake to take the—the female?"

"A mistake, sir? It's a villany. Release her directly. I order it. It's something new in this country, that the wives of felons are to be apprehended, merely on account of that connexion."

"Yes; but, your worship, you know it is felony to aid, and abet, and comfort, and so on, any one who has committed a felony."

"Why, who in the name of all that's wonderful, should comfort a man if his wife don't? Have you got a wife, sir?"

"Yes. I—I—"

"Release that woman directly, and let her go where she likes. Of course she will go back to where you took her from. What has this man been doing, that you have him a prisoner likewise?"

"Why, sir, one of my party—that one with the handkerchief round his head—only just laid hold of the arm of the wife of Duval, and said in quite a quiet way, 'Come along with us, and we will soon see how the air of Guildford gaol agrees with you,' when this young man ups with a pitchfork and knocks him down; so of course we took him, your worship."

"Then, my friend, of course you must let him go again, for your man who got the crack on the head with the pitchfork was in the commission of an illegal act, so it served him right. I order that man's release."

"But, your worship—Really, your worship!"

"No words, sir. If you dispute my authority, you are perfectly at liberty to do so. Carry your prisoners where you like, and take the consequences of doing so. I am quite willing."

"Oh dear, no, sir. Your worship's authority is, of course, sufficient. I am only very sorry I have done anything that your worship disapproves of; but I will be more cautious another time."

## CHAPTER CLXXV.

CLAUDE ASTONISHES THE VESTIBULE AT NEWGATE.

THE whole of this discourse was listened to by Cicely in a perfect fever of apprehension lest Claude should be discovered. It seemed to her as though it would be impossible that Claude could, in so very hazardous a conjecture, possess



THE SCUFFLE WITH THE TWO OFFICERS.

nerve enough to outface a dozen men with such a deceit. But even Cicely, well as she thought she knew him, yet knew not the amazing courage and coolness which he could exercise.

Most emphatically we may truly say, that Claude was never below the occasion. "Very well," said Duval. "You will say that you met me, and that will be sufficient. There can be very little doubt but that Claude Duval is upon the

Guildford road somewhere, and as I really feel strongly regarding his capture—indeed, I may conscientiously say that no one can possibly feel a stronger interest in his apprehension than I do, except it may be his wife here—I will give fifty-pounds among you if you catch him within twelve hours.”

“Fifty pounds, your worship?”

“Yes, I have said it; and there are quite witnesses enough to hear me, should they be required. But, mind—you must have him within twelve hours [from now.]”

“Come on!” cried the officer. “We are very much obliged to your worship, indeed. He can’t be very far off, and if we don’t have him it won’t be my fault; I am considered one of the most wide awake officers in London, your worship, though I say it myself, who, perhaps, should not. But it’s well known that it’s quite impossible to take me in.”

“You don’t say so?”

“Yes, your worship. I have cut my eye teeth; I wish your worship a good morning. Come on, my good fellows. We shall make a good morning’s work of this yet. Let the prisoners go. We don’t want to be encumbered with them now. We all wish your worship good day, and hope we may come to speak to you of that little affair of the fifty pounds.”

The men whom the officer had in his service, were all pretty well mounted, and it was quite a sight to see how they all rode off now, leaving behind them the very man, of all others, whom they would have galloped twenty miles to see; and notwithstanding all his courage, Claude, even with the assistance of Jack, could have had but a poor chance in the open road against so many.

With what a look of joy Cicely regarded Claude as all her foes thus galloped off upon a wrong scent, leaving to him the mastery of the field. When their horses’ hoofs began only to sound faintly in the distance, and when it was quite out of the question that any of them should see what was going on amid the little group of friends they had left behind them, Cicely sprang to Claude, exclaiming—

“You are saved! You are saved!”

“Yes, Cicely, for this time I am, and you too.”

“Do not think of me, Claude. All the danger is to you. But do not linger here. You cannot possibly maintain this disguise for long; and those men, who are in too great force to cope with, may return yet to your detriment. Oh, fly!—fly!”

“Yes, can well imagine,” said Claude, “that this neighbourhood is not just now the safest for me, nor is it to you, Cicely; for when it is found out that you have been liberated without authority, there is no knowing what injustice may be perpetrated against you. I must leave here, but you must leave with me.”

“That is true,” said Jack.

“We will protect her with our lives,” said the people who belonged to the farm. “You know, Claude, that we will protect her to the utmost stretch of our power so to do.”

“I do know it, my dear friends,” said Claude, “and that is yet another reason why I should not bring ruin and trouble beneath your roof by your being good to me, and to mine. Will you come with me, Cicely?”

“To the world’s end, Claude.”

“We shall be very loath to part with her,” said the young farmer. “Will you come back again when the danger is blown over, which it soon will?”

“Yes,” cried Cicely, “I will come back again, and when I shall return here I shall feel myself happy, for the happiest and serenest days I have known have been spent beneath the roof of yon farm-house. I am ready, Claude.”

“If it must be so, then” cried the young farmer, “why it must, and I can’t deny the reason of the thing. I will go and get a horse for Cicely from the farm stables, and then—Ah! To your arms, Claude.—Who have we here?”

A single horseman wrapped up carefully in a very capacious cloak, rode among the group.

"You are more bold than prudent, sir," cried Claude, as he dashed towards the intruder, but then he suddenly checked himself, for the horseman let fall the portion of his cloak that covered the lower part of his face, and disclosed that he was the very justice from whom Claude had borrowed the suit of clothes that he then wore.

"What, sir, is your errand here?" said Claude. "I am very unwilling indeed to quarrel with you."

"There is no occasion. Am I right in supposing that the group of horsemen who have just now passed me on the road, after some rather nude scrutiny, have taken you to be me?"

"They have, sir," said Claude, "but I am very happy to find they have not paid you the doubtful compliment of taking you for me."

"That they certainly have not. Will you confide in me so far as to tell me what you have said and done in my name?"

"Willingly, sir."

Claude then in a very few words told the justice what had past, including the offer of the fifty pounds, and saying how he thought it necessary to take Cicely to town in consequence of what had taken place.

"You can do that or not do it," said the justice, "as you see fit; I have already told you that on account of a near and dear relation of mine, I owe you a debt of gratitude. I will make an attempt to repay it by taking upon myself all that you have said and done in my name. The arrest of your wife is surely illegal, and consequently the assault committed in her defence is no offence. So far, then, in your favour, I can go, and after that remember that I know nothing whatever of you. I now leave it quite to yourself to decide whether you need take your wife to London or not, only I hope you will be sufficiently careful of yourself, as to keep me from being called upon for that fifty pounds you have so liberally promised for the capture of Claude Duval."

Slightly touching his hat, then, and without waiting for one word in answer to this generous speech, the justice at once rode away from the spot, leaving them all quite astonished at his conduct.

"What an injustice that man did himself," said Claude, "upon our first interview together. How much of the gentleman it is evident he can really be. May I trust him? What is his character in the neighbourhood?"

"He is considered," said the young farmer, "a violent but not altogether an unjust man. He is passionate in the extreme."

"That will do," said Claude, "I will trust him, then. Cicely, I now, with the permission of our kind friends, urge your stay here, where you know and are known, in preference to concealment, with all its troubles, in London."

"Your will, Claude, is my law. I will stay, and you will come to me as soon as may be?"

"Trust me, Cicely. I will, I feel that I ought to place it beyond a chance, that the justice should not have to pay the fifty pounds; so, for fear our friends on horseback should chance to have any kind of misgivings, and come back again, Jack and I will be off at once at a good pace."

Claude stooped from his horse and kissed the brow of Cicely; and then smiling an adieu to his friends of the farm-house, he cried to Jack—

"Off, and away, Jack! Let us place a mile or two of ground between us and those who are so anxious to be better acquainted with me this morning than suits my convenience."

"Ready," said Jack.

They both put their horses to a gallop, but not a distressing one, and off they went.

"The parson did not ask for his coat again," said Jack, as they slackened their pace about a mile on the country side of Tyburn-gate.

"No, Jack; and do you know I begin to like that fellow."

"It's the first parson, then, Claude, that ever you did like."

"Yes, and it only shows us how careful we ought to be in condemning whole

classes of men, even if the great majority should happen to be no better than they should be. That parson has, no doubt, a bad temper ; but the great distinction between a bad-tempered man and a bad-disposed man, should never be forgotten. Pay the toll, Jack."

Jack paid the toll at Tyburn-gate, and they passed on to Oxford-street. As they got into that even then populous thoroughfare, they thought it advisable to keep up to a greater extent the difference between them as regarded the appearance of master and man.

"I will take my place," said Jack, with a smile. "I will, however, be sufficiently near to be of assistance in case of anything happening amiss."

"Thank you, Jack. You have only to say the word at any time, and you know I shall be quite willing to play the man while you play the master."

"Pho ! pho ! Claude. I hope we understand each other better than that. It is all right. Push on, and for my part I don't care a straw what part I play, so that we are as soon as possible clear of London."

"I shall not linger in it a moment longer than may be absolutely necessary Jack."

With this, Claude at a steady canter, still attired in the very respectable costume of the country clergyman, made his way down Oxford Street, and Jack kept at the orthodox distance from him that a groom ought to observe, and by the steady demure look which he put on, made himself in all respects a suitable attendant upon a gentleman of his master's presumed cloth and standing in the church.

To be sure there were several persons who knew a little of such matters, who paused to cast a glance of admiration at the superb horse which the supposed clergyman rode, and then to admire likewise the animal upon which his groom was mounted ; but none of these had the least suspicion that they were either of them other than they looked.

In this wise, then, Claude and Jack reached Holborn, and keeping to the highway for the whole distance, they arrived at the corner of the Old Bailey. There Claude paused, and Jack in a moment was by his side.

"I think, Jack, I will dismount here, and walk to the gate of the prison."

"Oh, Claude," whispered Jack. "As I came along Holborn, the danger, and I might almost say the folly of this desperate expedition has come strongly across my mind. Up to this point, I do believe, although we have terribly tempted our fate, that we have come safely ; but now I beg you to go no further."

"Nay, Jack, I must keep my word with the turnkeys, and the officials of Newgate—they must have the money."

"I don't speak for the money, Claude ; but for you. Let them have the money ; I think, under all the circumstances, that it is much better that they should ; but you really expose them to too much temptation by going with it yourself.—I will take it."

"And what will they think, Jack ? Why, just that I was afraid to go myself with it ; and if once the feeling gets abroad that Claude Duval was afraid of anything, it will be soon all over with me. No, Jack, don't think that there is any danger. You wait here, with the horses ; and you may depend I will cut the interview as short as I possibly can."

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## CHAPTER CLXXVI.

### THE OLD COAL-HOLE IN FINSBURY.—STARTLING ADVENTURES.

Jack knew well enough, from old experience, that when Claude had made up his mind to anything, no appeal to his fears was at all likely to have the least effect in turning him from his purpose ; so when he spoke so decidedly, Jack said no more, but, with a sigh, took the horse by the bridle and prepared himself to wait with what patience he might the return of his friend.

And now, who that had seen Claude upon that occasion—and there were many who saw him—could for one moment have supposed that he was going upon so hazardous an expedition? Who could have thought that there was the man, who, with almost incredible courage and skill, had so recently escaped from Newgate, and who had now ridden a dozen miles to come and tap at its wicket, and with a certainty of being known too?—for he did not mean to attempt to deceive the officers who might be in the lobby with regard to his identity.

But a little consideration will show that in the very boldness of this proceeding lay its security. No one but the officers to whom he intended to make himself known could dream that he was there; and, as cupidity and personal interest is well known to be the main-spring of action, it was quite clear that their best plan was to take what Claude now brought them, and let him go again, making sure of him, as they did, at some other time, when no charge of betraying their trust, or of being paid by Claude Duval, would be brought against them; whereas, if they now were to betray him, of course he would relate the whole affair, to their discomfiture.

Thus then was it, that, viewing the whole affair, Claude did not think that he was running a great risk.

When he reached the wicket-gate of Newgate he had to pause for a moment to allow some one to come out. It was a gentleman, very plainly dressed; and the glance at the face that Duval caught convinced him at once that it was Judge Manning.

An irresistible desire to speak to the father of Grace came over Claude, and stepping after him, he slightly touched his arm, saying—

“Have I not the honour of addressing Judge Manning?”

At the sound of his name, the judge turned, and bowing slightly, he said—

“I regret that I have not the pleasure of recollecting you, sir; I am the person you name.”

“Is my disguise so good,” said Claude, “that the father of Grace does not recollect Duval?”

The judge started as he said—

“Good God! what do you do here?—can you be tired of your life that you linger in this neighbourhood? I was in hope that by this time you were far away from London. Do you want money? Command me if you do so; or in any other way that I can be of use to you.”

“Many thanks,” said Claude; “but I can manage very well. I hope your daughter is well.”

“Quite well; and full of gratitude to you and your friends for her preservation. Let me beg of you to come to my house, and speak with me about your future prospects. I think something may be done for you to withdraw you from the mode of life you follow, indeed I do.”

“Alas! sir, I fear not.”

“Nay, you are apt enough to think, that because you have been long in such a line of life as this, that there is no resource for you in any other; but in some other country, surely you might find peace and happiness, and honest prosperity.”

“Sir, I thought so once.”

“And why not now? You are young.”

“Once, sir, I made the attempt to leave England, but I was hunted back, even from the coast; and in the attempt my wife—she who has consented to share my varied fortunes—nearly lost her life. The occurrences connected with me at Winchester must have reached your ears?”

“Yes, I certainly heard that by the courage and skill of the officers, you and some gang of accomplices were prevented from carrying off the sacramental plate from the old cathedral.”

A bright flush of colour came to Claude’s face, as he said—

“And is that the story told of that affair, sir?”

“It is indeed, and it was most industriously circulated by the authorities. I

recollect it made no little noise at the time; but if you say it is not so, I will believe you."

"Sir, I thank you for that much. It is a base calumny. I had but one object in going to Winchester at all, and that was to make an attempt to leave England for ever; but a price was set upon my head, and I was worth too much to the officers and the blood-hounds of the law to be let escape them so easily. They hunted me back again, sir, and the consequence is that I am what I am, and what I ever shall be while life remains to me."

"Do not despair. Only say you will call upon me."

"I will, sir. Name your own hour."

"\* This day if you can. Now come home with me if it is convenient to you; I wish to do all that I can to repair the involuntary injury that I did you, by taking you to the police-office, and so giving the opportunity to your foes of declaring who and what you were. Will you come with me now?"

"I have a little business to transact in this neighbourhood, sir, and when that is done I will be with you."

"Enough. I will take such measures that you shall both come and go with perfect safety."

"Expect me, then, sir, if nothing happens to stay me. Mine is an eventful life. The hands of many men are raised against me, and but few for me, so that in a great measure I am the slave of circumstances; but I will come to you, if nothing of a serious character happens to prevent me."

With this Claude and the judge parted, and the former once more made his way to the wicket-gate of Newgate. He ascended the steps, and tapped at the entrance.

"What now?" said a turnkey.

"Is Joliffe within?" said Claude, naming one of the officers whom he knew was in the plot for favouring his escape from the prison.

"Perhaps he is and perhaps he aint. Come in and we will soon see. Come in if you pleases. This here way, sir."

The highly respectable appearance of Claude induced an amount of unusual respect upon the part of the turnkey. The little gate was opened, and Duval was once again in the lobby of Newgate, and the key turned upon him. A couple of the officials of the prison were lounging about, and in one of them Duval recognised the man who was usually called Bill, and who had been the one that had come to his cell to give him a hint that he might escape if he would. Upon this Claude touched him by the arm, saying—

"I think there is quite enough present for the transaction of business. I have come to settle a little account."

"A little what?" cried Bill.

"A little account. Don't you expect something among you all from one Claude Duval?"

"By all that's outrageous, it's him," said Bill, staggering back. "Why, Duval, you have got the courage of ten men and a half, to come here in such a way. What do you expect we are to do?"

"Take your money to be sure, and not make fools of yourselves. All that Tom Brereton got was seven hundred and fifty pounds. There's seven hundred pounds. Take it all, and don't, then, say that I was worse than my promise. Divide it equitably among you, and when we do meet again, perhaps you will remember that Claude Duval is always as good as his word, and at times a little better."

The prison officials glared at him as though he had been some apparition. The idea of a man with such a price upon his head calmly coming to Newgate, was beyond their comprehensions; and the additional idea of his voluntarily parting with such a sum of money was to them quite staggering.

"Now," added Claude, "as I don't at all admire the architecture of this place, nor its air, I will bid you good morning."

"Duval," said Bill, as he flung open the wicket, "you are a regular game one. This here is a story that it won't do to tell; but we shan't forget it for all



that. You is a trump, and if you are brought into the jug again, and I'm in the land of the living, you will find a friend here."

"But," said the man on the lock, "ought we—dare we—I say, Bill? blue murder to let him go agin. It's——"

Bill sprang at the turnkey and held him by the throat, as he cried—

"Cut it, Duval. Cut it while I throttle him. Cut it at once, afore some other wagabone wants to nab you."

Claude darted from the lobby; but it so happened that some one was ascending the little stone steps leading from the pavement to the wicket-gate at that moment; and Claude came out with so much force and precipitation that he encountered the person; and at once upset him, and rolled him over steps and pavement into the not over salubrious kennel of the Old Bailey.

"Murder! Murder!"

"The devil!" said Claude. "I ought to know that voice." He glanced at the fallen man, and at once recognised Tom Brereton, who at such a very inopportune moment had arrived at Newgate to hold a consultation with his friend, the Governor, about the loss of the money that Claude had taken from him, and just made so liberal an use of.

"Confound you," said Claude.

"Murder! Murder! Help!"

"Be quiet, idiot, will you?"

Probably Claude would have said something more threatening to Tom Brereton; but several people began to collect; and others from the opposite side of the way began to cross over, so Claude thought it prudent to get away as quickly as he could; for although he had not as yet been recognised by Tom Brereton, he did not know a moment when he might be; for that personage knew him rather inconveniently well.

Accordingly, then, Claude, with rapid steps, made for the corner of the Old Bailey, by Newgate Street, where Jack was, with no small amount of impatience, waiting with the horses. Jack, from where he was, could see that there was some sort of bustle at the door of Newgate; but when he observed Claude coming towards him, he felt it as a great relief to find that he was not in it in any way; but this was an opinion which he soon found the most ample cause to correct.

Tom Brereton, after rolling a sufficient time in the kennel to give himself the lively appearance of a man who had taken a mud-bath, rose full of ire and indignation; and the mob that had, with the marvellous rapidity that mobs collect in London, giving way before so muddy an assailant, permitted him to rush after Claude at a furious rate.

"Stop! stop! you villain!" cried Tom Brereton. "You shall pay for my coat—you shall! Stop him! stop him!"

Claude sprang into his saddle.

"Good Heavens!" said Jack. "What is all this about?"

"Nothing particular," said Claude. "He don't know me. Push on towards Smithfield, Jack. He may recognise us yet."

"Stop him!" still shouted Tom Brereton. "Him on the black horse. Why—why that's Claude Duval's horse, the famous highwayman. Murder! That's Claude Duval!"

"Who—who?" cried the mob in chorus.

"Claude Duval, the highwayman. Murder! murder!"

Tom Brereton was knocked down, and trampled over by at least twenty people in a moment, and a whole chorus of voices shouted—

"Stop him! stop him! A highwayman! Stop him! There he goes—a highwayman! Stop him!"

"We are rather in for it, now, Jack," said Claude.

"We are lost!"

"Not at all. Push on, and follow me. This way—this way. Don't look behind you, and if any one should touch you or your horse, down with him

with the loaded handle of your whip. We will show them soe spot y et, or I am much mistaken."

At a smart hand-gallop, Claude and Jack made their way up Giltspur Street, and dashed into Smithfield. The alarm had been so sudden, and the escape so quick, that the people on each side of the way looked about them in a scared kind of way, not knowing what it was all about.

## CHAPTER CLXXVII.

### THE THIEVES' KEN IN REDCROSS STREET.—A NARROW ESCAPE.

JACK kept as close to Claude as he possibly could do without impeding him in his flight, and so they got through the area of Old Smithfield with incredible rapidity. Jack had now—as, in fact, he always had—the most unbounded confidence in the resources of Claude, and so, when he found that they were really distancing the crowd rapidly, much of the fear that at first had taken possession of him dissipated. He held his bridle more firmly in his left hand, while in his right he brandished the heavy riding whip with which Claude advised him to clear his way.

"On—on!" cried Claude.

Some man with a metal badge upon his arm, and whose general ruffianly appearance without that would sufficiently have proclaimed his connection with the market, which was then almost as gigantic a nuisance as it is now, made a sudden rush at Claude from among the sheep-pens, crying, as he clung to his bridle—

"I have him!—I have him! He won't shake me off in a hurry."

Crack went the loaded handle of Claude's riding whip upon his skull, and down the fellow went as though he had been shot.

"One fool less in Smithfield, I think," cried Claude. "On, Jack, on! Follow me closely."

"I am here, Claude."

Claude kept an even, onward course, and before three minutes could have expired from the moment that the horse sprang from the corner of Newgate Street, he and his master were in Barbican.

"Ah," thought Jack, I know where he is going to now. Claude, you will go to Steven's?"

"Yes. Push on."

But now, the first panic and surprise of the people on the route of the two flying men had, in some measure, subsided; and they were able fully to understand what was amiss. The cry of 'A highwayman! a highwayman!' came from at least a hundred throats; and in that extraordinary manner that a whole population will, at times, without knowing very well why or wherefore, hunt some one person, the greater number of people in the streets joined in the race.

But still, the great advantage Claude and Jack had was, that they were sufficiently in advance to come continually upon fresh people who, although they heard that something was amiss, did not, until the two hunted men had passed, positively connect them with the tumult; and so they dashed on down Barbican and turned into Redcross Street.

The moment they turned the corner of that street, they were out of sight of every one who, with distinct notions that they were the parties to be apprehended, were pursuing them; and then it was that Claude felt that if anything was to be done for their safety, it must at once be attempted.

About half-way down Redcross Street was a small shop where cigars, then rather a rarity, and pipes, and various tobaccos, were sold, or pretended to be sold. The doorway of this little shop was rather lofty, although not so lofty as to attract any attention of a particular character to it. But it had its uses.

Casting around him a rapid glance, which assured him no one was observing him, Duval rode his horse full at the doorway of the little shop, and in he went, horse and all.

Jack followed him.

"Hilloa, Stevens!" cried Claude.



"Here!" said a man, half-dressed, rushing from a back room with great precipitation. "Here!"

"Is it all right?"

"As a trivet, master. That will do."

Stevens darted past the two horses and banged shut his door in a moment, and shot a couple of bolts to it. Then taking the bridle of Claude's horse in his hand, he shouted—

"Ann! Ann! Ann!"

"Here ye is," said a dirty-looking girl, making her appearance, and holding on her clothes, for they had the appearance that if she were to leave go of them, they would all tumble off together, leaving her like beauty unadorned.

"Take the horses to Phillips. Be quick. Ah, I hear cries. Why, captain, they are hard and fast on your track. Be off, Ann—no faster than you can."

Both Claude and Jack dismounted, and Ann took the bridles of both of the steeds in one hand, and in another moment disappeared with them down a long gloomy looking passage.

"A highwayman! a highwayman!" cried the mob in the street. "Stop him! stop him! A highwayman!"

"Is them your friends, captain?" said Stevens.

"I suppose so," laughed Claude.

"Ah, the poor deluded wretches! But, howsomdever, there's no saying but somebody may have seed you come in here, so come on, and I'll soon take yer by the old move to the Pine Apple. Lord bless you captain, you would hardly think how many gentlemen on the road, and off the road, have made their way to the old crib through my shop, and nobody none the wiser. If the hole in the wall was only better kivered up than it is, they would have found it out long ago."

"You still use the water-butt, Stevens?"

"Bless you, yes."

"It's a good plan."

"Lor, captain, there's nothing ekal to it. You know, sir," addressing Jack, "there's a big opening in the wall of my yard that goes bang through into the yard of the old Pine Apple inn, where the stables is, and agin the hole on my side, I put the water-butt, and they does the same on their side; but a *hinfant* could move 'em away in a minute; and the grabs have never touched 'em, though they have been here on the hunting lay twenty times."

"What's least hidden, is often best hidden," said Jack.

"I believe you, sir. I do think if they was to come every day, and if I was to live here in the old crib till I was as old as Methusela, they would go away agin as green as they come."

"I don't doubt it for a moment."

Into the back parlour, where not the most savory odours arose from Mr. Stevens's cookery, he led the way, and opening the window, he sprung out of the room into a dirty yard. Claude and Jack followed him instantly, and there they met the young lady named Ann, who came back from disposing of the horses in the stable of the Pine Apple.

"Don't touch the water-butt, my duck and a half," said Stevens. "The captain and the other gentleman is a going through. Is old Figgins at home?"

"Yes," said Ann. "He wanted to know who it was, very bad."

"We will soon satisfy him," said Claude, as he placed a guinea in Ann's hand. "Stevens, I shall see you soon at the crib."

"Yes, captain. It's a long time since you passed an evening in the old Ken; and there's many an old and many a young hand that will we glad to see you. You might do worse than stay a bit."

"You are right, Stevens. I ought to call upon old friends sometimes; and I will stay at the ken till an hour after midnight. Then I must be off."

"Very good, captain. We shall make a night of it, I'll be bound. Be off with you, for some one is knocking at my shop doer like mad."

"The deuce there is. Good-by."

Claude and Jack passed through the hole in the wall; and Stevens and Ann quickly replaced the old water-butt in its place, from whence it did not look to have been moved for the last twenty years.

The inn-yard in which Claude and Jack now found themselves was tolerably extensive. A kind of gallery ran along one side of it, which could be reached by an old well-worn flight of wooden steps; and from that gallery opened a

number of bed-rooms belonging to the inn. About the yard there was the usual amount of litter and confusion contingent upon a not very well ordered, but rather extensive range of stabling; but the two horses of our friends had completely disappeared.

In the course of a few moments a man came rather timidly down the stairs, from the gallery we have mentioned, and with a look of curiosity upon his face, he approached our friends.

"Good gracious! is this possible? Duval," he cried, "is it you?"

"It is, Figgins," said Claude, as he held out his hand. "Is your father well?"

"Quite. Quite. But if he were not he would be so glad to see you, that I think it would restore him. Was that riot I heard in Barbican anything to do with you?"

"A little. They hunted me across Smithfield, that was all; and so I thought of the old crib, and Stevens's shop, and in I popped.

"Right. Right. You could not possibly have done better. Who is your friend?"

"I will tell you that, or he will himself, I have no doubt, before we leave; but in the meantime you may be quite sure he is my friend."

"That is quite sufficient. Follow me, and I will take you to the old man. He would have come himself, but as I tell you he is not very well, and when he is at his best he is not now very good at getting up and down stairs."

"Our legs are young enough yet," said Claude, "to enable us to wait upon him. I long to see him, for I do not forget what a true friend he has been to me on more than one occasion."

Both Claude and Jack followed the young man up the old tottering staircase, and then having passed through several rooms they at last reached one which was very comfortably furnished, and in which sat an old man, whose hair was perfectly white, and whose face was a sufficient evidence that something a little stronger than pump-water had been in the habit of trickling down his throat for the last fifty years.

"Who is it, Dick?" he cried. "Who is it?"

"Duval, father," said the young man.

"What, Claude?" cried the old man, rising from his chair quickly, and then sinking into it again with such a howl that both Claude and Jack started back in amazement.

"Don't be frightened," said Dick. "It's only the gout."

"Only the gout! You hideous horrid rascal," cried the old man. "Only the gout! I only wish I had anything handy here to throw at your rascally head for saying, only the gout; but you will have it some day yourself, and that's a comfort. Duval, I am really glad to see you."

"And I to see you," said Claude, as he shook the old man by the hand. "Will you forgive me for not coming oftener?"

"To be sure, I will. Business, my boy, is business, and you can't be always making calls. But who is this you have with you? Is it an old friend or a new one, Duval?"

"Look well at me," said Jack, as he placed himself in the light. "Look well at me, Mr. Figgins, and I think you will know me again."

"Again?" said the old man.

"Yes, you knew me well enough once."

The old man shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment or two, and looked in Jack's face. Then he suddenly said—

"It must be true, though I didn't believe it when they told it to me. It must be true after all. You are Sixteen-string Jack."

"I am."

"Then you were not hung after all?"

"Yes, I was; but brought to life again, all of which I will tell you, at length, before I leave; and now, old friend, give me leave to shake hands with you

and to tell you how glad I am to see you once again, although you don't look so young as you did twenty years ago."

"No," said Figgins, "you are right enough there, Jack. I do not look so young as I did twenty years ago; but it seems at this moment to have knocked off one-half that time to hold your hand in mine once again. Why, I can—Murder!"

"Good God! what's the matter?"

"Oh," said Dick, "it's only the gout. Father forgot it again, and was going to get up. It's only the gout in his toe."

"Oh, you villain," cried the old man. "Duval, can you lend me a pistol to shoot this insulting scoundrel with, or can you, Jack? Only the gout, indeed!"

"Never mind him," said Claude. "Let us sit down here quietly, and talk over old times a little."

"Ay, we will; and Dick, my boy, go to number forty-two in the cellar, and get up a couple of bottles of the old madeira, my boy; and when you speak of the gout again, call it the gout; and not only the gout—Oh, don't—I wish you had it for an hour or two."

"Thank you, father."

Dick, the old man's son, soon brought the two bottles of the old madeira; and notwithstanding the gout, he (the old man) continued during the next hour to drink his fair share of the wine.

During this time, too, Jack told the old man the whole of his truly wonderful story, with which the reader is sufficiently familiar; and then, when there was a proposition on the part of old Figgins for two more bottles of the old madeira, Claude negatived it by saying—

"You know, old friend, that my avocations are not favorable to much repose; and, therefore, whenever I do find myself fairly housed for a few hours, I think it is throwing away my opportunities not to indulge myself with a nap."

"Certainly—certainly."

"Then, with your permission, as I mean to make my appearance in the Ken to-night, I will lie down for a few hours first, and, I dare say, Jack will be glad to do the same."

"I shall, indeed," said Jack.

"And you really will then pass some time in the Ken?" said Figgins. "That will be glorious. I'll go, and at once—Murder! Oh, you rascal! Dick, why don't you put me in mind of the gout, you villain! But you never do. You never do!"

## CHAPTER CLXXVIII.

### A FIGHT UNDERGROUND.—THE DEATH OF THE OFFICER.

RIGHT under the bar-parlour of the old Pine-apple Inn, and extending for a considerable distance back beneath the stable-yard, was a large vaulted room or hall. The flooring was composed of flat red tiles, laid down very nicely, and the walls were of plaster, with, here and there, a plank placed in it flat-wise for the purpose of keeping it up, as immediately behind the plaster was nothing but earth.

Along the ceiling of this large apartment hung at regular intervals six hoops of tin, made each of them to hold a dozen candles, so that when the whole were lit, the place had a tolerably brilliant effect. Right down the centre of the place was a range of tables, and, at least, a hundred seats of various sorts and sizes were upon the floor.

This was one of the most celebrated Boozing Ken in the City of London. It could only be reached by going through the bar-parlour, and then there were two more playing the part of sentinels, who had to be satisfied regarding the propriety of admitting any one before they were allowed to go on, so that it was next

to impossible for any officer or spy to make his way into the place ; and it was in such places that daring robberies were concocted—that assignments for burglaries and highway peculations were made ; and, in fact, all the business of the London thieves was conducted at the Boozing Kens, of which there were in London about six, and all of them perfectly well known to the police.

To those who are unacquainted with the mode in which Police business was then carried on in London, it may appear rather extraordinary that such nurseries of crime were allowed to exist ; but the thing was a regular system, and the officers went upon the idea, that if there were no thieves, there would be no need of officers ; therefore, Boozing Kens, as nurseries for thieves, or Family Kens, as they were sometimes called, were no bad things in their way.

It was very seldom indeed that any of the regular officers intruded into such places, but they had, no doubt, their spies in most of them, so that when any gentleman was wanted particularly, they could dog him from one of the Kens and pounce upon him without his being aware that he was watched from his bacchanalian orgies in the Family Ken.

It was about one hour after dark that Duval and Jack made their appearance in the bar-parlour in order to go into the Ken, where there would be many that, no doubt, would know them both well, and where from all they would be sure to receive the welcome that their celebrity warranted.

Old Figgins had managed, by smothering up his gouty leg in many bandages, and then keeping it from the floor, by the aid of a long piece of list going round his foot, and then round his neck, to hobble, by the help of his son, down the short flight of twelve steps that led to the short passage at the end of which was the Family Ken.

A large blanket hung before the entrance, and it had hung long enough to have assumed a colour more resembling the back of a chimney than a blanket, but it was liked better than a door would have been by the frequenters of the place. It never made any noise, and it was always closed of itself, easily, silently, and closely. Its hinges and its lock were never out of order ; and, moreover, it smothered noises much better than any door would have done, let it have been ever such a good one.

Already a sufficient number of persons was assembled to make a confused murmur of noises come upon the night air, even through the blanket-entrance to the Ken. The two sentinels stepped respectfully aside, when they saw old Figgins.

“Getting better, Mr. F.?” said one.

“A little, Bill, a little.”

“Oh, you will be all right again, soon,” said the other. “They say the gout is a very healthy thing to have, and shows a man is in good condition.”

“Do they? I should like to be out of condition a little then, so that I might give it the go-by. Open the curtain, these are friends of mine.”

“Then they are of the right sort.”

The blanket was pulled aside, and the roar of voices and the steam of tobacco smoke that came from the Ken were for the moment quite overpowering, and perhaps, to Claude and to Jack, who were much used to the pure air of the open country, the loaded atmosphere of that place was much more offensive than to any inhabitant of the city of London.

Neither Claude nor Jack, though, let those about them see that they shrank in the least from the atmosphere of the Ken. It would not have been policy so to do.

But little notice was taken either of Duval or of Jack on their first entrance into the Ken, but old Figgins, turning to his son, said—

“Now, Dick,” and the young man, who was very powerful, at once lifted his father on to the end of the table nearest to him. Upon this he was seen by all in the Ken, consisting of about forty persons, and a loud shout arose, of—

“Figgs—Figgs! Old Figgs is on his legs.”

“It’s a lie,” shouted Figgins. “I am only on one leg. I only wish you all had a touch of the gout, that’s all.”

"Thank you, Figgs."

"Stop a bit, that wasn't what I came to say to you all. Nothing at all like it. I came to announce 'Duval.'"

"Duval!" cried all the company at once.

"Yes, Claude Duval and Sixteen-string Jack."

"Stop—stop," said Jack. "Don't announce me, I am supposed to be dead, you know."

"Yes; but I'm very happy to be able to assure everybody here that you are not. Claude Duval, my family kids, and Sixteen-string Jack. Hurrah!"

A wild shout burst from the lips of all present, and the candles in the tin hoops shook again with the concussion of the air in that strange place.

"Sixteen-string Jack, poor fellow, suffered at Tyburn," cried a loud voice, "and it ain't the thing for any new hand to pick up an old pal's name."

"Ain't it? Well I——"

"For the love of Heaven say no more," whispered Jack. "I do not wish to be known to be in the land of the living, save to the few that I call my particular friends. Let the subject drop, I pray you."

"Very well—as you please, Jack."

"You will much oblige me."

"It shall be so. Now, my family men, I leave Claude Duval with you, and hope you will have a pleasant evening."

Another shout rose from the throats of the strange and motley assemblage, and Duval, turning to Figgins, said—

"A dozen bowls of punch as soon as convenient, old friend."

"And he has ordered a dozen bowls of punch," added Figgins, in a loud voice.

If anything had been wanting—which, in good honest truth, it was not—to add to the popularity of Duval, this would have fully supplied the deficiency. The shouting became quite prodigious; and it was not stilled until Claude raised his hand, and getting a brief silence, said—

"My friends, I beg of you not to create undue attention to the Ken to-night. I have many enemies, and I do not want them to fancy I am here. I know your good feelings towards me, and all I can do is for a few hours to take a glass with you, and then be off."

"To the road?" cried a voice.

"Yes," added Claude; "to the road!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!"

Another cheer was given, and then all was comparatively still. Claude and Jack went up to the farther end of the Ken, and a chair being placed upon a table, Duval was made to occupy it, whether he felt inclined to do so or not; and then, in the course of ten minutes, in came the steaming hot punch, which was welcomed with another shout of exultation by all present. Again Claude held up his hand, asking for silence, and the roar of voices again subsided in obedience to his wishes.

At this moment some ten or twelve new comers added to the boisterous hilarity of the scene, and the fun and frolic was at its height, when one suddenly cried—

"Bill Jinks is nabbed!"

There was a stillness for a moment or two, as though death had stopped the current of life-blood in the breast of every one present, and then a murmur of conversation arose, and another voice cried—

"Ned Soames has been shot, and left a blessed *widder* and eight babbies!"

"Let's have a collection, then," cried another. "We can give a shilling a-piece now, and a promise of future favours, can't we? Will you go round with the bag, Jerry?"

"That's your sort," said a tall man with a profusion of bright red hair. "I'll go round and collect the bobs. Now for it. Here's the bag. Anybody may put in what they please, but nothing short of a bob. That's the ticket. I knows the face of everybody here, so I shan't make any mistakes."



This individual produced a coarse canvas bag, and he then went from one to another of the company collecting the subscriptions, and giving the bag a shake as he came to each one, and making some jocose remark about the means of the party, which generally had the effect of extracting more than the shilling from him.

Suddenly he stopped before a short stout man, profusely marked by the small-pox, and in a puzzled tone said—

“Who the deuce are you?”

“Oh, don’t you know me?” said the man. “I am called Ticklish Bob.”

“Are you?”

“Yes, to be sure. There’s a bull for the bag. Cut along.”

“And pray what are you when you are at home? A cracksman, or a toby-hunter, or a knight of the road, or what?”

“Anything in a small way. I am a family man.”

“Hilloa! who knows this one?” cried Jerry, raising himself up to his full height, and indicating the man with his thumb.

Everybody looked at him, but there was a general shaking of heads consequent upon the examination. It was quite clear that the man was not known, and it was equally clear—contingent upon that circumstance—that he was in a situation of some considerable personal peril.

“Oh, this is all stuff!” he cried. “Some of you must know me. Why, I’ve cracked a crib or two in my time. It’s too bad to pretend not to know an old pal.—It’s really too bad.”

Some half-dozen strong men got cautiously between the suspected person and the door, or rather the blanket that did duty for a door, and one cried out—

“If anybody does know him, let them say so. If they don’t, why in course he’s a sneak.”

“Me a sneak!” cried the man. “Oh, that is too bad; but if you don’t like my company, I will be off at once. Gentlemen, I will go if that will be more pleasing to you. Only say the word, and of course I am off directly, gentlemen.”

“We isn’t gentlemen,” said Jerry, “but we is family coves. Don’t insult us by calling of us gentlemen, I begs; and as for going, old fellow, that’s a thing as you’ll do, when we knows something more of you. Does anybody know him?”

“No! no!” shouted the crowd of eager faces that crowded round the man, who now turned ghastly pale, and with a sickly smile upon his face, glanced around him, upon that throng of faces, in which he could not see one that bore to him a friendly expression.

“What have I done, pals,” he said, “that I should be picked out to be made a butt of? How came I here, if I don’t belong to the family? Come now, I’ll stand another couple of bowls of punch. Only let us have harmony.”

“That’s just what we wants,” said Jerry. “Lay hold of him, coves. Lay hold of him.”

A couple of men seized the now trembling man, and Jerry striding up to him, said—

“Now, what have you got in your pockets, old chap. You say you are a cracksman, and if you are, perhaps you have got some of your tools about you.”

“No—no. I am on no lay to-night, and so I have nothing with me. All I have is this guinea, and I am quite willing to spend it, and make an end of this affair. It will get a couple of right good bowls of punch, won’t it, Mr. Figgins?”

“I can’t go for to take upon myself all for to say,” said Figgins. “It all depends upon circumstances, you see, old fellow. We shall know more about it in a little time.”

“Now,” said Jerry, “I flatter myself that I can search a fellow as well as any officer in England. In course, when I talk of searching, none o’ this here honourable Family Ken knows what I means, but if you all looks you will all see.”

A peal of laughter followed this joke of Jerry's, for to tell the truth, the honourable company were one and all admirably acquainted with the process of searching, very few of them having been exempt from that operation, at some time or another.

The unknown man now looked as though his last hour was come, but he did not make any opposition, for that he knew would be utterly and entirely useless. He only looked unutterable things.

"Let's see," added Jerry, as he proceeded with his search, and laid the various articles on the table, close at hand, amid roars of laughter from the whole Ken. "Let's see—a snuff-box, good—a handkerchief, one constable's staff, one pair of darbies, one pistol, one warrant.—Humph, when I was quite a little boy, my father and mother forgot to teach me to read. Here, Bill, what does the warrant say?"

"How do you know it's a warrant, Jerry?"

"Why, one day, a gentleman in a red waistcoat showed me one, and it looked just like this here, and arter that he wished me to stay a month or two in a very large house, and arter that some coves said, 'Not Guilty,' one day, and out I toddled again, that's all I knows about it. What does it say, Bill?"

"It directs all Justices, Headboroughs, Constables and others, to assist Mathew Mouldy to apprehend one Claude Duval!"

A shout of rage rose from the Ken, and the officer, for officer he really was, grew faint with terror.

"Let me go," he said. "It's of no use denying it now. I am an officer, and I came to look at Claude Duval, and to follow him and nab him if I could. I hid here in the daytime, under one of the tables, and only slipped out when the candles were lit, and now let me go. What good will it do you to do me any harm?"

"Mr. Mouldy," said Jerry, "your werry humble servant. I rather thinks as you is in for it now, and that you'll be blue mouldy afore anybody outside sees you again."

"You don't mean to murder me! You surely can't mean to murder me?"

"Oh, dear no; we will only—"

"Stop!" cried Claude. "I do not deny but that this is an affair that concerns you all; but still, you must confess that it more particularly concerns me."

"Anything but letting him go, Duval," said Jerry.

"Listen to me. He has come here for the purpose of having a good look at me, so that he might dog me when I leave, and take me. Let him have his look, and keep him here till I go; then, if he likes to come out with me and try his luck, I am quite willing."

"Knock him on the head here, at once," cried a voice.

"If you do," said Duval, "this is my last appearance in the Old Ken, and I leave it on the moment. Let him be here until I go: don't let him leave before me; that's all I ask of you, and then the danger is over."

"I give up the whole affair," cried the officer; "I give it all up. I swear to you, that I wouldn't touch Duval now if I saw him on the steps of Newgate.—Spare my life, and I will give up the whole affair!"

"No, no!" cried twenty or thirty voices. "Death to the spy! Death to the sneak!"

"It shall not be!" said Duval, in a voice of thunder.

## CHAPTER CLXXIX.

### THE OFFICER'S FATE.—THE DISPOSAL OF THE BODY.

THE tone of voice in which Duval spoke was one that quite convinced a man who heard him of the complete seriousness of his intention to protect the officer, and a feeling of great disappointment came over the family men in the Boozing Ken upon that account. A dead silence prevailed for several minutes.

"Listen to me, my friends," added Claude. "I should be the last man in the world to say anything or to do anything contrary to your general wishes or intents ; but it is beneath any of us to do anything to this man short of killing him, and that it would be base to do,"

"Why base?"



CLAUDE'S SURPRISE AT THE FIRE ON HOUNSLOW HEATE.

"Because, my friends, we are nearly fifty to one."

The officer shrank as close to Claude as he could.

"What will you do with him then, captain?" said a voice.

"Let him come out with me, and if he plays the traitor I pledge myself to bring him back again."

"Good, good," cried several ; "let it be so. The captain knows best. Let him have his own way in the matter."

"My friends," said Claude, "I sincerely thank you for this confidence in me. Be assured that what I do, I do for the general good; and if I saw occasion that this man should die, my hand would be the first to strike him as my voice would be the first to condemn him. But let us all steer clear of murder if we can. It looks like murder for so many to take the life of one."

"So it does—so it does. Claude Duval for ever! Hurrah!"

"You are safe for the present," said Claude to the officer; "beware how you tamper with that safety. I may not be again able to stand between you and those who feel strongly concerning you."

"Thank you," said the officer. "Can you tell me if that clock there, on the Hall, is right or not?"

"I think it is."

The clock, which for the special convenience of the frequenters of the Ken had been put up on one of the walls, at this moment began to strike twelve, and naturally enough all eyes were directed to it. When it had finished striking the officer suddenly scrambled on to the table that was the nearest to him, and cried out—

"As you have been all of you so generous as to spare my life all of you, I should like to say a few words, if it is only to let you know how truly grateful I am for the favour."

"Hold your row," said Joe.

"Get down," shouted a dozen voices. "We don't want any gammon."

A great many, however, seemed to wish to hear what the officer could possibly have to say, and shouted to him to go on; and amid the tumult, Claude said to him—

"Why, you must be next thing to an idiot to court so much attention towards you. Have you as many lives as a cat?"

"Perhaps I have," he said.

"Well, the consequences of your own folly be upon your own head. I wash my hands of it."

"Gentlemen," cried the officer; "gentlemen, I—"

"Call us prigs," shouted a voice. "We aint no gentlemen here."

"I will call you anything you like, if you will only permit me to say how grateful I am to you all; and, as a proof of it, I here produce a pistol, which you missed in your search of me. It is loaded; and to show you the entire confidence I have in your merciful intentions, I here deprive myself of it, my only defence, by discharging it against the wall."

To the surprise of everybody there, who saw no occasion for such an exhibition of confidence, the officer discharged his pistol against the earthen wall of the Boozing Ken.

There was a pause of a few moments duration; for, somehow, there was a general feeling, that this shot was but the commencement of something in which they might all be more or less interested; and then, the landlord's son rushed into the Ken, crying—

"Douse the glims! The grabs are all round the house. Douse the glims, and cut it!"

"Bravo!" cried the officer, and he made a spring at the throat of Claude. It was a daring act; but Claude caught him round the neck with his open right hand, and, in a moment, clasped his throat, as though it had been in a vice. Claude saw the officer's face turning blue, and then every light in the place was extinguished.

The darkness in the Ken was most profound, and the Babel of voices was most prodigious. The members of the "family" were availing themselves of all their knowledge of the localities of the place, to make their escape, and the riot was terrific.

It appeared that at the sound of the officer's pistol, which was an agreed upon signal between him and a strong force of officers on the outside, in case anything

should go wrong in his original arrangement, they were to storm the place with the hope of capturing Claude Duval by a rush.

That rush was now being made, and everything in the public-house was being upset by some fifteen well-armed officers, in their attempt to reach the Boozing Ken, where they only cared to make one prisoner; but that one was Claude, and in their estimation, worth all the rest.

Duval still held the officer by the throat, until he felt quite sure that he was no longer in the land of the living; and then he flung him a considerable distance from him.

Suddenly, Claude felt his arm clutched, and the voice of the son of the landlord sounded in his ear, saying—

“Follow me.”

“Anywhere you like,” said Claude.

“Hush!”

At this moment, as Claude followed wherever the young man chose to lead him, he heard the doors above in the house—doors that had been closed to keep back the officers, being broken open, with a crashing sound,

“Our friends are in earnest,” whispered the young man. “Take hold of my coat, and keep as close to me as you can. We will baffle them yet, I think.”

“I hope so.”

Claude had not the least idea of where he was being led to; all he was at all aware of was, that the places through which he passed had a very peculiar earthy smell, as though damp and mildew had for long marked them as their own. But he knew that he could well, and truly, keep implicitly to his guide; and he felt a confidence, that not ten times the reward that was offered for him would induce either the old publican, or his son, to betray him.

“Don’t speak,” whispered the young man, “until I tell you that we are effectually out of all possible earshot of our foes. Then say what you like.”

Claude upon this was profoundly silent, and continued to follow his guide wherever it might please him to go.

The gloomy, earthy smell of the passages continued, and at length the publican’s son said—

“All’s right, I think, now. You are safe, Duval.”

“And I have to thank you. Where are we?”

“We are in the cellar of a house three doors off from our own; of course, we must be tolerably careful not to create any alarm, although, by this time, the inhabitants of the house are, of course, in bed.”

“Then, you don’t know the people?”

“Oh, no—only by sight and name. They have not the remotest idea that their cellarage is one-half so extensive as it is, nor that there is a narrow communication between one dark corner of it and the Ken. The fact is, this house once belonged to a man called Slashing Tim, who suffered at Tyburn.”

“I have heard of him.”

“Well, he and my father were old pals, and they made the communication between the cellars here and the Ken themselves; but that was long ago, in the old man’s young days.”

“So I should think. But how still everything is.”

“Yes, expect the officers have met with a little disappointment. They have, no doubt, by this time found their way, with lights, into the Ken, and are rather astonished not to see you. They will not interfere with any one else; for, luckily, the only two or three they would have pounced upon, are not here to-night.”

“In truth, I am glad of it; for it would have been my presence alone that would have brought the danger upon them; and now, the sooner I get off and away, and on the road, the better I shall be pleased. There is one thing, however, that gives me uneasiness.”

“What is that?”

"My horse. I expect it is tolerably well known to some of the officers; and if they should chance to hunt your stables through, and find him there, they will guess that I am not far off."

"Make yourself quite easy about that, Claude. Has your horse three white feet and a white star on his forehead?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Yes, Claude, he has, and if you were to see him now in our stables, you would find all those distinctive marks upon him."

"Ah, I understand you. You have been so good as to whiten him a little to prevent prying eyes from saying—'That is Duval's horse.'"

"Exactly so; and now will you exercise your patience a little, and stay where you are, while I go and see what is going on at the bar; I will not be away one moment longer than may be absolutely necessary."

"A thousand thanks. Don't hurry on my account."

Claude, in another moment, found himself alone in the cellars, and so profoundly dark were they, that he literally could not see his hand before his face, and it was only by cautiously feeling all round him, that he satisfied himself he was not quite close to some wall, against which he might hurt himself, if he moved a step.

Suddenly a faint starlike light broke the intense darkness of the cellar, and from quite another direction to that in which the son of the old publican had disappeared, there came a figure which filled Claude for the moment with astonishment.

A very little, old, decrepit man, attired in a miserable dressing-gown and carrying a candle-end stuck in a piece of cleft stick came tottering into the cellar. He was muttering to himself as he came, and Claude could just catch the words—

"Ay, ay, it all helps. It all helps. Who knows but I may get old some day?—I ain't at all old now. What is seventy-seven? Nothing—nothing, and it all helps.—Only another guinea, but it is another, that's a comfort. It is another.—Ay, ay—it all helps."

The old man repaired direct to a particular portion of the cellar-floor, and then with a knife, which he took from his pocket, he began digging, until at only a couple of inches or so from the surface, he dug up a small iron box. This he dug up and held in his trembling hands with quite a religious veneration.

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## CHAPTER CLXXIX.

### DUVAL IS ON THE ROAD AGAIN, AND STOPS TWO PASSENGERS.

CLAUDE was quite astonished at the conduct of the old man, but when he saw him open the little iron box, and by the light of his candle-end, gloat over the sight of some gold that was in it, he fully comprehended that he was one of those miserable beings who submit to a hundred privations to accumulate gold, lest by some freak of fortune, they should be compelled to submit to two or three.

"All safe—all safe," muttered the old miser. "Here is my money and no human eye looks upon it but myself. Yes, all is very safe indeed, here."

How little he suspected that one of the most celebrated highwaymen of the age was within twelve paces of him!

"Yes, yes," he continued, "all's safe, and here goes the other to add to the store. Ah, my glittering beauties!"

Claude felt some one touch him lightly on the arm, and upon turning, he found it was the landlord's son. They both looked on with no small amount of amazement at the miser's proceedings.

"It would almost be a charity," whispered the son, "to take his gold from him."

"It would kill him. You had better take his life."

"I will take neither; but yet a knowledge of this secret of the old man may be useful some day."

"Hush! he is listening."

The old miser thought evidently that he had heard something, for as he knelt upon the cellar-floor, he put himself into a listening attitude; but as both Claude and the landlord's son remained now profoundly quiet, he thought he was deceived.

"It is nothing," he said. "Nothing; or, if anything, only some rat. Ha!—ha! I have no objection to the rats looking at me—it is rats on two legs that I dread. Ha!—ha! All his safe."

After this the old man covered up his little iron box of gold, and having patted down the earth above it, he took up the little notched stick, in the cleft of which the candle-end was nearly expiring, and hobbled from the cellars.

"All is right in the Ken," said the young man to Claude.

"What, have the officers left?"

"They have; and what is more, they have left without noticing the dead body of their comrade, which had rolled under one of the old tables and lay there quite hidden."

"He is dead then?"

"Yes. You, I suppose, managed that for him, after all."

"I fancy I did; and after the trouble I had taken to save him, it was perhaps more my business to do so than any one's else in the whole Ken. I am sorry he brought such a fate upon himself, but he amply deserved it. It was the fortune of war."

"It was. Follow me, Claude, and you shall soon see the night sky again."

"It will be very welcome. I assure you that if I am many hours without breathing the open air, I get unhappy; and the air that is loaded with the damp smell of vegetation, amid trees and flowers, is the most welcome of all to my senses."

The young man led the way from the cellars of the house into a small area, and then forcing a door, that had upon it a very flimsy bolt indeed, they found themselves fairly in the house. They then lit a dark lantern, and saw that it was a kitchen into which they had made their way.

After this, although the kitchen-door was locked, the difficulty of getting to the passage and street doors was not by any means great to persons so accustomed to overcome that class of obstacles as Claude and his friend were.

The street-door being made fast upon the inside, of course, opposed no obstacle whatever to their progress, and Claude, with his friend, soon stood in the open street.

"My horse!" said Claude. "Oh, for my horse!"

"It is here," said the young man.

As he spoke, a lad, leading Claude's horse, made his appearance; and the transformation created by the white marks that had been made upon the animal, was so complete, that even Duval himself, with all his intimate knowledge of the animal, would have hesitated to pronounce him his.

"If I were as well disguised," said Claude, "I should think nothing of calling at Newgate or at Bow Street to ask them what the time of day was. Will it come off?"

"It is only whitening and gum."

"Good. I will let it be until I get to the country. But where is Jack?"

"Here," said Jack, stepping up. "I am all right, Claude; for Heaven's sake, let us be off. I have a horrid tale to tell you of that poor devil of an officer as we go along."

"But he is dead?"

"Yes, now."

Jack shuddered as he spoke; and then he mounted his horse, which he himself had, and Claude mounted his; but before they trotted off, Claude shook hands with the landlord's son, saying--

"Remember me to your father, kindly."

"I will; but the old man has a dismal presentiment upon his mind that he will never see you again in this world, Claude Duval."

"Has he? I will soon knock that out of his head. Wait for me a moment, Jack."

"What would you do?"

"Nothing particular. I will be back in a moment; I am only going to disprove my old friend's presentiment, that he will not see me again in this world, that's all; and if all the officers in London were in the way I would shake hands with him yet, and wish him good night, or rather early morning."

Despite the fears of Jack, that he would be running into the greatest danger by so acting, Claude must needs call upon the old gouty publican; and springing from his horse at the door of the house, he strode in, anxious to conclude the interview as shortly as possible.

"This way," said the son. "Father is this way."

"All's right," said Claude, as he ran up stairs after him; and then in another moment, he was shaking hands with the old man, and saying—"So you thought you would see me no more, did you old friend? but here I am after all."

"Oh, why did you venture?"

"To see you."

"But it is madness. I am certain as that I live that the officers are hiding in the house even now, and if they see you, or if they suspect that you are here, you are lost—lost!"

"I'm off in a moment. We are not all lost that are in danger. Good-by, old friend. You and I will meet again, depend upon it."

"No—no, I have a presentiment that we shall not."

"And I," said Claude, "have a presentiment the other way; so I am resolved that mine shall come true. Farewell."

Claude had only taken two steps towards the door, when it was slammed shut violently from without, and locked, and then a loud voice cried—

"I have him! I have him! He is in this room! Come on! I have him! Here! Here! I have him at last! This way, comrades, I have locked the door!"

"Have you really," said Claude; "but you forgot the window."

The window was a French casement, and opened on a low small balcony.—Claude was on that balcony in a moment, and Jack saw him.

"My horse," said Claude.

"Yes, yes," cried Jack. He understood fully what Claude meant, which was, that the horse should be brought under the balcony to facilitate his descent. Jack placed the obedient steed in the required position, and in an instant Claude disappeared on to the saddle.

"All's right," he cried.

"Thank the fates, it is," said Jack; "and now, let us be off out of London, Claude; for the risks of the last few hours have made me sick at heart. Off—off—"

"In a moment, Jack. Now for it."

In another instant, Claude would have been off, and would soon have distanced all pursuit; but suddenly, a man appeared at the door of the public-house with a thick holster pistol in his hand; and, levelling it at Claude, he cried, as he fired it—

"Take that! I don't miss often!"

The bullet struck Claude upon the left arm, producing a strange stunning sensation, but, at the time, nothing more, and in an instant Claude drew one of his pistols from the side of the saddle, and firing it at the man, cried—

"I never miss, where I mean to hit!"

With a yell, like the last cry of some wild animal, the officer fell back into the passage of the public-house.

"That's done," said Claude. "Now, Jack, for a trot."

They clapped spurs to their horses, and went at a rapid pace into Finsbury Square; and then, turning their horses' heads westwards, off they went at a gallop



that soon left all chance of pursuit far behind them. The horses were perfectly fresh, and had been well looked to at the public-house, so that they did not flag in their pace in the least. The long straggling thoroughfare of the New Road was passed; nor did Claude materially slacken his pace until he found himself in the green lanes, and among the meadows, which now form the site of Cambridge and Oxford Terraces.

All danger from any pursuers had long since been passed, and it was with a face full of satisfaction that Claude now once again, after so many perils, found himself once more in the open air; and as the light of the early morning shone upon the tall trees in the hedgerows, and the wild birds began to sing their early songs, he felt that glow of the imagination which all true lovers of nature feel when in the midst of her glorious and beautiful works.

"I breathe again, Jack," he said.

"And I, too," replied Jack. "London is something to me very like a large prison, Claude."

"It can be compared to nothing else, Jack; for amid its wilderness of bricks and mortar, are you not shut out from all that is bright and beautiful in nature? How those who can fly to country sights, and country sounds, voluntarily submit themselves to the tiresome artificialities of city life, is to me inconceivable."

"And to me. Hark at that!"

A thrush was sitting upon a blackthorn bush not far from them, and was pouring out a gush of melody.

"Yes, that is better music than any over-dressed crowd ever heard in the heated atmosphere of a concert-room."

"It is, indeed; but where do you think of going to, Claude, now? We are rather too near town to be quite safe."

"We shall never be quite safe, Jack. But I intend to keep on the western road a little while, and do what business I can. I look upon the route from Tyburn Pike to Guildford as my manor, and I take toll of who I can. I am not over rich, and you must recollect that now I have all the responsibilities of a married man upon me. Ha! Who comes here? Don't you hear the sound of horses' feet, Jack?"

"I do."

They both rode a little on one side, and in the course of a few minutes a couple of mounted men came up. One of them was a thick-headed bully of a fellow, but the other had all the primness and neatness of a gentleman in his clothing, although a certain air of vulgar religious fashion about his clothing very much detracted from his general aspect. Upon observing Claude and Jack, he rode up to them, and said in a canting nasal sort of tone—

"My friends, have you been long hereabouts?"

"No," said Claude, "not above a couple of hours."

"I do not wish to offend you, but I have had information that the notorious Claude Duval will be in this neighbourhood shortly, and if you have no objection to a fifty-pound-note, and will assist me to capture him, you shall have it."

"I have not the least objection to the note, but is not this notorious Claude Duval—I suppose it is the highwayman you mean?—a very desperate fellow?"

"He is, but here are four of us, and although he has a companion with him, I think we may capture him."

"How came you to know he would be hereabouts?"

"Why if you must know, it was Dick Turpin told me."

"Dick Turpin?"

"Yes. He, you know—or you may have heard—is no better than he should be, and he gave me the information. How he got it I don't pretend to know."

"And pray where is Dick Turpin?"

"On the road here somewhere. I and my man took him prisoner; but upon his giving us the information regarding Claude Duval, we let him go, for, you see, no reward is offered for him."

"Quite a sufficient reason, I grant, quite sufficient. I should like to see this

Dick Turpin, though ; but as it is, I consent of course to your terms, and only hope you have the money with you."

"Oh, yes, I have it, and as soon as Claude Duval is taken and I have a good hold of him, you shall have it, you may depend. This is your servant, I suppose?"

"Yes, he is, and he will assist us very much. Of course, you will give him something, likewise?"

"I don't mind a ten-pound-note if we are successful ; but mind you, I give nothing unless I have fairly hold of Claude Duval. Then the money is due, and you shall have it on the instant, for if he gets away after I have got a grip of him, I will give him leave, and say that he is the better man."

As he spoke, he stretched out a large bony hand, which certainly might, if its owner had courage as well as strength, be of some service in holding any one tolerably tight.

"Well," said Claude, "I have not a very long time to spare, and I must be getting on a little, so let us walk our horses westward. If we meet him, well and good. If we don't, of course it can't be helped ; but somehow, it comes across me that we shall."

"So it does me, my friend. I dreamt it, last night, and my dreams generally come true."

"So do mine. Do you know, I dreamt that I met an idiot, who handed me a fifty-pound-note for nothing at all."

"And idiot, sir?"

"Yes, to be sure, and you are the man. Jack—Jack."

"Yes. I am here."

"Look to that fellow behind, and blow his brains out at once, if he stirs an inch. Now, my friend, your dream has come true, for I am Claude Duval ; and my dream will come true, for you will hand me the fifty-pound-note ; so you see what wonderful and providential things dreams are, at times."

The man glared at Claude, as though he had seen a spectre, and he repeated the words "Claude Duval !" as though they had only come to him floating on the air, and he had not the least idea in the world as to who had given utterance to them. Then, suddenly, in a screaming voice, he called out—

"Jenkins, catch the other one, I've got this!"

The great, bony hand was stretched out, and Claude's collar was fastened upon with no despicable grasp.

"You would be wise," said Claude, "to take your hand away."

"Catch the other one, Jenkins ! Catch the other one!"

"I have got him," growled Jenkins.

"Call out murder, Jenkins ! Call out murder, Jenkins!"

"Murder," said Jenkins, in one of the quietest tones in the world ; then Claude darted forward his right hand, and caught the sanctified-looking person by the throat, with a grasp that seemed to be something superhuman.

"Let's see," he said, "who will hold on the longest."

The face of the would-be captor of the highwayman grew red, and he shouted—  
"Jenkins—Jenk—Jen—Je——"

Claude's fingers compressed his throat too closely to enable him to speak, and the hold he had taken of Claude's collar gradually relaxed, and finally fell off altogether.

"Fool !" cried Duval, as he gave him a shake, and then letting go his throat, he slid off his horse to the ground. "Jack, where are you ? Is it true that you are a prisoner?"

"Not exactly," said Jack. "This fellow is as quiet as a lamb. I never met with a more favourably-inclined man."

"Who are you?" said Claude, riding up to the bullet-headed looking man, who was quietly seated on his horse, looking at Jack, who had levelled a pistol at his head. "Who are you, fellow?"

"Take it easy."

"But who are you?"

"Jok Jenkins; I always takes things easy. You are the biggest, so I lets you have your way. I always gives in to the strongest and biggest, I does. If I was to come across some little boy, I could whack him; but otherwise I takes things easy."



THE HORROR OF CLAUDE AND PARTY AT FINDING LUCY A CORPSE.

"Why, you are quite a philosopher, Jenkins."

"Anything you like, sir."

"Well, I will trouble you to dismount, and to take your master there, and throw him into yon ditch with the duck-weed upon it."

"Certainly, sir; oh, certainly. Take it easy. Of course, sir. Anything you like; you are a great deal the biggest, sir, as you will see when I get down. Then

don't you see, I'm bound to do just what you like, you see, in an easy way, sir: Throw master in the ditch? Oh certainly."

"Well," said Claude, "you certainly are the drollest fellow ever I came near. Before our friend here goes into the ditch, Jack, just lighten his pockets of anything that would not benefit by a damping."

Jack rifled the half-insensible man's pockets, in a few minutes. He was slowly recovering from the insensibility that had been induced by the squeeze Claude had given his neck; and while Jack was rifling his pockets, he glared at him with a stupid half-stunned sort of look, not knowing very well what was going on. Claude started both the horses, and they went off at a good canter down the green lane.

"Now," said Claude to Jenkins, "you can do what I told you."

"Yes, sir."

He lifted his master from the ground easily enough, for Jenkins had a good quantity of brutal strength about him.

"Help, help!" cried the sanctified-looking personage. "Help, murder, what are you about, Jenkins?"

"Take it easy. They are both bigger than we are, master. Take it easy; anything for a quiet life, you know. I am only going to throw you in the ditch. That's all, master. Take things easy."

"In the ditch? Murder—murder!"

"I must. Look at him. Big he is; and so it's quite right, and it must be done. It's of no use your kicking, master; there you go."

Splash! The sanctified-looking man was struggling in the ditch among the duck-weed, and it was well for him that he had recovered so far as he had, or he would inevitably have been drowned, for all Jenkins would have troubled himself in the matter.

"Ah!" said Jenkins, as he saw his master gradually struggling up the bank.

"Ah, he don't look nice, but it had to be done. We must in this world give way to the biggest."

"Murder!" screamed the unfortunate wretch who had made in his mind so sure of capturing Claude. "Murder, I am smothered."

The duck-weed had stuck to him in the most eccentric manner, so that he seemed as though, by the touch of an enchanter's wand, he had been changed to green, including his face and hands.

"Is he to be pushed in again, sir?" said Jenkins to Claude.

"No," replied Claude, as he mounted, "I think he has had enough for this once; and I leave you now, Mr. Jenkins, with the most profound admiration for your philosophy."

## CHAPTER CLXXX.

### THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE MOCK DICK TURPIN.

"COME on, Jack," said Claude.

Off they both went at a sharp trot from the scene of the late encounter. There was not the least likelihood of either Jenkins or his master following them, seeing that those two worthies were now on foot, but still Claude and Jack thought it best to place as speedily as they could a few miles between them and their late adversaries. At length, with an explosion of laughter, which he could no longer resist, Claude drew up, and turned round to Jack.

"Did you ever, Jack," he cried, "in all your life and experience, meet with such a fellow as that Jenkins?"

"Never," said Jack. "He is the most extraordinary original I ever encountered. I wonder if that odd manner is natural to him, or only assumed as a result of a general feeling of disgust at society at large."

"Oh, it is natural, Jack."

"Can you really think so? It sounded to me like the most exquisite piece of grave irony that I had heard for a very long time indeed; bid extremes meet, Claude, and we can only say that our friend, Jenkins, is either a great fool or a great philosopher. When I held my pistol to his head, and told him to stir upon risk of death, he replied, 'Just so,' and from that moment did not make the smallest effort to take any advantage of me."

"He is, in truth, an oddity."

"Most surely. But look at the pocket-book, Claude, that I took from his master. I have not had time to examine it. I hope there will be something in it to make it worth the trouble of taking."

Jack handed the pocket-book to Claude, who opened it with all due gravity. The first thing he took out of it was a very carefully folded, but terribly worn, silk nightcap: the second thing was the unpaid bill of some laundress, amounting to two shillings and four pence; and that was all.

Claude looked at Jack, and Jack looked at Claude, and then the latter again burst out into an uproarious fit of laughter, while Jack pulled rather a long face, and quietly said—

"We are done."

"Yes, Jack, we are done; and upon my word this, to me, has been a most amusing adventure. I don't think the poor devil had one farthing in the world, and the offer of the fifty-pound-note to me for my own apprehension was only a magnificent piece of bombast to secure some efficient assistance. There is only one thing that I do not comprehend in the whole affair, and that, to tell the truth, does disturb me very much."

"And that," said Jack, "I can guess, is the use that has been made of the name of Dick Turpin."

"True—most true. I would stake my life upon the good faith of Dick; but it does puzzle me to find that, for the second time, information of my whereabouts is by two distinct people attributed to him."

"But you don't believe it, Claude?"

"No, upon my life, I do not, and until I have it from the lips of Dick himself I will not believe it. But come on, Jack. We are most magnificently done as regards the pocket-book, and the poor devil who owned it is very appropriately punished. Let us push on over Wormholt Scrubs here, and who knows but we may meet with better fortune?"

"Don't you think it would be advisable to change your costume, Claude?"

"Why hardly yet, Jack. I flatter myself that in this present dress I look very respectable, and like some gentleman of independent means, while I must confess your getting up as a first-class groom is exquisite. I do not think that we have any enemies close upon our track who know of this disguise, and to fresh foes it will carry us through anything."

"There is reason in that, Claude; so let us, as you say, push on over the Scrubs."

Wormholt Scrubs was then a very much wilder and more country-looking neglected spot than it is now that a slashing railway passes through the middle of it; and when Claude and Jack came upon it, they could, in the wide expanse before them, see no sign of any human being save themselves. They took a direct route across the Scrubs in the direction of Hounslow, where upon a more mature consideration Claude intended to dine.

About three hundred yards to the left there was a small clump of fir trees, and it was about the only shelter for the space of a mile or more; and just as they passed this little clump of trees, there issued out from it a horseman, attired in a faded sky-blue coat with tarnished silver lace upon it. Huge jack-boots were upon his feet, and he wore likewise a slouching hat with a very large buckle. His horse was rather a smart-looking animal enough, and take him for all in all, he looked like some unattached drunken subaltern officer in the army, who upon slender means contrived to cut a sorry dash among a not very creditable class of

society. Such characters—now happily extinct, for an officer is forced to be a gentleman—were very frequent even fifty years ago.

He came prancing on, with a devil-may-care sort of look, and as Claude had passed on, he encountered Jack, to whom he said, in an authoritative voice—

“Who is your master, sirrah?”

“A gentleman,” said Jack.

“But his name and calling, sirrah? Answer me.”

“He it just before you,” said Jack; “and you had much better ask him yourself. Information is always best from the highest source. Here he is.”

“B——Sir, I’ll remember your insolence. Hang it, sir, how dare you speak to me in this way?”

Hearing the altercation, Claude turned his horse’s head, and trotted back.

“What is all this about?” he said. “Is the gentleman out of his mind? or has he lost his way on the Scrubs?”

“No, sir,” said the fellow, “this gentleman is neither mad, nor has he lost his way upon the Scrubs. Confound my blood, sir, I am a gentleman, and in want of a little ready cash; do you understand that, sir?—Curse everybody—eh, sir?”

“Yes,” said Claude, “I understand it, as well as your ridiculous and stupidly profane oaths will permit me.”

“Oh, oh, you belong to the church, do you? Well, well, my fine dressed gentleman, we will borrow a few guineas from you. In a word—your money or your life!”

“What! Are you really, then, a highwayman?” said Claude.

“Call me what you like; but stand and deliver!”

The fellow produced a pistol nearly as large as a small carbine, which he levelled at the head of Claude, who, however, took no more notice of it than as if it had been a bit of stick; but turning to Jack, he said—

“Here is a highwayman, if you never saw one before. He is quite a curiosity in his way. Let’s ride round him and have a good look at him. How often I have wished to meet with a real live, bragging, bouncing, cowardly rascal, such as this.”

As Claude spoke he walked his horse slowly round the fellow, who, with a growing fear upon his face, kept turning and facing him, still keeping the immense pistol presented at his head all the while.

“Come, come,” he said, “these tricks won’t do for me.”

“Nor for me,” said Claude; “so go your way, and I will go mine. I have seen quite enough of you, my friend.”

“But I have not seen enough of you, my friend; and so, I say again, your money or your life! I am one too accustomed to say ‘Stand and deliver!’ to be trifled with.”

“Do you mean seriously to say that you want my money?”

“Ay, brother; and your watch and jewellery too. Ha!—ha!”

“If you will stand on your head for five minutes I will give you a shilling, but not otherwise, my fine fellow.”

“Then you and your servant may as well say your prayers, for your two lives are not worth a minute’s purchase. Perhaps, when I tell you who I am, you will come to a different conclusion. I am Dick Turpin!”

A sudden light broke over Claude’s countenance. Here then, at once, was the mystery unravelled. This fellow was personating Dick Turpin in the neighbourhood; and not a doubt remained in the bosom of Claude but that it was from this man that the gentleman in the ditch had obtained his information.

“Dick Turpin?” said Claude.

“Yes. You have heard of me?”

“Oh, surely. Really, this is one of the pleasantest adventures that I have met with for a very long while, indeed. I am Claude Duval!”

The fellow reeled again in his saddle, and the gigantic pistol fell from his palsied fingers to the ground. Claude sprung upon him, and clutched his arm.

"Stir a step, and you are a dead man. I will blow your brains out with as little compunction of conscience as I would those of a mad dog."

"Oh, spare me! I—am—only a poor fellow!"

"I know it; and a pitiful fellow are you into the bargain, you vagabond. Tell me this moment why you assumed the name of one who is as different from you as Hercules is to a sick child? Speak, dolt! Jack, keep an eye on him. Pitch him off his horse, or he will give us a race after him yet."

Jack charged against the fellow, but he anticipated the shock by slipping off his horse on to the ground, and leaving the animal quietly to crop the scanty herbage on the common.

"Spare my life," he moaned, "and ask me what you like. I will tell you everything. Only spare my life!"

"Why did you assume the name of Turpin?"

"Because—I—found—that it frightened people, and so they let me rob them when otherwise they wouldn't."

"How comes it that you have given information concerning me to several people?"

"I—only—slightly—mentioned——"

"Come—come; let us have no prevarication. You gave certain information concerning my movements: why did you do so?"

"I will tell the truth. I was afraid of meeting you about this neighbourhood, and thought it would be a good thing to frighten you away to some other road—that was all."

"But your information—how did you procure it, for it has been strangely correct?"

"There is a girl named Lucy—you knew her once?"

"Ah!"

"Yes; she was your girl once, you know, Claude Duval, and when you cast her off, you thought she came by her death; but she didn't, and she is now with me; but she don't, and she won't forget you; and she says she will never rest until she sees you hung. She dogs you as much as she can, and when she knows anything she sets the officers after you. I warn you to beware of her, Claude Duval, for the passion of a jealous woman knows no bounds. This that I tell you you may rely upon. It is the whole truth."

"By Heaven," said Claude, "it must be so! It has the aspect of truth about it. Tell me—what does she know of me?"

"She knows, she says, that you are married, though I tell her that it is not very likely, because——" (Claude made an impatient gesture.) "Well, she says you are married, and I believe, if she could get at your wife, she would take her life."

Claude staggered a little.

"Do you hear that, Jack?" he said in a whisper.

"I do, Claude; and a bitter thing it is to hear."

"Very—very, Jack. What can I do?"

"Above all things, Claude, do not let the man see that you are so keenly touched by what he has told you."

"But you believe it, Jack?"

"I do. There is, I think, something about truth that carries conviction with it. I do not think he has deceived. In his fear he has spoken out the exact truth, Claude, and it is well that you know it."

"And yet I was happy in knowing it not. But no matter—no matter. He has, by truth-telling, disarmed me of all resentment against him now. I will speak to him again."

Claude turned away from his brief conference with Jack, and again addressed the man.

"My friend, I believe that which you have told me; and because I do believe it, I hold no enmity against you for what has passed. I advise you, for the future, not to take the name of Turpin, for he is a man of rather sudden and

fierce temper, and should he encounter you, and know that you have played him such a trick, I would not give much for your life. So much I say to you in the way of advice."

"I thank you, Duval. I will no more personate Turpin. I am very much obliged to you. I was not always the disreputable devil that I am now."

"I don't think you were. Your language has a smack in it of something better."

"You are right. There was a time when—But, no matter. I am what I am, and to think even of the past, is like planting daggers in my heart. I have no friend in all the world now."

"You may make one in me if you like."

"May I indeed? Do you really mean it?"

"From my soul I do."

A change came over the face of the man, and he was evidently too much affected for some few moments to speak. Then he held out his hand, and in choking accents, he said—

'Will you take it?'

"Freely," said Claude, as he clasped it in his own. "Most freely. And now that we understand each other, tell me how I can serve you?"

"No way at present, Duval; but I can, I hope, serve you by keeping such a watch upon Lucy, that she shall have no opportunity of doing any harm to one whom I can easily imagine you value before all the world. That I think I can do for you, Claude Duval; and this, so help me Heaven, I will do for you."

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## CHAPTER CLXXXI.

CLAUDE SEEKS THE RETREAT OF LUCY.—THE LONE HUT ON THE HEATH.

CLAUDE looked very serious for a few moments, and then he said—

"I have that degree of faith in what a madly jealous woman may do, that I shall not be easy until I see Lucy myself and speak to her."

"That you can do."

"Tell me, then, where I may be sure to find her."

"I will so describe the place to you that you cannot miss it. There is upon Hounslow Heath a pond, and near to it an old barn, with the roof blown off."

"I know it."

"Well, a few paces from that barn there is a cottage with a very small patch of garden-ground reclaimed from the heath, and there you will find her. But I would like to know when you purpose coming, for I would take care she shall be at home to receive you."

"I beg you," said Claude, "not to give her the slightest hint of my coming, as that would spoil all."

"Depend upon me, I will not."

"Then to-night, during the hours between twelve and one, expect me. If I get the girl's promise to rid herself of her wild resolve, I shall be satisfied, for I do not think she would break such a promise made to me."

"I am afraid, Duval, you do not know her so well as I do. While she thought herself yours, no doubt her behaviour to you was gentle enough; but now she is a very devil incarnate."

"Well—well, I will see her, and try what kind words will do, and if they will not, my duty to others calls upon me to adopt some course that will protect her, who is best of all entitled to my protection."

Duval and Jack very shortly then took leave of their new friend; and when they were alone again, Jack said, with much earnestness of manner—

"Take care of yourself, Claude, when you visit that girl, for at the sight of you in the bitterness of her rage she may try to do you a mischief."



"I will be careful, Jack. I must confess that her threats against Cicely fill me with uneasiness. But I will come to some conclusions upon that matter to-night. Ah, whom have we here now?"

Two persons on horseback, a lady and a gentleman, approached. The lady was young and handsome, but the gentleman in every part of his attire, and even in the manner in which he sat on his horse and held the bridle, showed the coxcomb. As he approached Claude and Jack, he put an eye-glass to his eye, where, by a curious contraction of the muscles, he held it fast, and glared at them both for a moment or two in silence.

Jack was, or this exquisite fancied that he was, in his way slightly, so he drawled out—

"Fellow, get out of the world, will you! Don't answer me—I can't hold any conversation with the lower classes. I think they ought all to be put out of the world. Out of the way, fellow."

"Did you address me?" said Jack.

"Ah, he speaks. Out of the way, fellow, and don't let me hear your horrid low class voice."

"Don't be angry, Jack," said Claude, laughing as he saw the colour mounting to Jack's cheek. "Don't be angry; he is only a curiosity. You should never be annoyed at any animal following its vocation, and its natural impulses, Jack. Men are men, apes are apes, as you see by the specimen before you."

"Good God," cried the exquisite. "I shall have to finish this fellow. Stand aside, my dear Helen, while I send him into another world."

With this the conceited personage drew a remarkably slender sword, and made a flourish with it in the air, no doubt fully expecting that Jack would start back in alarm; but when he found that such was not the case, but that with his hand raised, Jack watched him steadily, he said—

"Fellow, I will spare your life. It may be useful to you, fellow, so I shall spare it. Pass on, pass on, fellow. Low man, you are spared."

Claude was very much amused at what was going on, and probably much more so on account of the evident rage that Jack was in; a rage which he had the greatest difficulty in keeping under, but of the existence of which the dandified personage who had provoked it, did not seem to have the least idea.

"Are you going to get out of the way, fellow?"

"No," said Jack.

"Oh, ah. Then I shall go round, for nothing can be so very horrid, after all, when one comes to think, as to touch a low person, even if one has his own gloves on."

"You really think so?"

"Come on, Frederick, come on," said the young lady, most imploringly. "Why will you thus insult quiet people on the highway? Gentlemen, think nothing of it. Come on, Frederick, come on."

"But I do think something of it," said Jack.

"For my sake, I hope you will not," added the young lady; "now, Frederick, I hope this will be a lesson to you."

"For your sake I will forego," said Jack, "my just resentment in its full extent; but unless this coxcomb asks my pardon, he shall not pass me with his head on."

"My—head? Ah!"

"Yes, your head. I don't expect to find anything in it, but I'll knock it off if you don't ask pardon."

"Oh, I couldn't—I shall have to slaughter you, fellow, after all. I shall have to send you to another world."

With this the coxcomb made another intimidating flourishing of his sword, and Jack dashed at him, and took it from him in a moment. The young lady screamed, and Claude, as he hurried up to her, cried out—

"Moderation, Jack, moderation."

Upon which Jack only broke the sword in two, and flung the pieces in the owner's face.

"Do not be alarmed," said Claude to the young lady, "but you will act very injudiciously if you lay your commands upon my friend not to humiliate Frederick. Is he your brother?"

"No—no."

"Not your husband?"

"Oh no—nor never will be. He is a cousin."

"Oh, very well. Now, Mr. Frederick, I am quite sure all that my friend requires of you is to dismount, beg pardon on your knees, or else I assure you he is just the man to blow your brains out."

"Which I would rather do at once," said Jack, "and have no more bother about it."

"Murder!—blow my brains out?"

"Yes, if you have any. You prefer it, I see," added Jack, and he took a pistol from his pocket, and began to examine the priming very carefully indeed. Upon this, the dandified gentleman was so stunned, that he slipped off his horse, and plumped down upon his knees in the mire of the road, crying—

"Oh, ah! I beg pardon."

"Very good," said Jack. "Now, as far as I am concerned, you may pass on. What my friend may have to say to you is quite another affair, sir."

"I am not at all offended," said Claude, "and shall merely treat the gentleman professionally. Your money, watch, and jewels, sir, if you please, unless you prefer me taking them from your insensible carcass, after I have placed a couple of slugs in your skull."

"A highwayman, by Jupiter!" gasped the dandy.

"Exactly so," said Claude. "Be quick, sir."

In a moment a well-filled purse, a watch, and some rings, were, with an amount of nervous trepidation quite ludicrous to behold, handed to Claude, and the young lady said—

"I have nothing but a small watch, which is not of much value. Here it is, sir."

Claude bowed, as he said—

"I pray you not to do me the injustice of supposing that I could take it from you. I am only vexed to find so much beauty in such indifferent company."

"You are Claude Duval?" said the young lady.

"I am; but I do not know how you could be aware of that fact. I do not, however, deny it."

"I guessed it from your manner, sir. A lady of my acquaintance was permitted by you to retain her watch in the same way that you permit me to keep mine, and so I made a guess which turns out to be correct. I hope I may ask of you the favour to let this young man go without any injury or any practical joke being played off upon him."

"Certainly. He is free as air. Jack, you have done with your friend, I suppose, now?"

"Quite so," said Jack. "He is too contemptible to have anything further to do with. Let him go."

"I would prefer," added Claude, as he bowed again to the young lady, "that the knowledge of my name should remain in your own breast."

A glance at the exquisite let the young lady know what Claude meant, and she bowed in acquiescence.

"Now sir," said Claude, "mount and be off, for we don't want your company on the road any longer."

Upon this, feeling quite happy to get off so well as he was, the dandy mounted again, and minus his sword, watch, purse, and rings, left the spot, accompanied by the young lady, who at the last moment looked her thanks for his being let go so easily, considering all things. When they were gone, Claude, despite the many anxieties that were then passing upon his mind, could not help laughing very

heartily at the scene that had taken place ; and after a time, Jack, although he really at the moment had been very much provoked, could not help joining in the laugh.

“ Well, Claude,” he said, “ it was ridiculous.”

“ Most essentially so, Jack, and I really believe that if I had not been here to



CLAUDE FIRED AT BY THE CORPULENT LANDLORD OF THE ROAD-SIDE INN.

cry out moderation to you, you would have actually demolished that unfortunate young man, who, after all, was more ridiculous than noxious.”

“ I ought only to have laughed at him.”

“ Nay, Jack, I will not go quite so far as that. I think that in breaking his sword you served him quite right, but that was enough. And now until the time shall come for me to keep my appointment with our new friend, who will en- b e

me to have a meeting with Lucy, I will go to the farm and pass a short time with Cicely. We are sure of a cordial welcome there."

"With pleasure," said Jack.

The fact is that Jack always lived in the hope that the time would yet come when Claude would find a means of quitting the perilous and most nervous profession, if it might be so called, in which he was engaged ; and he, Jack, thought that if anything more than another could put such thoughts into Claude's head, and keep them there, it would be often to seek the society of Cicely. Thus, Jack was almost more than willing to encourage Claude in turning his horse's head towards the farm.

They both knew the bit of country in which they were amazingly well, and it was after all but a sharp trot of half an hour to bring them to Ealing Common, in the immediate neighbourhood of which was the place they sought. With great joy and alacrity, Claude dived down the little shady lane, which would take him by the back and unfrequented route across the meadows to the farm, and he and Jack soon passed through a well-known gap in a hedge, and made for the friendly shelter of that roof, beneath which poor Cicely found as much comfort as could possibly be hers in this world, considering the many anxieties that must naturally continually possess her upon Claude's account, knowing as she did the perilous life he led.

If Cicely had not chanced to be, as she was, the companion of Claude, during some of the most perilous of the scenes connected with his attempt to leave England, she would have been much more urgent to him than she now even was to abandon a course of life which was so full of perils. But whenever she did say much upon the subject, Claude had a ready answer by saying—

"Cicely, did I not try, and do you remember the result?"

Too well she remembered that result ; and when he did so speak, the gloomy aisles of Winchester Cathedral would rise up before her imagination, and she would shudder at the recollection of the awful scenes of bloodshed and misery she had then gone through.

Hence, then, was it that poor Cicely led a life of continual anxieties, beset by doubts and fears, and not knowing whether to urge Claude to make yet another attempt to leave England, or to let him be for awhile, until some opportunity might arise to promise him a complete emancipation from his course of life, without any of the perils he had encountered in attempting before to leave it.

She had not seen him now for some days, and she had got naturally anxious to know of his welfare. When, therefore, upon glancing from one of the upper windows of the farm-house, she saw him and Jack leading their horses through a little gate from a small paddock into the farm-yard, her heart leaped for joy.

"He is yet safe," she said. "He is yet safe. Heaven has heard my prayers, and he is guarded from death. Once more I behold him free and unharmed !"

So intense were her feelings of gratification, that it was some few moments before she could go down stairs to welcome him, and previously to doing so, she had opened the window and called to him and waved her hand.

## [CHAPTER CLXXXII.]

### THE GREAT PERIL OF CLAUDE AMONG THE GIPSIES ON HOUNSLOW HEATH.

CLAUDE DUVAL had some happy moments of his life. One of them certainly was when he saw Cicely's face at the window, radiant with delight at seeing him.

"Well?" he cried. "Well?"

"Yes, Claude ; and you?"

"Oh, yes !"

She disappeared from the window, and in the course of the next few moments was in his arms, and sobbing upon his breast.

"So you are quite well, Claude, and you are not hurt—you are sure you are not hurt? You have perhaps been in great danger though, while I was safe and secure. Ah! no I was not secure. I never am secure except I am thus—thus, Claude, close to you, and with the full assurance at my heart that you are not snatched from me by any unexpected blow of fate."

"And I, Cicely, am never happy except when I can look into your eyes, and know that I am with you; and feel that you are all my own."

"And you will, neither of you," said Jack, "ever be quite happy until the sea rolls between you and England."

"That is true," said Cicely. "Do you hear it, Claude?"

"I do hear it; and well I know that both you and Jack wish for nothing in the world so much as my happiness and safety; but we will not talk of this now. Neither time nor place are fitting."

"Come in, then," said Cicely, "come into the house. There is an old friend there waiting to see you."

"A visitor?"

"Yes; one who has come on purpose to see you, but who would have left this evening without doing so if you had not chanced to come."

"Tell me who it is, Cicely. I hope you have not been indiscreet enough to take any artful stranger into your confidence? There are many who if they did but know where to find you, would come to you under the pretence of knowing me."

"But this one really knows you. It is my brother."

"Mark Brereton?"

"Yes. It is he, Claude, and with him you know you are quite safe. Is it not so?"

"Yes, indeed; but I thought that he was very far away by this time, indeed."

"And so did I, Claude, and so did everybody; but here he comes himself to speak to you, and you may see by his looks how very glad he is to see you. It is partly for my sake, Claude, and partly because he says he cannot help liking you, whether he would or not. Mark, here is Claude."

These two men, with such dissimilar habits and pursuits, met and shook hands most warmly; nothing attaches men so much together as having passed through serious dangers in each others company, and Heaven knows that Mark Brereton had by the merest accidents and freaks of fortune, been thrown into many strange situations with Claude Duval, and he had had, consequently, opportunities of observing what a fine spirit was lost to some worthy career when he, Duval, took to the road.

"And so you are among us again?" said Claude.

"I am. I could not rest until I had seen you and Cicely; and believe me I am not a little pleased to see that you are so well, as you seem to be."

"I am quite well. And you? I fancy I see an improvement in your looks. It is so, is it not?"

"Oh, yes. My health is better. I have been travelling, and that, I find, is always beneficial to me. But I really began to think that I should have great trouble in finding you. I consider your dropping in here to be quite providential."

"Ah, Mark, if you had chosen to stay here a little longer, you might be sure of seeing me here. I only stay away when I cannot help it, and as soon as I feel myself with some hours of liberty upon my hands, my thoughts fly here, and I fly after them."

"I do not doubt it."

They all entered the house together, and then the farmer and his family began to welcome Claude in the warm and kind-hearted manner with which they always greeted him; and in answer to his inquiries, they said that since the little fracas with the parson, of which Claude was quite cognisant, they had not met with any annoyance from any quarter whatever, but lived in perfect peace

and security, feeling quite sure that the reverend gentleman had so far kept his word towards them.

All this was pleasant enough news for Claude to hear, and turning to Brereton, he said—

“If all the world would be kind enough to forget me, and allow me to live in such a place as this, the quiet life of a lover of the country and of country pursuits, I should be one of the happiest of men. But they will not. No! Nothing makes the world so angry as any attempt to escape from it; and if you do but try it, slander will be busy with the past, and there are hundreds who will raise the hue-and-cry after you from very wantonness and mischief-loving.”

“That is but too true,” said Brereton.

“I have found it so, my friend,” added Claude. “But we will not sadden any of the joy of this happy meeting by such reflections. The evening is but creeping on, and it will be midnight before I need leave you.”

“Leave at midnight?” said Cicely.

“Yes, dearest, I have an appointment with a friend which I hope will not occupy me more than two hours, and if not, I will return here again, But I cannot swear to be back to night again.”

“Ah, Claude, your visits are indeed to me like angels; few, and far between.”

“Nay,” said Claude, with a smile, “but what I am going upon is real business, which ought not to be neglected, as I will convince your brother. Mark, when I tell him; and you will not ask me what it is, I know, Cicely, if I do not freely volunteer to tell you.”

“No, Claude, I will not.”

“A model of a wife,” said Jack, with a smile. “There is but one Cicely in the world, or I think that, tattered by fortune as I am, I might almost yet venture upon matrimony. What say you, Mr. Brereton?”

“You might do worse, Jack.”

Claude stepped apart with Brereton, and told him evidently what he was going about at midnight, upon which Brereton replied that he ought not to go alone, and at once proffered his own services to accompany him, adding, that he and Jack would be company for each other while waiting for him; Claude, and that in case of any treachery or unforeseen danger, they could be close at hand to render him effectual assistance.

“I do not anticipate,” said Claude, “the slightest peril, for I have ample faith in the man who gave me my information, and who might with the greatest ease have withheld it from me. But if you choose to come, I will not say no. You have a horse here, I suppose?”

“Yes, and a good one too.”

“Be it so then; and Jack, who, as a matter of course, will follow me, will be glad enough of your company, and for the matter of that we can all ride together to the common.”

“We can, and I sincerely hope, for all our sakes, you will be able to ward off any threatened danger from the desperate woman you mention. The passions of such persons are dangerous alike to themselves and to others.”

“It shall be done,” said Claude.

We must not follow the conversation that took place at the farm-house now, further than to say that it was of a most friendly and affectionate character among all these assembled, until Claude, upon hearing the old kitchen clock strike twelve, rose and said it was his time to go.

Upon this, both Brereton and Jack rose likewise, and although the cause of his absence at such an hour happened to be one which Claude did not like to explain to Cicely, she felt tolerably satisfied upon finding that Jack and her brother were going with him. He promised to get back with all the expedition in his power, and the fact of Mark Brereton accompanying him was of itself sufficient to assure her that it was no perilous, marauding adventure he was going on, for had such been the case she well knew that Brereton would have nothing to do with it.

The night was more than usually dark, and neither Claude nor his companion could have had much chance of reaching the high road, had not one of the family from the farm-house come with them as a guide that far. The young man who accompanied them led Claude's horse, and the rest followed until they were on the high road that goes along Ealing Common.

"Ah," said Duval, "I know where I am now. I could find my way where I am going blindfolded, if it were at all necessary, so well do I know every inch of it, and every tree, and every turning and winding it can take."

"Then I will leave you now," said the young man.

"You may, my friend, and I thank you for coming so far with me. I hope to be back at the farm in two hours. Now, my friends, a sharp trop will very soon take us to Hounslow Heath."

They all three set off at a trot that got over the ground very quickly, for the horses had been well seen to at the farm, and were consequently in first-rate condition. It seemed as though they reached Hounslow Heath in an incredibly short space of time; and when Claude suddenly cried out—

"Here we are."

Brereton said, "Where?"

"Why, on the heath," said Claude.

"Indeed! You must have brought us by a very near route in good truth, Duval,"

"Yes, both Jack and I know the way pretty well. But now, my friends, I will, if you please, go forward alone, and you can easily keep quietly in the neighbourhood of the spot to which I am bound. Jack, you know it well enough?"

"I do," said Jack; "but let us agree upon some signal, which if we hear will be a hint to us to ride up."

"Very well. If you hear a pistol shot, you may safely enough conclude that your presence will not be amiss. But I do not for one moment anticipate any danger, only I grant always that it is best to be prepared for the very worst that may happen."

"Unquestionably," said Brereton; "so we shall listen for the signal with the hope of not hearing it, for it will be much better if you are able to settle the affair amicably, Claude."

"Much, indeed. Farewell now for a brief space, I think, only. Yonder lies my route."

With this Claude rode off, and was in a very few moments completely lost to all view in the dense obscurity of the night, that seemed to hang over the heath like a funeral fall.

Before he had proceeded very far on his road, which he had to guess at more by instinct than anything else, he became conscious of a dullish red light some short distance ahead of him, and apparently just in the direction he was going, for it shone faintly upon the ruined barn which had been mentioned to him by the man who had personated Dick Turpin.

Claude could not conceive what this light could be, and it was so very near to the earth, too, that upon that account it still more puzzled him. While, however, he was straining his eyes to make something more of it, it suddenly disappeared.

"This, I suppose, is one of the mysteries of the heath," he said, "which probably my new friend may be able to tell me something about, when I am so fortunate as to see him."

He did not in the least relax in his speed on account of this phenomenon, and he soon felt conscious that he must have reached the old barn. He accordingly slackened the speed of his horse. He dismounted, and reaching out his hands, distinctly felt the wall of the old barn, and after a little time he found a place to which he could attach the bridle of his horse; and having done so, he went carefully on, on foot, until he suddenly, upon turning the angle of the barn, came upon the cottage, which was clearly enough observable by the light that streamed out from its little casement.

"All's right," he said, "that is the place."

He advanced rapidly, and tapped at the door with the handle of his heavily loaded whip. In a moment it was opened, and the man whom he had expected to meet stood upon the threshold.

"Ah, I am glad to see you," he said.

"Thank you," replied Claude; "is she here?"

"No, but walk in; I don't know what has come over her to-night, she has been in and out a dozen times at the least. She will be back very soon, I feel assured.

"Why, where has she got to go to?" said Claude, as he slipped into the cottage. "I don't know of another habitation within a good half-mile of this upon the heath."

"Nor I; but there are some gipsies' tents in the neighbourhood, and she seems to have struck up some sort of acquaintance with them."

"Nothing more likely," said Claude. "She always used to make a kind of joke of saying there was gipsy blood in her veins, and I suppose it was true enough. But I will wait for her, and talk to her, poor girl. I hope she will come soon."

### CHAPTER CLXXXIII.

#### CLAUDE IS ATTACKED BY THE GIPSIES, INCITED BY LUCY.

THE place in which Claude found himself now, was by no means one of the most inviting in the world. In fact, a hut more destitute of common comforts than that was, could not have been imagined.

With the meanest and poorest habitation the world ever saw, there is always a something to be done, if there is one to do it, that will give it an air of home comfort; but then again, it requires some one who loves a home to do that, and not so brooding and strange a spirit as that of the young girl whom Claude had come to see. What cared she if the cottage looked squallid or not? Her own cruel passions were all that occupied her thoughts; and having an undisguised contempt for the man who was the sharer of the wretched abode with her, it was not likely that she would even make an effort of the slightest description to bestow an air of home comfort upon the place; on the contrary, she took a gloomy and misanthropical satisfaction in it being what it was.

The walls were marked with unwholesome damp; a glimmering fire was upon the hearth, and the sole furniture consisted of a broken-down deal table, and some apologies for chairs. In one corner was some course pieces of board nailed up so as to make something resembling shelves, upon which some cracked and chipped pieces of crockery were placed; and another corner had partially hiding it a kind of curtain hung to a cord, but it was so blackened by age, that its material could not be defined. The floor was sanded, and as that had been freshly done, the material being in abundance upon the heath, that portion of the wretched dwelling looked better than any other.

"This is a sorry place, Claude Duval, to introduce you to," said the man.

"It certainly is not a palace, my friend. You don't seem to find the road very profitable?"

"I don't know. I dare say it's as good to me as most, always excepting such as yourself. But she won't let me be comfortable. Oh, she's a hard bargain."

"Why don't you leave her, then?"

"Well, somehow or another, I have got used to the girl, and when I do come here, I like even to have her to talk to, in preference to nobody. But she might make the crib a little tidier."

"Truly, she might, my friend. What is that?"

A faint low whistle had sounded from without, and Claude rose from the rather insecure chair upon which he had seated himself at the request of the man.

"It's some of the gipsies, I'll be bound. They are, as I mentioned to you,



## LIFE ON THE ROAD.

Claude Duval, in the neighbourhood, and it's odd but that they are up to some game or another. I will just pop out for a few moments, and see what they are about, if you like."

"Do so; and if you can see Lucy, tell her that I am here, and would fain speak with her."

"I will."

Any one less confident in his own resources, and more suspicious of foul play than Claude Duval, would have hesitated about permitting the man to leave the hut so immediately upon an apparent signal being made from the outside; but Claude took no notice of such little matters, unless he had very good reason indeed to feel this importance, nor was he wrong in the confidence he put in his new friend, as will quickly enough appear.

"For the sake of Cicely, whose safety is so very dear to me," said Claude to himself, as he glanced round the wretched hut, "I must say all I can say to the poor girl who calls this her home. I would that I could see her. Ah! that whistle again. What can it mean?"

The door of the hut was opened a little way, and the head and face of a man looked in. It did not require more than the most hasty glance to let Claude see that he was one of the gipsies.

"Izra," said the stranger. "Where are you now, girl?" and then observing Claude by the miserable light that was upon the table, he shaded his eyes for a moment with his hands and cried—"Who are you? You ain't the usual fox that is in the old lair?"

"Do you wish particularly to know who I am?" said Claude; "for if you do not I prefer keeping that news to myself."

With a short impatient growl the stranger withdrew his head, and banged the front door shut again.

Claude; as a measure of ordinary precaution, looked at his pistols, for well he knew the extreme jealousy with which the gipsies looked upon any one whom they could have the slightest reason to suppose was a spy upon them; and that they held human life under such circumstance cheap enough, he was likewise well aware. The man upon whose good faith he placed reliance, had been gone rather an unreasonable time, and Claude was upon the point of thinking he might as well sally out into the night air to make his own observations, when the door of the hut was hastily opened, and the man appeared.

"Have you seen her?" said Claude.

"I have—she comes. At the mention of your name she was furious, and I thought she would have struck me to the earth. She vows that she will have vengeance against you."

"Pho! pho!"

"You do not fear her?"

"I fear her? My friend, you know less of me than I thought you did, if you fancy that I fear her. I have come here to subdue her—to frighten her; and I will do it."

"If you do frighten her," said the man, "you will be a match for any one, be they ever so mad. But hark! I hear her footsteps on the heath. She comes!"

"Tell me," said Claude quickly. "Has she seen the gipsies since you told her I was here?"

"One man she has seen and held some discourse with, but I know not the subject of it."

"Well, it matters not. Leave us together for a short time, my friend, when she comes here, but be within call, and you may be within hearing too. Indeed, I would rather you were."

"She don't know I am here. I will hide behind yon curtain if you like."

"Do so. Juick! I hear her coming."

The footpad, for such was his real vocation, had only just time to conceal himself behind the curtain in the corner of the hut, when the door was flung

violently open, and Lucy sprang into the little room. Claude never moved from his seat which he had occupied again, but he let her come right up to him, and waited patiently for what she might choose to say. Her anger and impatience soon found words, and in a voice of fury she shouted rather than said—

“So, Claude Duval, you have come here to make me a present of your life, have you? Fool! Where is your boasted cleverness now? Idiot, you are at my mercy now! Ha! ha! Yes, the famous Claude Duval is at my mercy!”

Claude slowly pointed to the open door of the hut, and in a cold, calm voice, he said—

“Shut that door!”

“What!” she cried. “You dare to address me in such a tone! You dare to do it!”

“Shut that door!”

“Ha! ha! You order me!”

“Shut that door, woman!”

She shrunk back evidently cowed, and with a forced laugh she said, as she closed the door—

“Well, perhaps one don’t want all the world to hear what one says—that’s all. There, the door is shut. What do you want with me, Claude Duval?”

“Much.”

“Say it, then. Oh, I ain’t to be cowed and beaten down by you. No. Those times are past long since, I should think. I will have my revenge. Come, speak to me. What do you want, now that you have taken all this trouble to find me out?”

“Trouble I have not taken,” said Claude. “I was told where you were, and I came, so that it has not cost me any trouble. Sit down, Lucy.”

“No, I will stand.”

“But I say you shall sit down. Do you dare to stand when I tell you to sit down?”

She dropped into one of the miserable seats, and with a growl she added—

“There, then, I am sitting down. What do you want now?”

“Is it true, or is it false, that you have uttered threats against my wife?”

“Your wife—wife! Ha, ha! That is good, indeed. So you come here to try to persuade me that you are married, do you?”

“It is true; and if you contradict me again, I will send your head through that wall. Answer me that which I ask of you. I want none of your comments. Is it true that you have uttered threats against my wife?”

“Yes: and what then?”

“Why, then, you shall retract them, and upon your knees you shall take a solemn oath (I know that you are superstitious) that you will never raise hand to do her harm. That is my errand here, and I will fulfil it.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, Lucy. I thought you knew enough of me to be aware that I was a man likely to keep my word, even in so small an affair as this.”

The girl looked at him for a few moments in silence, and then, in a deep, solemn tone, she said—

“Will you swear to me, by all your hopes here and hereafter, that you are really married?”

“I will. But I think my word ought to have amply sufficed. Yet I most solemnly swear it.”

She shook as if moved by some strong convulsions, and then in a high croaked tone she spoke—

“Claude Duval, there was a time when you affected to love me—when you told me that no eyes were so bright as mine—when you cajoled me to be yours by the promise that our union, although it was not ratified by the ceremony of the church, should be eternal. There was a time when I was to you everything—when at my request you would come and go, and be as kind as a summer’s day was long.”

"Well?"

"Can you hear me talk in such a strain, Claude Duval, and say nothing but 'Well' in reply to me? Can you sit and look upon my ruined face, and look the while so calm, when you know you made me what I am?"

"Lucy, you know that that is false; I did not make you what you are. Do



CLAUDE AND JACK MAKE THEIR ESCAPE FROM THE GLOVER'S.

not attribute it to me: You know well that I lifted you from much misery and degradation to make you my companion. That you did not continue to be such, was owing wholly to your own stormy passions. But this is a profitless discussion, and one that it is folly for us to engage in. I came for another purpose."

"Then I tell you, Duval, that you will not accomplish that other purpose."

"So you say?"

"Ay, and so it will be. I have sworn that I would be revenged upon her who has taken you from me, and I will be so revenged. But for her the time would have come when I might again have been with you ; but your marriage places all that aside, and I know that it may not be. Therefore it is, that as I am wretched, you shall be wretched."

"Miserable woman, can you possibly find any sort of gratification in such insensate raving?"

"It is not raving. It is the truth."

"You know that it is not. You know well that I am not one to be trifled with, and that if I for one moment really thought there was any danger to her whom I love to be apprehended from you, I would take such measures as would thoroughly prevent you from being such an enemy to yourself, as to carry out your foolish threats. Well you know all that, and now I say to you, Lucy, make me the solemn promise that you will bear no such malicious thoughts about with you."

"I will not."

"Reflect again, foolish girl. Reflect that by my coming to ask you so much I show you that I have still some esteem left for you. Reflect, I say, before it be too late, upon my words."

"I have reflected until my brain has been on fire. I have thought until thought, too, became madness ; and I tell you, Claude Duval, that if I live I must have my revenge. You can kill me if you like to do so. I do not deny your power to kill a weak girl ; but my death shall sit far heavier upon your soul than my present threats."

"I give you another moment for thought."

"It is useless ; had I an age for thought, the result would be the same ; I could not—I would not alter my determination. It is made, and it is fixed as though it held to my heart with iron grappling-hooks. I will have revenge!"

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## CHAPTER CLXXXIV.

### CLAUDE FINDS HOUNSLOW-HEATH TO BE WELL PEOPLED.

Up to this point, it would almost seem that Claude had had some faint hopes of being able to turn the infuriated girl from her purpose ; but now he looked upon that hope as gone ; and he could not but see that she was madly wedded to it. The idea of taking her life, or of doing her the least bodily mischief, never came into his imagination for a moment, but he had concocted a plan of operations as regarded her, if he found her in the temper that he did, which, however, reluctant under ordinary circumstances he would be to carry out, he yet felt was his only resource. He knew that there was not far from the high-road of Hammersmith a private mad-house, the keeper of which was unscrupulous enough to detain every one who was well paid for, without being particular either as to the amount of madness, or the nature of the authority under which he held them ; and it was to that establishment that Claude thought himself authorised to take Lucy ; provided he found her in such a state of mind as would be decidedly inimical to the safety of Cicely.

It would seem, however, as if the poor creature had seen by the expression of his eye, that he intended something that would be prejudicial to her life or liberty, for suddenly starting up before he could move from his seat, she darted from the cottage, saying, as she went, something in the gipsy tongue, which to Claude was perfectly incomprehensible.

The man came out from his place of retreat behind the curtain, and said at once—

"Go, Claude, from her. Make speed and insure your safety. There is upon the Heath a large party of gipsies, and if she gets them to side with her, they are capable of committing any act of desperation or of blood!"

"I will not leave her thus."

"Nay, what more can you say or do now, than you have said and done already? Leave her to me, Claude Duval, and I may find perhaps some opportunity of speaking to her, when she is calmer. Besides, you should always reflect that an angry woman says much more than she means."

"I have reflected upon that. But this girl is mad, I can see she is, or why at such a time as this, when all sort of connection with me has long since been forgotten, should she become so furious?"

As Claude spoke there came upon the night air a strange low moaning sound, and he looked at the man for an explanation of it.

"It is the gathering of the gipsies," he said. "I know their habits and feelings well, for I have lived with several of the largest tribes. Heaven only knows what that maddened girl may say to them, to stir their hatred against you. I tell you, Duval, you are anything but safe here."

"And yet I shall remain."

"It is madness."

"No, not so. I have friends within call whom I can summon to my side. When I begin an adventure I like to go through with it, and this one is anything but satisfactorily settled as yet. I am not without hope of getting Lucy to a better disposition."

"You do not know her then so well as I do. As well might you attempt to make the stoutest oak of the forest bow before your breath, as get that girl to listen to reason, when her passion tells her to be unreasonable."

"She is changed, but yet she is human."

"Hark! The moaning sound continues. It is the peculiar sound made by the gipsies, when they are meeting under the impulse of some strong excitement. Again I urge you to seek safety in flight. Come this way. I can take you out by another way from the hut, and you can seek your friends."

"Urge me no more. I cannot think there is much danger. Surely the lawless people who live such a life of wandering and defiance of the rest of the community cannot feel much more than sympathy with one of my profession, and they have sense enough, I should fancy, not to pay much attention to the ravings of a jealous girl. I should scarcely forgive myself, my friend, if I were to fly from such a danger as this. Compose yourself and trust to me, that so far as regards my personal safety, all will be well; at the same time, let me thank you for your kind solicitude and assure you that I feel it deeply."

"It is so much my doing your being here at all, that I should feel myself almost like your murderer should anything disastrous happen to you. But since you will stay, remember that I will stand or fall by you, and that you may depend upon me, let the emergency be what it may."

"I know it, and will do so. They come."

A strange half-suppressed kind of shout now arose in the night air from the outside of the hut, and through the chinks, which were sufficiently numerous, in the walls, there came the red glare of torches. Claude took care to keep as near the centre of the place as possible, so that he might not be taken by surprise by any one, for the walls were quite frail enough to enable anybody who might wish to get into the wretched building in that way to push right through at any part. It did not at the moment occur to Claude that the roof might be in worse condition still, and he was at the moment rather startled to hear a sudden crash accompanied by a rushing noise, and to find a man alight close to him from the old thatch.

The gipsy's features, the long black dishevelled air, and the sparkling eyes, at once told Claude that it was one of the lawless race that stood before him with a knife in his hand.

"Die!" cried the gipsy. "Die, enemy of the child of our race."

Claude sprang upon him in a moment.

"My friend," he said, "you mistook the roof for the door, and I never allow

any one to come in where I am, without knocking first. Pray tell your friends outside as much, if you please."

As he spoke, Claude made one of those tremendous efforts of strength, which at times only, and under extraordinary circumstances, he thought proper to exert. He lifted the gipsy to the height of some six feet from the floor, and then dashed him like a shot head-foremost through the little casement of the hut, and the force with which he went was so great that it had all the appearance as though he had been projected by some powerful mechanical means.

The gipsy raised a loud shriek as he went thus unceremoniously out of the hut, that he thought he had so very cleverly got into.

"You have killed him!" said the man.

"Possibly, but those fellows take a deal of killing. I very much doubt if he is other than a little hurt by the broken glass of the window, and you may depend that he alighted on his feet. Gipsies and cats always do—begging the pardon of cats for the association."

"You are a strange man, Claude; but look to your arms."

"All's right, I have a couple of pairs of pistols that I know I can depend upon. How are you provided in that particular?"

"Very well indeed. But you spoke of your friends; are they far off, or can you summon them at a moment or two's notice?"

"They are close at hand. At the first pistol shot that is fired by either party they will make their appearance; I shall not fire it unless urged by some uncommon necessity so to do, and I beg that you will be as feeling as you can."

"I will—I will!"

The low shout of the gipsies again came upon their ears, and in the course of a few moments some one tapped at the door of the hut. The man was about to answer it, but Claude said, "Permit me," and then in a clear unembarrassed voice he cried—

"Who is there?"

"One who demands admission," said a voice.

"Take it then. The door is on the latch. What hinders you, except fear? The fear that always besets men upon a bad errand. Why do you not come in?"

The door was opened, and a tall dusky-looking man in a tattered cloak appeared upon the threshold.

"Claude Duval," he said, "we know you."

"Then you have the advantage of me," said Claude, "and I do not at all envy you it, for I am not by any means solicitous for your acquaintance."

"Peace," said the tall gipsy. "This trifling as ill becomes me as it does you. I come with a demand."

"Make it then."

"You must repudiate her whom you call your wife, and you must take again to your home and to your affections, by such ceremonies as we may think proper, her whom you have discarded, and who is one of our people. That is the sentence of our tribe; and if you refuse, the bitter consequences must fall upon your own head."

"And pray what may those consequences be?" said Claude.

"Death!"

"Then my dingy-looking friend, I differ very much from you; and if you are the ambassador of your tribe, you can go back to it, and say that I am married already, and that if I were not, I should at once and most unhesitatingly decline any of their ceremonies or any of their people. If, as I suspect, you are all allowing yourselves to be stirred up to this folly by a girl who calls herself Lucy, I can only say, that you don't any of you know her half so well as she is known upon the pave of London; and the very best and most creditable thing you can all do concerning her, is to disown the connection, for it will bring upon you all nothing but disgrace and trouble."

"False wretch!" cried a female voice, and an old woman with long matted

hair and a tattered red cloak about her, rushed into the hut. "False villain! she whom you speak of is my child, and she is as virtuous as she is beautiful. It is you only, who have led her into the paths of vice; and repugnant as we are to an union with a stranger, you shall, according to our forms, wed her."

"Madam," said Claude, "the less we say of the virtue of your daughter, the better. The subject is a very ticklish one, and I sincerely advise you to drop it."

"You shall wed her! She has decided that she will be satisfied if you repudiate your wife, as you call her, and wed her. You will then be pardoned your many iniquities towards her, and from time to time we will receive you as one of us. So, rejoice—rejoice—rejoice!"

Claude could hardly help laughing at the inflated manner of the old woman; and when she told him, with the air of some ancient priestess, striking a grand attitude at the same time, to rejoice, she certainly got the better of his gravity altogether, and he laughed outright.

The old gipsy woman gave a perfect yell of rage at this, but Claude raised his hand, and cried in a clear voice—

"Silence, woman! Your ridiculous denunciations and absurd inflation of language, may go down very well in some hovel, but permit me to say that I am rather a matter-of-fact personage, and that consequently, your raving has by no means the effect upon me that no doubt you wish it to have. If the foolish young woman, Lucy, is your daughter, the best advice you can possibly, as a mother, give her, is, to be quiet, and to do her best now to quell the tumult that she has been the absurd cause of raising."

"He dies! he dies!" cried the old woman. "His death shall be upon his own head! He dies! he dies!"

"Yes," said Claude, "when my time comes I shall certainly die; but not yet, I think I have a well-grounded expectation of living some time, yet. And now, in all seriousness, I warn you, and your tribe of ragamuffins, that I am a man fond of a joke in its way, but I do not like it to be carried too far, and when I begin to be serious, it is rather apt to be a serious thing for other people. This man who is with me can tell you as much of me; so I warn you, and it will be well for you and all your tribe, Lucy included, if the warning be taken in good time."

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## CHAPTER CLXXXV.

### CLAUDE CAPTURES LUCY, AND TAKES HER TO THE ASYLUM.

The manner of Claude Duval during this most perilous adventure, probably had more effect upon the gipsies than anything he said or did. They were perfectly astounded to find, for the first time in their lives, a man who, alone, laughed at their practical appetite for revenge; and in replying to their high-flown threats, only treated them to a little common-sense, such as they well knew the truth of, but most certainly were not in the habit of hearing.

And all that he said, too, was said in such a calm, quiet, confident air, as if their power against him was really nothing, while his against them, one would have thought was infinite.

The woman, in particular, who had thought to bear him down by hard words, and an assumption of the stage-priestess style, was evidently cowed, and if she had but had the candour to say so, she would have admitted that for once, if it were only for once, she had met her match, in meeting with one who knew how to treat with cool contempt those empty threats which only borrowed a little force from the lofty language in which they were couched.

Claude Duval knew much more of the gipsies, and of their strange habits and traditions, than they were aware of; and among other things that he knew of them, he well knew that they dreaded nothing so much as a collision with the law. It was

quite a principle with them to put up with a general injury done to them, rather than provoke the regard of public opinion, and of public persons; for leading the strange vagabond life that they did, they lived in constant dread in so highly civilized and carefully cultivated a country as England, of being put down, if we may be allowed the expression.

The old gipsy women, however, although it was quite clear that she trembled before Claude, made yet another effort to obtain the mastery over him, and so accomplish her object, which was now to get rid of him as quickly as possible.

Throwing herself into an attitude as though she were quite an inspired personage, she cried—

“Ah! the spirits of another world speak to me. The dim future, like the course of some mighty river, seen from the mountain top, unfurls itself before me. My children, we will spare this man.”

A yell of disappointment from the dark throng of gipsies at the door of the hut was the response to this announcement.

“Yes,” added the old woman. “It must be so. Go in peace, stranger, from our people. Go in peace, I say, and never let us look upon your shadow again. Never—never!”

“No, no,” cried the gipsies. “Down with him! kill him, kill him! Down with him. He has done a deed to bring shame upon our tribe. Down with him! kill him, kill him!”

“No,” cried the old woman, “I say no!”

“You need not contend about me,” said Claude, calmly. “I have come here for an especial purpose, and I will perform my mission.”

“Fool!” cried Lucy, suddenly springing towards him, from the open door of the hut, and clutching him by the arm. “How many lives have you that you can afford to play with them thus? Let me ask you that; idiot that you are.”

“Upon my word; Lucy,” said Claude, “you are very complimentary; but permit me to say, that I look upon you as the fool, for you are the author of a disturbance here, that in the end these worthy people will not thank you for stirring up.”

“They are my people,” said Lucy, making a very faint effort indeed to imitate the manner of the old woman.

“They may,” added Claude, “or they may not be your people. You may have gipsy blood in you veins, for all I know; and this anything but respectable-looking, old lady may be your mother, upon the principle that as unquestionably you had a mother, she may as well fill that situation regarding you as any other person. But I have yet to learn what all that has to do with my object here?”

“Your object is defeated,” said Lucy. “This is my mother, and those whom you see and hear are my tribe. Your object, I say, is defeated. It was to threaten me—it was to frighten me from my revenge; but I will not be frightened from it. I will have revenge upon her whom you have taken to you heart, after once placing me there!”

Claude smiled.

“You laugh? A knife—a knife! I will kill him myself! He laughs at my seared and broken heart. A knife, I say! I will myself kill the man who has made me what I am, and who now scorns the gipsy’s child;—will no one give me the means of present vengeance? Is there no brother of my tribe who will give it to me?”

A long glittering knife was thrown on to the floor of the hut, within a few paces of where Lucy stood. With one stride Claude put his foot upon it, as he said in a loud clear voice—

“If the man who threw this knife will come here, I will throttle him for his pains.”

No one came, and the dark throng of persons at the door of the miserable little place rather drew back than otherwise.

“Give me the knife,” said Lucy.

“Pho! girl,” cried Claude, “you are a fool; you overact your part.”



He seized her by one wrist, and, although he by no means held her with any painful pressure, yet she found it as impossible to escape from that grasp as if it had been one of iron.

"He holds me!" she cried. "He wants to kill me!"

"Not at all, Lucy," said Claude, "for if such a foolish idea had ever entered my brain, I could and would have done it long ago. But I will, now that I have got you, hold you fast."

"Help! help!"

"Oh, you may shout for help as much as you please. I will take care that you shall come to no more harm, at all events, than your own obstinacy may bring upon you; but if any of your dark-skinned relations interfere with me, let them look to it, for I shall not be very particular how I retaliate."

"Mother! mother!" cried Lucy.

"Let her go," said the gipsy-woman. "We will bury the past in deep oblivion. You shall be adopted into our tribe, and Lucy, according to the mystic rites and ceremonies of our ancient race, shall be you wife."

"I decline the honour," said Claude.

"You decline?"

"Yes; I am already married, according to what probably you would call the mystic rites and ceremonies of my own people; and if I were at all inclined for a plurality of wives, I should not come here for the second one; so, with a great appreciation of the honour, I despise it."

"He contemns us!" cried the old woman.

"Vengeance! vengeance!" cried those without the hut.

"Hark, you," said Claude; "if this girl will, even now, in the presence of yourself and of her people, which she calls the savages outside, retract her mad threats against one, whom it is my inclination as much as it is my duty to protect, and will make a solemn oath that, by word or deed, she will not seek to injure her, I will depart in peace."

"No—no!" cried Lucy.

The old woman spoke, in the patois of the gipsies, to some of those who were upon the threshold of the door, and turning to Claude, she said—

"It is done—it is done. Now go."

"What is done?"

"You may go in peace, with an assurance that nothing will be attempted against the person of whom you speak."

"Is this so, Lucy?" said Claude.

"No!" cried the girl, with vehemence. "If my lips were to utter as much my heart would not. I call upon my people to avenge me upon you, and I will avenge myself upon her who stands between you and me."

"That is quite enough," said Claude.

"She knows not what she says," cried the old woman. "Passion is in her heart and brain. In a calmer hour she will think differently; I will in the meantime be answerable for her, you can take my word."

"I wish I thought I could," said Claude, "but I have always found that I could take any one's word for mischief much sooner than I could take it for good. If Lucy herself had acceded to my conditions, I would have left her, for I should have felt that I had no right to ask more; but as she has not, I hold her as my prisoner."

"Your prisoner?"

"Yes; my prisoner. Do I not speak plainly? I say, I hold her as my prisoner, and I will not let her be at liberty to carry out her threats, in the smallest particular. My determination is to take her now away with me, dead or alive!"

"Save me! save me!" cried Lucy.

"There will be murder done," whispered the footpad to Claude; "for her sake, let her go now."

"No—not while I have life to hold her.—I give every one fair warning. If any of you interfere with me I will blow your brains out. I am well armed, and

I will do it. My mind is wound up to my object, and I will carry it out, so help me Heaven!"

The tone of voice in which Duval uttered these words for a few moments struck absolute terror into the hearts of all who heard him. Even Lucy, nerved as she was by strong passions, shook again. The old woman stamped with rage, and advanced two steps, crying—

"You would drag my child to a prison?"

"No," said Claude. "But I will take care of her. If she is so very fond of me as she pretends, why all this fuss about going with me?"

"You do not take her in affection."

"Certainly not."

"Then she shall not go. My children—brave spirits of our ancient tribes! I let loose your wrath against this man. I withdraw all interdiction. I no longer say to you, spare him. But I tell you to kill—kill—kill!"

A loud howl of delight came from those on the outside, and one dark figure darted into the hut and made an attempt to cast himself at Claude's feet, and seize him by the ankles, which, if he had succeeded in doing, would have embarrassed Claude very much, and indeed, in all probability would have defeated him; but Duval was well aware that that mode of fighting was practised by the gipsies, and he was prepared to resist it in the only manner in which it can and ought to be resisted.

With one of the heavy riding boots that he had on, he gave the gipsy who tried the cunning manoeuvre, such a frightful kick in the face, that with a yell of pain, he rolled right out of the hut, among his companions.

"Come on," cried Claude, "I am quite prepared for that species of attack. Come on, cowards—come on!"

It was all very well for Claude to say "come on," but after the reception that their comrade had met with, the gipsies did not exactly see the amusement of coming on. The old woman suddenly said a something in a loud voice, and then rushing from the hut, she slammed the door of it shut.

"What are they going to be about now?" said Claude to the footpad.

"I cannot imagine. I don't know what the old gipsy said. Their language is only very slightly known to me. What do you mean to do, Claude, with the girl?"

"Take her with me, of course. She has fainted. Excess of passion has got the better of her at last, and before she recovers I shall, I hope, have her in a place of safety. We must manage to leave the hut, my friend, as quickly as possible."

"They are barricading the door."

"Indeed! What can that be for?"

"Hush! hush! Ah, now I guess."

"You guess what?"

"That they are going to burn us out. *Ахъ*, the old woman is raving away at a great rate. I think they are about to do something that she disapproves of. The fact is, they care nothing for this girl, for they do not at all acknowledge her as one of them; but the old woman has a certain amount of authority among them, which they allowed her to exercise until their own passions got the upper-hand of them."

"Now, then, you think it is merely an affair of private vengeance against me, do you?"

"Yes, the manner in which you have treated two of them has made them almost mad, and they will think nothing of sacrificing Lucy, if, with her, they can sacrifice you."

"Do you really think so?"

"I am sure of it. They keep repeating the word 'fire' in their own tongue, and I believe that they will set light to the thatch of the hut."

"Ah, there is very little doubt but what that will be their game. Now you mention it, I can easily imagine that it is just the sort of thing that would sug-

rest itself to them ; and the old woman opposes it on account of Lucy, no doubt."

"She does."

"Put out the light, my friend. Without it we shall be better able to judge of what they are about. The turf upon the hearth will give us sufficient light to



DICK TURPIN VISITED BY CLAUDE AND JACK.

prevent us being taken by surprise through the roof, or by any other extemporaneous modes of entrance."

The footpad put out the light, and then, as Claude had said, there was a dim twilight throughout the little hut from the glowing turfs on the hearth. A very strange and unnatural stillness was without, and as Claude felt no doubt of the genuineness of the faint of Lucy, he placed her upon two chairs and waited the

result of the gipsies' proceedings, with a most admirable coolness and self-possession, that was much envied by the footpad.

"Are you sure," he said, "that the girl is not playing you a trick?"

"Quite. You mean, do I think she has really fainted?"

"Yes; that is it. She has played me so many games and tricks, that I am suspicious of her."

"I know her well, my friend. But you don't seem very much cut up at the idea of parting from her?"

"I cut up?—oh, no. Quite the reverse. Her temper was tolerably violent before, but now, I expect, after all this, if she were to stay with me, I should never have one moment's peace; so I beg that you will take her, and let me get rid of her in any way. I should go in fear of my very life."

"I should not wonder. But go to the window, my friend, and both look and listen. You know something of the dialect of the gipsies, and I do not. If you can come to any correct information as to what they are about, I shall be glad to hear it."

"I will, Claude. You keep an eye on the girl, and likewise keep both ears and eyes open to be on the alert in case of these rascals trying any of their tricks. They are quite as artful as so many savages."

"I know it. I will be careful."

The footpad listened at the window, and in a few moments he came to Claude, and said, in a low tone—

"I am certain some one of them is on the roof."

"I was thinking the same thing," said Claude.

"You have heard him then?"

"I have; but you look to the general safety while I adopt a mode of meeting the fellow. Where is my hat?—oh, I have it. That will do. Have you a stick?"

"Yes. Here is one."

"Very good. Do not say a word now."

All was profoundly still, and Duval took one of the glowing red hot turfs and placed it upon the crown of his hat, taking the precaution previously to place a cold turf under it, so that it should not in a moment, as it otherwise would have done, burn through the crown. He then placed the stick in the hat, and held it behind his back, and waited under the large hole that was in the roof for the gipsy.

## CHAPTER CLXXXVI.

CLAUDE HEARS OF DICK TURPIN'S ARREST, AND DETERMINES TO SAVE HIM.

As he stood in the hut under the hole in the little miserable thatched roof, through which it will be recollected that one of the gipsies had made an attempt to come down upon Claude, and been so summarily ejected again, he could just see some portion of the night sky and one star.

That star would rapidly, no doubt, have passed over his plane of vision, but he kept his eyes fixed upon it, and in the course of about half a minute it was suddenly obscured by something black being thrust before it.

Claude did not doubt for one moment but that that something was the face of a gipsy on the roof, and it was for such a contingency that he had the little piece of apparatus ready that we have noticed at the conclusion of our last chapter.

The turf was glowing hot, and in one instant, by the aid of the stick in the hat, Claude thrust it up with sharp and sudden vehemence into the face of the gipsy. A yell of pain and rage, and a shower of red hot sparks from the turf on to the floor of the hut, testified amply to the success of the plan. Then there

was a rolling sound over the roof, and the unmistakable indication of a heavy fall outside.

"I rather think," said Claude, "that I have singed that gentleman's whiskers, if he had any to singe."

"You must, indeed," said the footpad, "have punished him severely."

"Serves him right. He had no business there."

"None in the least. But I should not have thought of such a plan, if I had puzzled my brain for twelve months upon the subject. Of a truth, Claude Duval, you have a most fertile imagination."

"One needs it, my friend, when one has to deal with such a set of demi-savages as these gipsies."

"They are quite savages when they are enraged; for then they forget that they are in a civilised country, and encompassed by the restraints of the law."

"Ah, they begin now."

"By Heaven! they do. They have fired the thatch, and the old hut will soon be about our ears. What on earth is to be done now, Claude Duval?"

"Don't be alarmed," said Claude; "all will be well yet."

"Think you so?"

"I feel assured it will. The walls of this hut are not very strong, my friend. Perhaps you know the weakest part. Break through it, and then we will leave the place. No doubt, it is the door that is most looked to by the gipsies."

"Yes; but they are all round the hut."

"Never mind that. All will be well. They are people who deal in threats, but nothing else."

"I will soon open a way to the heath," said the footpad. "Nothing is much easier to do than that, Claude, in such a place as this."

"Quick, then,"

The footpad set about opening a hole in the wall at the back of the hut, and by the rattling of the falling rubbish of which the wall was composed, Claude could hear that he was being speedily successful.

And now the hut presented both from without and from within, a very strange appearance indeed. The thatch was all on fire, and blazed up rather freely, while the inside was tolerably cool and comfortable, for the artificial current produced by the flames brought in at every crevice, as well as by the broken window, a strong draught of cold air; and no doubt, from without, the appearance was that the whole place was in one blaze.

Claude picked up Lucy, and flung her over his right shoulder, as he said, in a low tone—

"Are you ready?"

"Quite," said the footpad.

"Very good. Follow me, if you wish to get away; or, possibly, you would rather remain, since it is not against you that the rage of the gipsies is invoked?"

"No. It is not against me specially, but yet I feel that this is no place for me now. When you are gone, they will want some one to be revenged upon, and they may just as well light upon me as not. I will go with you, Claude, if you will permit me."

"Certainly. Come on."

The opening that the footpad had made in the wall was just wide enough to admit of one person only to pass out of the hut by it; and Claude took the lead. In his breast he had placed a pair of pistols in such readiness that he could avail himself of their services at a moment's notice, and in his right hand he held the powerful stiek—which was more like a hedge stake than anything else—which he had used to thrust the hat, upon which was the lighted turf, into the gipsy's face.

Claude did not run, or make any undue haste, but he coolly and boldly sallied out into the night air.

The footpad was right enough in saying that the gipsies encompassed the hut, for the moment Claude made his appearance he was seen by the light of the blazing thatch, and a dozen voices cried—

"Down with him! Down with him!"

"My child! my child! Where is my child?" shouted the old woman. "He will kill her!"

"I have him!" said a man, darting forward; but in a moment he lay prostrate upon the heath with one blow of the stick that Claude carried.

"Take that," said a voice; and the sharp report of a pistol immediately sounded. The ball went through Claude's hat about a couple of inches only clear of his forehead. He saw by the flash the gipsy who fired it, and in an instant he returned the shot; and after a spring into the air, and a shriek, down went the gipsy dead upon the heath!

The wild yell that upon this arose from every throat was really something awful to hear, and might have appalled many a stout heart; but Claude kept the gipsies yet at bay, although, now that matters had got so serious, he did not attempt to advance. He well knew that the pistol shots would have the effect of bringing his friends to the spot, and he was, therefore, content to wait until they should arrive before he attempted anything else.

The footpad was close behind him, and he whispered—

"Blood has been shed now, and they will murder us!"

"Oh, no—no. Not at all."

"They will—indeed they will. Why do you not try to rush through them? Throw down the girl, and make one bold push for your own safety, Claude—I implore you to do so."

"All is well. Do you hear that?"

The footpad listened, and the sound of horses' hoofs came plainly upon his ears, patting the heath with a rapidity of sound that showed they were rapidly approaching the spot of the contest.

"Ah," he said, "I had forgot that you told me you had friends at hand. Why did you not summon them sooner?"

"Blood! blood!" cried the gipsies; and by the light of the now nearly expiring thatch, Duval could see that almost every one of them was armed with a knife. They were evidently collecting in a strong body, with the intention of making a rush at Claude and the footpad.

On came the horsemen, and they were close at hand before the gipsies, in the state of excitement in which they were, heard anything of their approach; and when they did, a momentary feeling of consternation induced them to pause. That moment was everything to Claude, for during it Jack and Brereton and the young farmer rode up.

"Where are you?" cried Jack. "Is all right?"

"Yes, all right," said Claude; "only these gentlemen think of murdering me, that's all."

"We will be in at the death," cried Jack, "at any rate, I rather think, Claude."

In an instant the three horsemen dashed through the throng of gipsies, and reached the side of Claude, having upset some half dozen of the more violent of the gang in their way.

"My horse?" cried Claude. "Is he with you?"

"Yes. Here," said Jack; "I have him by the bridle."

"That's right, Jack. Will you take care of this young lady? she is an old acquaintance of yours."

"Who is it—Lucy?"

"Yes."

"Give her to me," said Jack; "I'll hold her tight enough. I have a lively recollection that she used to have some little peculiarities of disposition that she called a temper."

"And she has them still, Jack. But she has fainted, so will give you no trouble. All's right now. Ah, pop away!"

As Claude mounted, another pistol was fired at the party; but although the bullet must have come right among them, it did not seem to have done any damage to them.

"Now," said Claude, "one charge with vigour will carry us through this mob of desperadoes, and you must not be at all particular where your horses tread, or whose toes come under their hoofs, for they will use their knives against the animals if they can."

"And what's to become of me?" said a doleful voice.

"Really, my friend," said Claude, "I hope you will forgive me for forgetting you for a moment. Get up behind me. My horse will carry double fare as far as we want to go, at any rate."

The footpad was thankful enough to scramble up behind Claude Duval, and then the whole party was ready; and what had been said and done during the time that they were getting ready had not occupied one quarter of the time that we have been compelled to take in the telling of it.

"Charge!" cried Claude.

Every one put his horse to a gallop, and as they each had rather heavy riding-whips, and Claude still retained possession of the hedge stake, they did not make much of the foe that only made a straggling attempt to oppose them. In the course of half-a-dozen seconds they were quite through the throng of gipsies, leaving some half-dozen of them sprawling upon the heath.

"On—on," cried Claude. "Follow me."

He took the lead, and rather to the surprise of the friends who were with him, he did not take his way to the farm-house, whither they had naturally enough concluded he would go first; but he galloped across the common in quite an opposite direction, keeping on at such a pace that none of them could ask him a question as to where he was going to.

He did not continue this speed for long though, and then Jack called out to him—

"Claude, where are you going? This is not the route to the farm."

"No," said Claude, "but that is the last place to which I should think of taking this girl to, Jack. Our friends there have quite enough trouble upon our account as it is."

"Do not think of that as a reason," cried the young farmer. "We never think anything a trouble, Claude, that we do for you; so that is of no sort of consequence. If you think proper to bring her to the farm, do so."

"No," said Claude; "it is certainly impossible that you could be always on the watch to prevent her from escaping from you, or perpetrating some mischief that would be worse still. I propose placing her in a private Lunatic Asylum, of which I know something, and where they will take her if they are well paid, and ask no questions."

"But she may talk?"

"Oh, yes, and they may listen, but what she says will have about as much effect upon those who will listen to her, as though she talked to the trees, or to the grass in the meadows. Has she moved, Jack?"

"No."

"Indeed! I begin to feel a little uneasy about this long swoon that she has fallen into. Can any of you get a light?"

"Yes, I can," said the young farmer; "and I have a small lantern hanging by my saddle, if it has not been knocked away in that squabble with the gipsies. No, here it is."

"Let us pause a moment by these trees," said Claude, "and see, if we can, what is the matter with her. I have half a suspicion now that she is only shamming a faint, for these sort of insensibilities seldom last so long as this."

They were tolerably clear of the heath, and upon the verge of a rather dense cluster of tall trees, among which they now quietly walked their horses, and Duval and the young farmer alighted. The latter, after some trouble, succeeded in lighting his lantern, which was a small hand one, with a powerful magnifying-glass, and a good reflector.

"Now," said Claude, "we will see what is the matter with this rather violent piece of goods."

As he spoke he lifted Lucy off Jack's horse, and kneeling upon one knee, he supported her upon the other.

"Bring the lantern close," he said.

"Here it is," said the young farmer. "Won't she open her eyes?"

"Good God!" said Claude.

"What is it—what is it?" they all cried.

"Poor girl, she will never open her eyes again. A pistol-bullet has gone through the very centre of her forehead, and she is stone-dead!"

## CHAPTER CLXXXVII.

LUCY IS BURIED AMONG THE TREES, AND CLAUDE HEARS NEWS OF TURPIN.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that had happened to deprive the little party among the trees of much sympathy with such a personage as Lucy, they could not help feeling something of a shock upon finding that she was really dead.

For some few moments not one word was uttered by any one, and as they all, by the light of the little lantern that the young farmer had with him, gazed upon the lifeless face, no doubt each was busy with his own peculiar reflections upon the scene.

"Thank God," said Claude, breaking the silence, "that no one here present is answerable for this death."

"No one," said Jack.

The footpad stepped forward, and with his hands clasped, he looked down at the corpse. One tear fell from his eyes, and with a deep sigh, he said—

"So this is the end. Poor girl, I don't know now if all thy passion about Duval was real or affected; but whichever it was, you have paid the penalty of it. You are gone now."

"Yes," said Claude, "and let all her faults go with her. Let us, if we say anything of her now, poor girl, say that she was wrong-headed but not wrong-hearted. It matters not now if she were only playing a part, or if she really felt all that she said and did. She is gone."

"Yes gone," added the footpad. "Peace go with her. I never thought until this moment—"

"What?" said Claude.

"That I cared for her a jot!"

As he said these words, so few, and yet so expressive of his feeling for the dead, he turned sadly away. Claude walked after him, and touching him lightly on the shoulder, he said—"Stop."

The footpad turned round hastily.

"There is something yet to be done, my friend," said Claude.

"What? Can you restore her to life again?"

"No, but we can pay proper respect to the dead. Here, in the open country, far away from the fetid soil of the crowded churchyard, let us lay her to rest. We will bury her, my friend."

The footpad grasped Claude's hand, but he said nothing. That pressure was sufficient, and they then walked back slowly together to the spot where Lucy lay, with Jack and the young farmer looking at her.

"We must bury her," said Claude. "At least, at our hands her remains want so much attention. Here amid the trees, where the free air of Heaven will blow over her grave, we will bury her."

"Yes," said Jack. "That is a job I will help at, with all my heart, Claude. Poor girl, she has my pity, and yet she has come to a quieter end than probably any of us will. Only look at her face, Claude; she just seems sleeping calmly and pleasantly."

"It is so, Jack."



"How is it possible," said the young farmer, "that we can bury her? We cannot dig a grave with our nails."

"That is indeed an obstacle," said Jack.

"And yet," said the footpad "buried she must be, poor thing. If it take me a whole day to scoop a grave for her with a hedge-stake, I will do it. It is my duty not to desert even her corpse, whatever you may all think proper to do."

He spoke in a tone of voice that was harsh with hardly suppressed g. Claude laid his hand upon his arm, and spoke gently,

"Hush, my friend, hush. If we speak of difficulties, it is only that we may devise means to overcome them. Do not fancy that we are going to abandon our object. It will be done, let the difficulties be what they may."

"Forgive me for a brief impatience."

"It needs no excuse, Jack; can you think of any mode of operation in this emergency?"

"Yes," said Jack. "I think I can go to our friend's farm here, in less than half an hour, and bring back a couple of spades."

"Ah!" said the young farmer, "I did not think of that; I will go, and as I know exactly where to lay my hands upon what I want, I shall be able to do it quicker, and likewise to give no alarm to the family. Shall I go at once on this errand, Claude?"

"You will please me much, my friend, by doing so."

The young farmer did not wait another moment, but availing himself of the loan of Jack's horse, which was accustomed to a sharp run now and then, he set off across the fields at a pace that promised very soon to bring him to his destination.

Nothing of any moment passed during the absence of the young farmer, and he returned in much less time than any one could have supposed it possible for him to do. He brought with him two staved spades, and as he dismounted, he said—

"I got the spades from an outhouse we have in the garden, and so had no occasion to go near the house."

"Then no one knows you have been there?" suggested Claude.

"No one."

Claude nodded as though he would have said—

"I am glad of that," and then in a clear voice, he said—

"At this juncture, my friends, let me ask if any of you feel any repugnance to promising to keep this affair a profound secret?"

"None," said the footpad. "I feel, Duval, that this is a question that is solely addressed to me, and I promise that not one word of to-night's proceedings will ever pass my lips."

"I thank you," said Claude, "and I tell you frankly my reason for being pleased at such a promise. It would much vex Cicely, my wife, to hear of it."

"No doubt. It shall be kept secret."

The young farmer took one of the spades, and the footpad took the other; but Claude, throwing off his coat, took it from him, saying—

"No, my friend, let me do this last service for the poor girl. You can be a spectator and a mourner, and should not be asked to work at this sad task."

The footpad surrendered the spade. Indeed his hands shook so, that if he had attempted to persevere in the use of it, it was quite clear that he would have made but very small progress indeed with it, while Claude, with his strength and perseverance, was able, effectually, to aid the young farmer, who had already systematically begun the work.

They chose a spot beneath a large sycamore tree, whose spreading branches stretched far and wide on all sides, and particularly to the south, and then they marked out the grave of the wayward spirit that had brought death upon itself.

As they worked, the gray light of the dawn began slowly to make its appearance, and they extinguished the little lantern, by the aid of which they had first

begun their labours. The moment they put that out, the coming daylight was much more perceptible to them all, and they paused a moment to look at it.

"We must get our work over soon," said Claude, "or the daylight will surprise us."

"Yes," said Jack, "it is coming fast. There—there is a sudden gleam of light from the east. Do you see it among the trees?"

"Yes, and the grave is finished," said Claude.

They had dug about five feet into the earth, and now the young farmer and Claude having got out of the grave, they all carefully and slowly lifted the body and placed it in its last resting place.

"My large cloak, Jack," said Claude.

"Yes, it is here," said Jack.

Claude took it and laid it four times doubled over the corpse, and then they replaced the mould, and as the young farmer had carefully laid aside the turf from the surface, he relaid it again, so that but very slight traces of any interference with the ground was left. The spare mould they scattered far and wide among the trees; but before the work was quite finished the farmer approached the footpad, and taking a little volume from his pocket, he said—

"I brought you this. Would you like to use it?"

It was a book of Common Prayer, and, of course, contained the service for the dead.

"Yes—yes," he said, eagerly; "yes. I thank you for this. Indeed, I thank you for this."

He advanced to the side of the grave, and holding the book so that the best rays of the gray light that was irradiating the east fell upon it, he read the service of the dead in a solemn and affecting voice. All present stood uncovered, and listening to it with quiet composure; and when the last words were spoken, and the book was closed, it dropped from the hands of the footpad.

"I shall leave England now," he said.

"Do you think you will be happier elsewhere?" said Claude.

"Yes, I am sure I shall. Besides, I—"

What the footpad was going to add, was suddenly drowned in the echoes of a loud yell, that came from some unseen persons in the immediate vicinity among the trees.

So entirely unexpected, and so startling was this sudden outcry, that even Claude, with all his presence of mind, and few could equal him in that grand particular, was startled. He recovered, however, in a moment, and cried out—

"The horses, Jack! See to the safety of the horses!"

"The gipsies are upon us!" said the footpad.

The words had scarcely escaped his lips, when the old hag, who claimed, probably upon rather dubious grounds, to be the mother of Lucy, rushed forward from among the trees, with a knife in her hand. She made directly towards Claude, exclaiming—

"Thus am I avenged!"

Had she made a similar demonstration against any other one of the party, it is likely enough she might have succeeded in doing what she wished; but Claude stood as firm as a rock, and when she darted towards him, he caught the wrist of the arm she had raised against him, and with the other hand flung her some distance off, and she rolled right over the newly covered up grave of Lucy.

"Let her be," cried Claude. "She is mad, I do think."

It would appear that the gipsies had relied upon the old hag being successful in taking the life of Claude; for they had not followed up this sudden yell, or war cry, by any attack. No doubt, that was merely for the purpose of petrifying the little party with sudden fright, so that the old woman might, before the sudden surprise had ceased, plunge the knife into Claude's heart.

If this had succeeded, it is very probable that the rest of the party would have found it difficult to resist an impetuous attack from the gipsies; but the failure of the hag made all the difference.

There was quite sufficient daylight now for the gipsies to see perfectly well what had happened, and how completely the hag had failed in her murderous intent. They just hesitated long enough to enable those whom they came to attack, to get thoroughly upon their guard.

"Do not run," cried Claude. "Stay and face them. They are arrant cowards at the best of times. I know them well."



CLAUDE AND JACK WATCHING THE LANDLORD OF THE INN IN HIS SLEEP.

The most available weapon he could use in a close encounter with the gipsies, so as to ward off their knives, which were really dangerous, was the spade with which he had assisted the young farmer to dig Lucy's grave; and that in the hands of such a man as Claude Duval was, in truth, a most formidable implement of offence as well as of defence.

The young farmer had the other spade. Jack held a very heavily loaded riding

whip in both hands, one blow from which he well knew was enough to knock down any man. Mark Brereton had a sword by his side, which he now drew and put himself upon the defensive; so that our party, although small, was well prepared.

They had not, however, very long to wait, before, with a wild scream of rage, about thirty of the most desperate-looking fellows of the gipsy race that could well be conceived, made their appearance from among the trees, and tried, by one sudden rush, to overcome all opposition, and crush their foes.

This was not so easily done, however. Our friends stood shoulder to shoulder in a small half circle, and well they sustained the sudden shock of the gipsies' assault. Claude, with his spade, knocked no less than four of them prostrate in the course of as many moments. Two others fell before the young farmer, and the heavy riding whip wielded by Jack, did great execution.

One athletic fellow, who made a dash at Mr. Brereton, was run right through the body in a moment, and Brereton had to put up his foot to throw him off his sword.

This reception certainly staggered the gipsy crew; and seeing more than a third of their number put *hors de combat* in about a minute and a half, they wavered. One voice then cried out—

“Forward! kill them—they are exhausted now—kill them all! They have murdered the girl! Blood for blood!”

The sound of that voice seemed to animate the gipsies; and collecting all their strength and all their ferocity, they made another dash at the little party; but as our friends had not received any injury whatever worth the mentioning, and none at all that they felt at the moment, they stood firm, and the result of this second attack of the gipsy crew was something very similar to the first. Some half-dozen more fell to the ground, either dead or totally insensible from serious hurts.

## CHAPTER CLXXXVIII.

### CLAUDE TAKES A HASTY RIDE TO OXFORD.

AFTER this second check, the gipsies were by far too much reduced in number to hazard a third attack. With a yell of rage and disappointment, they set off in full retreat among the trees; and in the space of a moment or two not one was to be seen, except such as lay upon the ground at the feet of their victors.

“This is pleasant!” cried Claude.

“Very,” said Jack.

“Is anybody hurt of us?”

“All right,” cried the young farmer and Mark Brereton.

In a moment, then, the footpad answered—

“A slight scratch,” he said, as he appeared stanching the blood that flowed from a knife-wound in his arm. “A slight scratch, that is all.”

“How did you get it?” said Claude.

“Why, I saw that you all had enough to do in front, so, knowing well what the gipsies are, I kept an eye on one man, and was rewarded by seeing a fellow stealing along, with a knife in his hand, to attack you all behind. I closed with him, and he gave me this bit of a scratch, that’s all.”

“And where is he?”

“Lying over there. It strikes me his head had two or three hard knocks against that bit of root of the chesnut there, that sticks out of the ground so singularly, and is as hard as iron.”

“It strikes me so too,” said Jack, who stepped for a moment over to where the man was lying. “Nobody can deny that the fellow had some brains.”

“How do you mean, Jack?” said Claude.

“Why, they are lying principally on the ground by his side.”

"Well, I shouldn't wonder," said the footpad. "He would be rather troublesome, so I was forced, in a manner of speaking, to do the best I could with him."

"Where is the old woman?" said Claude.

"Dead, I think," said Brereton, as he wiped his sword in the grass. "She is lying on the grave here, quite gone; I think."

"Nobody hurt her," said Claude. "I was careful only to throw her; and a fall upon the green sod here could not kill her. If she be dead, passion has more to do with it than violence."

As he spoke, he approached the grave upon which the old hag lay, in exactly the attitude she had fallen in when Claude cast her from him. He stooped slightly over her, saying—

"Foolish woman, we have no animosity against you. If you live, go and join your people in peace, so far as we are concerned."

The old woman moved slightly.

"Oh, she is all right," cried Claude.

"You will let me go?" she said, faintly.

"Certainly. Get up and be off with you. I can assure you we are none of us solicitous of your very agreeable company."

"Be careful of her, Claude," cried the footpad, who, with the assistance of Jack, was binding a handkerchief round his wounded arm. "Be careful of her. She has as many tricks as an old fox."

"Thank you," said Claude.

He only slightly turned his head towards the footpad to say these two words, and on the moment, seeing her opportunity, the hag was on her knees in a moment and made a stab at his breast with the knife which she had, despite her tumble, retained, and cunningly hidden.

"Now I am avenged!" she cried.

The knife broke off short by the hilt against Claude's breast, as though it had been made of iron. In another moment Mark Brereton had seized the old woman round the waist, and held her tight.

"How is this, Claude?" he said. "Do you wear armour?"

"Armour?"

"Yes. The knife broke off your breast as it would off a good cuirass. It has saved you."

"But I have no cuirass. I never thought of such a thing."

He hastily tore open his vest as he spoke, and then, in a moment, it was seen what had saved him. The point of the knife had happened to come precisely against a rather massive gold watch that Claude had in his pocket, and so he had been effectually saved. There was a clear indentation in the outside case of the watch; and as he held it up, he said—

"This is a lucky escape, indeed, my friends. This watch has saved my life, and I will never part with it."

"You ought not," said Brereton; "but, in the meantime, pray tell me what I am to do with this mad old woman."

"I'll soon relieve you of her!" cried Jack.

Taking from his pocket a stout cord, Jack now, after some little difficulty, tied the old woman's wrists together.

"Now," he said, "I shall have the pleasure, madam, of effectually preventing you from being mischievous for some time to come, by making you fast to one of these trees."

"My bitterest malediction light upon you all!" cried the hag, while her eyes flashed with passion.

"Rave away," said Jack, "we like to hear it. Besides, it will keep you out of more mischief. Only remember, that your cursing us has just about as much effect as if, by your maledictions, you strove to uproot one of these old trees."

"Revenge!—I will have my revenge!"

"Doubtless you will, when you can."

Despite all her struggles—and, at times, they were rather furious—Jack tied her fast to a tree, and there he left her to rave or swear at her leisure.

“What is to be done?” said Brereton to Claude.

“Nothing, that I know of,” he said; “but as a matter of choice, now, to leave this place. All that has happened here, disagreeable as it is, has only been a matter of force with us. We did not choose it, and so we cannot help it. Let us all go to the farm, and from there we can separate as our different routes and inclinations may lead us. Jack and I are for the road again.”

“And so am I,” said the footpad, “until, by some lucky chance, I can get hold of enough to take me from England.”

Jack shook his head.

“You won’t go, my friend,” he said. “We tried it once. There is a destiny in these things.”

“Think you so?”

“I am sure of it. But help me with the horses here. It is something more than a lucky thing that the gipsies did not find out where we had stowed them, or we should have had to walk, for a certainty, from this place.”

“Yes,” said the footpad. “I know them well. They would have gloried in slaughtering them.”

Fortunately, as Jack said, the cattle had been, while the grave was being dug, placed in a secure position among the trees; and now they were brought out quite fresh and ready for a good start.

“I shall never forget this place as long as I live,” said Claude. “This affair will make a pretty noise when it comes to be known.”

“I don’t think,” said the footpad, “it will ever be known. Of course, the dead bodies will be found; but as they are all gipsies, it will be considered that they have had some fracas among themselves, and so a number of them have come by death, and everybody with a poultry yard will rejoice accordingly.”

“Then,” said Claude, as they all rode off, “you think they will not themselves—I mean these who escaped—say anything about it?”

“Not one word.”

“It is better that they should not.”

“But you, Claude, and all of us, will be marked men by the gipsy tribe; and if ever they have an opportunity of being revenged upon us, you may depend that they will.”

“Naturally enough,” said Claude.

“Do you hear,” said Jack, “what a racket that old woman makes, swearing and cursing us at such a rate?”

“Yes,” said Claude, “I hear her. She ought to be less dangerous upon that account some other time.”

“Not a whit,” said the footpad. “If she don’t follow you up, Claude Duval, and yet try to place a knife-blade in your heart, it will be simply because her failures will take a superstitious hold of her, and she will fancy that you are supernaturally protected—that is the only feeling that will keep her quiet.”

“And do you think it a likely one to come over her?”

“I do.”

“Well, I must say, I sincerely hope it may. A man I really don’t mind how many tussles I have with, but with such an antagonist as a viperous old woman, it is one of the most difficult things in the world to know what to do.”

More than once they at intervals paused to glance behind them, to see if they could notice any appearance of the gipsies; but all was quiet, and they soon reached the outskirts of the farm.

Claude rode up to the young farmer, and said—

“You are pretty certain that no one knew of your visit to the farm for the two spades?”

“My brother only saw me, and him I cautioned to say nothing. While I was getting the spades, he fetched me the prayer-book, which, it appeared, your friend was well pleased to have.”

"Just so. I would not have the mind and the peace of Cicely disturbed by this adventure on any account."

"There is no occasion."

"Not the least; and I am extremely obliged to you, for the discretion you have showed in the matter."

"Do not mention that. If I or any of my family can, by any possible means, do you a service, you know what great pleasure it gives us."

"Yes, I do know it, and I feel grateful accordingly; but here we are at home. I always call this house home, for such is the character of the feeling that comes over me when I reach its threshold."

"And there is Cicely!"

"Cicely! So early up?"

"Ah! yes, Duval. She, doubtless, has been a little alarmed at your protracted absence. I warrant she left her chamber as soon as daylight enabled her to see her way."

"I should not wonder. Cicely—Cicely!"

Cicely ran across the farm-yard to the little gate at which they had all halted.

"Ah, you are safe?" she said.

"Safe!" said Claude, quietly. "Yes, to be sure, Cicely. How could we be otherwise? We have not been in more than common danger."

"What do you call common danger, Claude?"

"Why, have you not heard that?"

"'Tis dangerous to eat, to drink, to sleep,  
To walk?"

"Yes, Claude; but your dangers, I am assured, are generally of a much more stringent character."

"And who assures you, Cicely, of that?"

"My own heart, Claude."

This little dialogue took place between Claude and Cicely as they walked up the avenue together of the garden towards the house, for they had left the farm-yard, and had taken a slight round to the homestead.

"You will now remain for a time?" said Cicely.

"Yes, for a time."

"How long, Claude? I like not the tone in which you say 'for a time.' You will stay all day?"

"Nay, dear Cicely, that I cannot. I can but breakfast, and then be off; but if it be at all possible for me to return by about midnight, I will do so. Do not, however, construe this hope of mine into a positive promise."

"I must."

"Nay, do not; for I cannot tell what may detain me. You do not know what adventures befall me at times; and were I to tell you all——"

"Why do you pause?"

"Because I was going to say, were I to tell you all, you would not be able to sleep so soundly a-nights, as, in truth, I hope you do, and wish you to do. Besides, if I were to make positive promises about being here at certain hours, without leaving myself the smallest latitude of action, if anything occurred that I came not, you would picture to yourself the worst that could happen, when, perhaps, it was very far, indeed, from the truth."

"You are right in that, Claude."

"I feel that I am. Let me then go without a promise, and come when I can."

Cicely's reason told her, that this was by far the best arrangement that could be made; and after a few moments, she acquiesced in it completely. They all sat down to an ample breakfast at the farm-house, and at its conclusion, Claude and Jack again sought their steeds, and mounting, took to the road.

They struck off to the high road to Guilford at a gentle trot across the meadows.

## CHAPTER CLXXXIX.

THE LAWYER'S CLERK FROM OXFORD, DETAILS TURPIN'S PERIL.

"JACK," said Claude. "How do you feel after all this affair of Lucy's?"

"Will you let me answer your question by another, Claude?"

"It is an Irish way of answering a question Jack; but say on. Let us have it."

"Then, what is your reason for asking me?"

"Why, Jack, you are turning a complete Jesuit. What reason could I possibly have, my friend, for asking you, but to obtain information?"

"Then, Claude, I am quite satisfied; I know that her death hangs heavily at your heart; but I do not think it ought to do so. You had literally nothing to do with it; and although she had threatened abundance of harm to Cicely, you never for one moment dreamt of any to her."

"That is strictly true, Jack."

"Well, she, in the frenzy of her evil passions, called up the gipsies to her aid, and she herself fell a victim to the evil spirit she had summoned to do her service, as you will generally find most people do."

"Yes," said Claude, mournfully, "the pistol-shot which killed her, certainly came from one of the gipsies."

"And it was aimed at you, Claude."

"That there can be no doubt of. Well, Jack, we cannot recall the past, and I will endeavour to forget the fate of that poor creature. Ill-directed passion brought her to her end, and I cannot help thinking that she had some evil adviser who urged her on to her destruction."

"I have thought so myself," said Jack, "for at times, when she seemed to be most violent, her passion did not seem to me to be so natural as it might have been."

"The same idea crossed me, Jack, more than once during the fray. But hush! I hear the rapid sound of a horse's hoofs. Some one approaches in a hurry."

"They do indeed; and yet it is, by the sound, a straggling bad sort of gallop."

"Where are we?" said Claude, glancing around him.

"What, Claude, don't you recognise the road? It is the old Oxford-road, and we are about eight miles from London. Don't you know it now?"

"Oh, yes, most assuredly I do. But I should like to stop this fellow who is coming along at such a rate, and know what puts him to speed. Wait where you are a moment, Jack, and I will take the middle of the road. I don't like people to go by me in a great hurry, and I know nothing about it."

Jack laughed, and Claude rode out into the centre of the thoroughfare, which was, just at that spot, not very wide, so that when the horseman came up, he found it would have been rather a difficult thing to pass on.

"Out of my way, sir," he cried; "I am at speed."

"Hold!" shouted Claude. "As an officer of police, I insist upon knowing who you are and where you are going? They say that the celebrated Gentleman Jack the highwayman is upon this road, and how do I know but you may be he?"

Upon this the horseman pulled up at once,

"Bless your heart," he said, "me a highwayman? Only look at me, and then ask yourself if I have any resemblance to one."

"I don't know that. What do you make yourself out to be, my friend, and where are you going?"

"My name, sir, is Brown. I am clerk to a respectable solicitor in Oxford, and I am going to Bow-street."

"Humph! what about?"

"Why, you must know that the notorious Dick Turpin has been apprehended at the Pig and Tinder-Box in Oxford, while he was in bed, and we think of hanging him for a highway-robbery, outside that city, committed only three days ago. The Oxford Assizes are on, only it was thought as he was such a notorious



criminal, the Attorney-general might come down by order of the Treasury to conduct the prosecution."

"Oh, indeed."

"Yes, sir. And now you know all about it. Of course, I very sincerely hope he will be hung, as no doubt you do; so I beg that you will not impede me any longer, sir."

"Certainly not—go on. Good day."

"Good day, sir. You are a very active officer, indeed, and about the stupidest fellow I ever met with," added the lawyer's clerk to himself as he rode on, for he had quite mistaken Claude's look of concern, when he heard of Dick Turpin's peril, to stupidity and a difficulty of comprehension.

The moment the clerk was out of sight, Claude rode to where Jack was waiting, and told him what had passed.

"Why didn't you stop him?" said Jack.

"Because it would have done no good. We should not have liked killing him, and if we had dismounted him, and started off his horse, he could have walked to London in a couple of hours. I did think of stopping him, but upon consideration I did not see that it would do the smallest good to Dick Turpin; so I abandoned the idea of it."

"You are right, Claude."

"But I am not going to abandon Dick, for all that. What say you to a trot to Oxford, Jack?"

"With all my heart, if you think you can do any good; and if you don't think so, we may as well go, as something may turn up when we get there."

"Jack, I thank you for those words; they show a proper spirit. So let us be off at once. Our horses are fully equal to the job; and we shall be there in six hours from hence, I think, or thereabouts."

"Easy," said Jack.

They did not pause another moment, but turning their horses' heads in the required direction, off they went at a good pace, although not a distressing one, for knowing the distance that lay before them, they were too judicious to tax their steeds for the first twenty miles, to the peril of seeing them perform the rest of the journey with difficulty.

"How are you off for money, Claude?" said Jack, when they were in a lonely part of the road, after having ridden about twelve miles or so.

"Pretty well. I think I have somewhere about eighty pounds by me."

"And I have more."

"More Jack?"

"Yes; you forget that you frequently lend me sums of money, saying, 'Take this, Jack,' or 'Mind this for a rainy day, Jack,' or something of that sort; but I take care of it all; so if cash will do Dick any good, I think we shall have plenty. I speak because we should not allow ourselves to lose any time by crying 'stand and deliver!' to anyone upon the road."

"No, Jack, we will let the world go free for once in a way. Oxford is our destination, and we will not turn out of our route or stay upon it longer than will be necessary to give our horses bait a little, on any account."

"Very good, Claude, I think that is the right course."

"After completing the first twenty miles, they halted for a whole hour, during which they refreshed themselves and their horses, letting the latter have a careful grooming, and a light feed, after which they were nearly as fresh as when they had first started in the morning.

"I want to do all the rest of the distance now," said Claude, "without a halt of more than ten minutes or so, once or twice."

"That we can do, easily. I should advise that after the next five miles we give the horses a pot of old ale each, and then I don't think they will flag if we were to ride right through Oxford."

"It shall be done, Jack."

They halted at a pretty little road-side inn, to give the horses the ale, and just

as they had finished drinking it, a corpulent man came to the door of the inn with an immense bell-shaped barrelled blunderbuss in his hands, and pointing it full upon Claude, he called out—

“Stop, both of you—I know you; You stopped me once when I was in my gig, and took away one hundred and twenty pounds from me. You know you did. You are Duval, and the other rogue I don’t know.”

“Well,” said Claude, “I’ll tell you. They call him Blaze-away, and that’s what I’m waiting for you to do, you stupid old pump. What’s the use of that blunderbuss to you?”

“I’ll soon let you know what use it is of, if you don’t stop. Quick, Jem! Bob! Get a couple of ropes to tie up these two highwaymen with. I will take them both to London.”

“Well,” said Claude, “I’m sorry that I have not a blunderbuss to meet you with. If I had, we could make a regular duel with them both; but here is a little pop-gun in the shape of a pistol which will do.”

The moment Claude produced a pistol, the corpulent man cried—

“All right, only I like to have first fire; so here goes.”

As he spoke, he pulled the trigger of the blunderbuss, when, instead of discharging itself in the proper manner, it burst with a stunning report; and the last Claude and Jack saw of the corpulent man, were his heels in the air, as he lay upon his back in the passage of the inn.

“Come on, Jack,” said Claude, “I expected some such an end to this adventure. Those old blunderbusses are really never to be depended upon.”

“Really, Claude, you take things remarkably easy. What if it had gone off all right and riddled you with bullets?”

“I don’t think, Jack, that it’s my fate to be popped off in such a way. I have stood fire so often and never come to much hurt, that I seem now to have a blind confidence in my good fortune. It may fail me some day, though, for all that, and when it does, I shall not complain. Push on, Jack.”

They went on at a good pace, and the effect of the ale they had given to their horses was tolerably manifest, for they did not draw rein again until they reached an inn not above three quarters of a mile from Oxford.

“We will put up here, Jack,” said Claude, “and no doubt we shall get all the news if we ask our landlord to join us in a bottle of wine.”

“It’s more than likely,” said Jack.

The horses were put up and well attended to—Claude asked for a private room, and then desired that a couple of bottles of wine should be brought him, and the two best beds kept for them. An order, too, for supper was given, of quite an *ad libitum* character, so that the landlord thought two such guests were well worth waiting on himself.

We should have premised that Jack had doffed his groom’s costume and wore rather a dashing suit of brown cloth. Claude still retained about his costume a rather clerical look, and it became him very well indeed.

After the wine was on the table, the landlord came into the room with many bows and smirks.

“I hope, gentlemen,” he said, “the wine is to your liking?”

“Very good,” said Claude. “Pray sit down and take a glass of it with us, landlord.”

“Oh sir, you really do me too much honour.”

The landlord, notwithstanding it was too much honour, drew a chair and sat down with his very kind and urbane guests, and after a few glasses of wine had been partaken of, Claude said in an easy off-handed manner—

“Is there any news stirring in Oxford?”

“Why, sir,” said the landlord, “at assize time we have lots of news of some sort or other; but everything is now taken up with the capture of Dick Turpin the highwayman.”

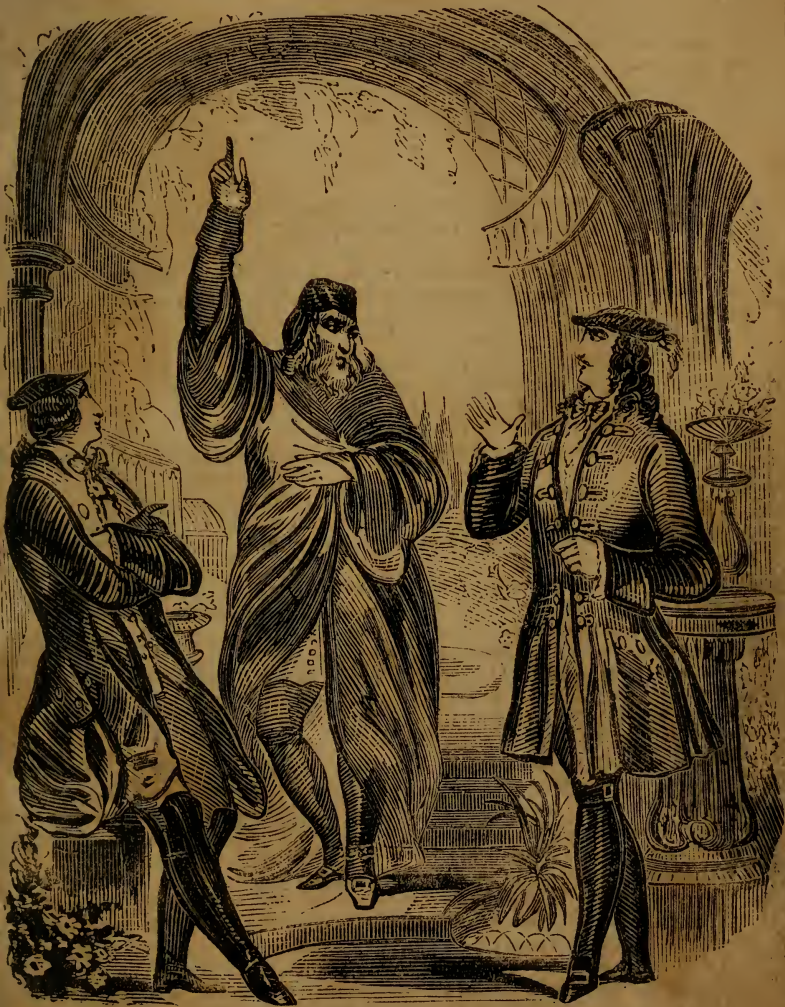
“What, the celebrated Turpin?”

“The very same, sir.”

"Why you amaze me! I always thought that he was so very bold and determined a fellow, that he would hardly have been taken alive."

"So did I," said Jack.

"Very likely, gentlemen, very likely," said the landlord. "Perhaps he would not, if they had not caught him in bed."



THE JEW CONCOCTING PLANS FOR THE RESCUE OF DICK TURPIN.

"Oh, that was it, was it?"

"Yes, they caught him in bed, gentlemen. But I hope you like this wine?"

"Ve y well, indeed. I think among us we may manage another bottle of it when these two are done; and in the meantime you will oblige us very much, landlord, by telling us how Turpin was captured, and by whom."

## CHAPTER CXC.

TURPIN IS CAST FOR DEATH, BUT DOES NOT DESPAIR.

THE landlord smiled his best smile, for it was not every day that such good customers came to his house.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I can tell you the whole particulars."

"And we should like to know, too," added Jack, "what specific offence they are going to try him for."

"That I can tell you likewise, gentlemen, as well as any man. It is for robbing the Provost of Magdalen College on this very road, and not two hundred yards from this house."

"Indeed?" said Jack.

"What assurance," said Claude.

"Worse than assurance," added the landlord, "for of course gentlemen, you are aware, that the Provost is a Doctor of Divinity."

"Exactly."

"Well, then, gentlemen, the Provost has a quiet little nag that he likes a ride upon every afternoon, and about four days ago he passed this door on his nag, but he did not come home on it."

"How so?"

"Why it appears that after he had got some distance past this house, he met Turpin on his horse, although, of course, the Provost did not know him from Adam. Up rides Turpin to him and says—

"'Sir, can you tell me the exact time?'"

"Well, the Provost did not much like his looks, but he took out his watch and told him.

"'Does that watch keep good time?' said Turpin.

"'Sir,' said the Provost, who was rather proud of his watch, which was worth a hundred guineas, 'sir, it keeps better time than the clock of Magdalen College.'

"'Oh, then,' said Turpin, 'I will trouble you for it, as I often want to know the exact time. You see, sir, I am a highwayman, and have, in consequence, what people call a bad character. Now in this country, if you give a dog a bad name you had better hang him, and as I am often accused of crimes at places I never saw, your correct watch will be a very handy thing when I want to prove an *alibi*.'"

"How cool," said Jack.

"Very," said Claude.

"You may well say that, gentlemen. Well, upon this, he took the watch from the Provost, and besides that, he made him give up his purse containing twenty pounds, and then he forced him to dismount from his nag and started it off down the London Road, and because he did not dismount quick enough, Turpin threw the reverend doctor's hat and wig into a ditch."

"Upon my word," said Claude, "that was too bad."

"Very much too bad," said Jack.

"You may well say that, gentleman. The poor Provost had to come here to this house on foot, and send for a chaise to Oxford, to take him home; and when he got to the college, he offered a hundred pounds reward to any one who would apprehend the highwayman who had robbed him, and he gave a good description of him, so that the police of Oxford all said it could be no other than Dick Turpin. But still he would have got clear off if he had only chosen to ride away, but instead of that he came into Oxford and put up at the Three Kings Inn, and the landlord of it gave notice to the officers, and they caught him in bed and had him handcuffed before he was very well awake to what was going on."

"Ah," said Claude, "I understand how it was then. You may depend that if he had not been caught napping in such a way, Dick Turpin would have given them some trouble."

"Not a doubt of it, sir."

"And is he to be tried?"

"Why, yes, sir. The assizes were on, so he was committed at once, and as there is always a second gaol delivery during the assizes, he will no doubt be comfortably hung, for they say that the big-wigs, meaning the judges, sir, are quite resolved to get rid of him."

"But they will give him a fair trial?"

"Oh, yes, gentlemen. Everything will be regular enough; but you see it's a very clear case, indeed; and there aint the shadow of a chance for him. He will be hung, and between you and me, gentlemen, he will be a good riddance, for those sort of gentry make the roads unsafe, and do the Inns a deal of harm. Now there's another something like him; I mean Claude Duval. They tell me that on the London side of Uxbridge, he does just what he likes."

"Is that possible?"

"It is, indeed, sir. I am credibly informed of it, I assure you, on the most competent authority."

"Well," said Jack, "if Duval ever stops me, he shall find out that he has made a mistake."

"Oh, but, sir, he has another ruffian with him."

"Has he?" said Claude. "Then if that other ruffian ever stops me, he shall find out that it shall not be for nothing."

"Well, gentlemen, I only wish you two could meet them both."

"I fear that is not likely," said Claude. "But where is Dick Turpin confined now, landlord?"

"In the gaol; and he is tolerably safe. They had him in the spinning house for a time, but they did not think that safe enough. He won't get away, you may depend upon it."

"That's a comfort," said Claude, "at all events. We are very much obliged to you, landlord, for these particulars. We will leave our horses here and take a walk into the city, and then come back to rest, for we are rather tired."

"Very good—very good gentlemen. The best beds shall be at your service, and better I am sure are not to be found in the whole county, to say nothing of the city."

"Thank you," said Jack. "We shall no doubt be very well satisfied."

They then rose, having made a highly favourable impression upon the Innkeeper, and on foot they walked into Oxford. They soon found upon reaching that place that the sole topic of conversation was of the apprehension of Dick Turpin; and after a consultation between themselves, Claude said—

"There is one thing, Jack, that we must make up our minds to, let the risks be what they may; that is, to save Dick. I am quite resolved to encounter any difficulty rather than let him perish."

"And I likewise," said Jack.

"Very good. From all we can hear of the old jail, it is a crazy enough structure, and if Dick were not heavily ironed, I have not the least doubt but that he would make his escape from it."

"To be sure he would, Claude. But cannot we, who are not ironed at all, contrive to get at him in some sort of way?"

"You have anticipated my idea, Jack. There are two things, however, necessary to do before we could, with any chance of success, attempt Dick's rescue from the jail. One of them is to procure a plan of the prison, and the other is to ascertain in what part of it he is placed."

"Both rather difficult," said Jack.

"Probably so, but not impossible. There is an old work on the antiquities of Oxford, in which I know there is a plan of this jail, and what can be a more likely place to find such a work in, than in Oxford itself."

"Let's come then," said Jack, "to the best bookseller's in this place, and see if we can get it."

We need not particularise the interview of Claude and Jack with a smiling

Oxford bookseller; suffice it to say, that without any difficulty they got the book they wanted, for which they had to pay two guineas, and then they both repaired to a private room in an hotel, and studied well the plan of the jail. They found that the cells of any strength were only six in number, and that they were numbered in regular order, and in a part of the prison called 'The Inner Keep.'

"That will do," said Jack.

"Yes, so far, Jack; and now we must find out some house of entertainment to which the officials of the prison are in the habit of going. There is always some such place near to every jail."

This latter object was much easier accomplished than even the former, and Jack and Claude were soon seated in the parlour of a public-house near the prison, with a glass of brandy-and-water before each of them. They trusted to their own natural acuteness in finding out the sort of person they wanted.

In the course of ten minutes a burly looking man came into the parlour and sat down next to Claude. He got Claude over any little difficulty in opening the conversation with him, by saying, as he rubbed his hands together—

"A nice day, sir, out of doors."

Those three words "out of doors" were quite sufficient to convince Claude that the man was one of the prison officials, and he said in a cool assured tone, "Oh, yes, my friend. You are off duty, now, I suppose?"

"You mean at the jug? Oh, yes, I get half an hour three times a day, when I ain't on the outer lock."

Claude pushed his glass of brandy-and-water towards him, as he added—

"I hope you will keep Dick Turpin safe now you have got him."

The man took a long draught at the hot steaming liquid, before he answered, and then, with what he thought was a very knowing wink, he said—

"I believe you; catch weasels asleep? We have got him safe enough."

"But he is a desperate fellow."

"Let him be."

"And he will break out of prison if you don't mind."

"But we will mind. We have got him in number six, and if he gets out of that, I will give him leave."

"Number six?"

"Yes. In course, you don't know, but number six is in the inner-keep, and there he is as safe as ninepence; and besides, he's got half-a-hundred weight of irons on him, so you needn't be afeard of his getting away. Ha! ha!"

"Well, that's satisfactory," said Claude, giving Jack a sly kick under the table.

"Very," said Jack.

"It's to be hoped they will hang him," added Claude, as he again pushed the glass to the man, and then as before, the turnkey took his drink before he replied; placing the empty glass upon the table, he said, as he drew a long breath—

"Hang him? of course. That's settled."

"But he ain't tried."

"No matter, it's settled. Thank you, for me, sir; I must be off now, my time is just upon up. If you stay in Oxford a few days longer, for I take it you are only visitors, you will see Dick Turpin tucked up."

"We shall certainly stay. Good evening to you."

"Good evening, and your servant, gentlemen."

The official personage who had made the revelation regarding Dick being in number six in the inner-keep, then took himself off, much to the relief of Jack and Claude, who now waited to consult with each other, as to what was to be done immediately regarding the preparation for attempting the rescue of Dick from the old prison.

## CHAPTER CXCI.

## A PERILOUS NIGHT ADVENTURE IN OXFORD.

FROM the experience that our readers have had of Claude and his friend and companion Jack, it may be well supposed that in their cogitations concerning what was to be done for the rescue of Dick, they did not throw aside any possible plan that might suggest itself, on account of any dangers that might surround it.

On the contrary, it is highly probable that to those most adventurous spirits, danger was a kind of excitement, that was now in a manner essential to their existence, and there was one thing they felt convinced of, namely, that the most dangerous path was generally the most direct to any object.

"Well, Jack," said Claude. "What is your conclusion?"

"In good faith," said Jack, "I cannot come to one; but if I mistake not very much, Claude, you have."

"You are right."

"Then let me hear it, Claude, not that I may in any shape or way criticise it, but that I may be prepared to carry it out as far as my powers will let me. You are far more more fertile in expedients than I am."

"I don't know that, Jack. But you must have observed that next door to the jail in which Dick is confined there is a glover's shop."

"Yes, Claude."

"Well, then, Jack, it strikes me that we must get admittance to the prison in some way through that house, after its inhabitants have all retired to rest. It is rather something new to break into a prison, especially when such as you and I, Jack, are concerned in the affair; but I really think, for once in a way, we can manage it."

"No doubt of it, Claude."

"Then you do not think that there is anything extravagant in my proposal, Jack?"

"Very far from it. When one of our profession breaks out of a prison, he of course labours under every possible disadvantage, and such tools and implements as he requires for the purpose he has to get in with much risk and difficulty; but we being upon the outside, and perfectly free to possess ourselves of what means and appliances we like, may surely break in."

"I am glad, indeed, Jack, that you view it in that spirit. We will, from the plan of the prison we have got, make a careful sketch of our route to Dick's cell, and at midnight we will come into Oxford, and commence our enterprise."

"Good," said Jack. "I am willing. What shall we need in the way of tools and implements?"

"A couple of the best ropes we can get, each forty feet in length, some strong grappling hooks, and your picklocks, which you know how to use as well, Jack, as any man breathing, and I will take with me a small crow-bar of iron. Our pistols we will, of course, keep prepared, so that, I think, we may defy any accidents."

"I hope so, Claude."

"Then come along, and let us make our purchases, and after that we will go to our inn, and get our supper, and, then, if possible, we will get back to the town without our host knowing that we have left the inn at all."

"That, too, may be managed, Claude."

They both now left the public-house, where they had been so signally successful in getting the information they sought, and sallied into the principal street of Oxford to purchase the various articles they wanted.

In such a place as Onford they did not find much difficulty in suiting themselves with the ropes and the hooks. At a cutler's, too, Claude purchased two capitally-made small crow-bars, so that they repaired to the inn capitally pro-

vided, although, even under Jack's great coat, the rope was rather a bulky article.

They found that the landlord had got [the supper for them that they had so liberally ordered, and having, to their great satisfaction, discussed it, they, under the plea of fatigue, retired very early to rest, or rather to their bed-rooms, where they were supposed to be going to rest, but where rest they did not.

"It's all right," said Jack. "My window looks into the garden of the inn, and there is only a slight paling to cross to get into a lane that runs parallel with the High-street."

"That will do, Jack."

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and all sounds had for the last half hour ceased in the inn, when Claude and Jack prepared themselves for their enterprise. They dressed themselves as compactly as they could, so as to leave as little straggling portions of apparel about them as possible, that might impede them in flight, or in climbing; and each winding round him one of the pieces of rope, to which they had firmly attached the grapples they had bought, they cautiously opened the window of Jack's bed-room.

"You have not forgotten your pick-locks, Jack?" whispered Claude.

"Ob, no—no. You have the crow-bars?"

"All right: and I think you locked to the [priming of your pistols, and you have the file with you?"

"A couple of as sharp-biting files, Claude, as ever made war against fetters, I have about me. If I can only lay one of these across Dick's chains, they won't hold him long."

"Good. This little balcony is not above eight feet from the ground, so we can easily drop it. I think the moon is getting up, Jack."

"I hope not, Claude."

"So do I, for no doubt we shall do better without it; but it can't be helped. What a cold air is blowing."

Jack took off his hat, and held his face up to the night clouds for a few moments, and then he said—

"We shall have rain."

"Think you so?"

"I am sure of it. I have been so much in the open air at all times, and in all seasons, that I cannot doubt it for a moment; the signs and tokens of the coming weather are all familiar now to me. Look how the dark clouds hang over that light part of the sky, where the moon would be if she could only find an opening through which to show her fair face."

"You are right Jack. Come on."

They both sprang from the window into the garden, and then they paused for a few moments to listen, and make sure that they had given no alarm to any one. All was as still as the very grave, and in cautious whispers, Jack said—

"This way, Claude. This is the way to the little fence. There, do you not feel the rain upon your face now?"

"I do."

The night grew very black indeed, as Claude followed Jack across the garden of the inn. They both vaulted over the little fence Jack had spoken of, and found themselves in a straggling lane. It took them two or three minutes observation there, to be certain of the route, and then off they went at a good pace for Oxford.

When they got some distance from the inn, they conversed a little more freely together, for the road was perfectly quiet, and there did not seem to be a soul stirring in it but themselves.

"Well Jack," said Claude. "We will take our success so far, as a good omen of completing our enterprise."

"I hope we may, Claude."

"To determine to succeed is one half-the battle. I only hope that no one, by any foolish opposition to us, will force us to use our pistols."



"It would be a pity, Claude ; but we have what we believe to be our duty to do as well as they have theirs ; and so no more than they will, must we hesitate."

"You are right, Jack ; and it gives me no small pleasure to find you are in such a spirit."

Jack's prediction about the rain was now most abundantly verified, for it began to come down in a thick small shower, and with a steadiness, too, that pretty well showed it had set in for the night. Such a state of the weather was considered by both Jack and Claude as highly favourable to their enterprise, for they knew that upon such a night all persons would be indisposed to active watching, and that the interior yards of the prison would, in all probability, be deserted,

In all the distance from the inn to Oxford, they only met two persons ; and the rain was falling so thickly and so steadily when they got into the streets, that they traversed several and only met one watchman, and he was snugly ensconced in his box, and merely mumbled a "Good-night," as they passed him.

Jack answered him.

They then passed a house in which some Collegians, who were staying out in defiance of all college rules, were carousing, and singing tipsy choruses.

"That," said Claude. "is how our great legislators and statesmen get their wisdom."

"Humph !" said Jack, "I rather think that they got it from the rent rolls of their estates"

Claude laughed, but as they were now near the prison, they no longer spoke upon any indifferent subject, and their whole thoughts and inquiries become concentrated upon the object they had in view.

The glover's shop was closely shut up, and from top to bottom of the house there was not a vestige of a light visible.

"All's right," whispered Jack.

"Yes, I think so. Look well about you, Jack, and see that no one is lurking in the neighbourhood."

They both walked about the street for a few moments, but no one was near, and then they dived into the doorway of the glover's house, which happened to be a very deep and old-fashioned one, with quaintly carved door-posts.

Jack tried the lock with his skeleton keys.

"How goes it?" whispered Claude.

"All's right. There's only one bolt, and that's below. Give me one of the jemmies, and I will soon loosen it."

There was a creaking noise for a moment or two, and then a rather sharp crack.

"Done?" said Claude.

"Yes. I have cracked this crib, at all events. Come in, Claude. All's right. Nobody is stirring. I wish we knew what family there was in the house."

"So do I. Perhaps we shall find out, Jack, before we get out of it again?"

"We may."

They closed the shop-door now again, and in case any officious watchman, in his rounds, should take it into his head to try it, Jack shot the top bolt into its socket, advising Claude that he had done so, in case they should have to make a hasty escape, and he (Claude) should chance to reach the door first and find it fast, contrary to his expectation.

"Hush, Jack!"

"Did you hear anything, Claude?"

"At the moment I thought I did. It sounded like the sudden closing of a door or a window somewhere in the upper part of the house."

"The deuce it did."

They were both now profoundly silent for the space of about five minutes, during which they listened intently, but not the smallest sound met their ears, so that they came to the conclusion that either Claude had been mistaken altogether

in the noise he had supposed he heard, or that it was some accidental sound in the house, which was no indication of any one really being up and stirring.

"It's all right enough, I think, Claude," whispered Jack.

"Yes, I think so, too. Come on."

"We must see our way, first."

Jack ignited a very small piece of wax-taper, and shielding it with his hands, they both looked about them for some mode of getting from the shop into the house. A small door, with a little muslin-blind, presented itself to their observation, and they immediately opened it. It led into a parlour, in which lay the remains of a supper. From this parlour a door opened to a staircase and a passage.

"We are right enough now," said Jack. "If we can only find some unoccupied room at the top of the house, we will soon be upon the roof, for if it has not a trap-door to it, I don't think it will take us very long to make one."

A cat got up from the hearth, upon which she had been sleeping, and looked at them.

"Poor pussey," said Claude.

"Puff!" said the cat.

"Oh, very well," added Claude, "don't be friends then, if you don't feel inclined. I'm sure I don't want to force my acquaintance upon you: You had better lie down again and fancy it's all-right."

"Come on," said Jack. "There is not a sound in the house; I have been listening on the staircase. Kill that cat."

"No, Jack. Not if the success of all our enterprise was at stake."

## CHAPTER CXCH.

### DICK TURPIN SURPRISED BY A RATHER LATE VISIT.

JACK looked at Claude for a moment, and then he said—

"I forgot that these creatures were great favourites of yours, Claude."

"All creatures are, Jack."

"I know it. I spoke inconsiderately, and I should have been the last to like to carry out my own suggestion, Claude. Come on, all is profoundly still. It will not be prudent to carry even this faint light up the staircase, as it may flash under the door of some one's chamber, and betray us."

"The socks, Jack."

"Ah, true, I had forgotten."

From his pocket, then, Jack produced two pairs of stout worsted-socks, and he and Claude drew them on over their boots, so that their tread was completely muffled, and unless the stairs should happen to creak under their actual weight, they could now ascend them without the slightest noise.

"Keep close to the wall, Claude," whispered Jack. "Very few stairs make any sound, if you tread there."

"Yes—yes. I will."

Out went the little wax taper, and then they commenced their passage up the stairs, holding by the wall as they went, and treading as carefully as it was possible to tread. Luckily for them, the house was old and substantial, the timbers being of solid oak, so that the staircase made none of the complaints that modern ones are in the habit of doing upon any one ascending them. The whole building was only one story above the shop, but from the outside they had seen, that it they could only gain the roof they would be very nearly on a level with the outer wall of the prison.

Twenty five steps took them to the top of the staircase.

Jack touched Claude upon the arm, and whispered—

"I feel a room door. What do you think will be best to do?"

"Open it carefully."

"Very well. I can tell in a moment if any one is there by the feel of the air. That was an old trick that was taught me by a friend who is now no more. There is a warmth and a closeness in the air of a bed-room that you may know in a moment."



CLAUDE PRESENTING THE LETTER TO THE SHERIFF.

"Not a doubt. Proceed, Jack."

Jack found the handle of the door, and began very gently to turn it, but he found it had a slight propensity to squeak, and with such handles he knew that the safest plan was rapidity of action. In an instant he turned it, and it made no noise. The door yielded, and Jack put his head into the room. All was dark, but in a moment a female voice said—

"John! John! John!"

"What the deuce now," growled some one half asleep.

"I'm very uneasy, John."

"You always are!"

"Yes, but I'm certain I heard something down stairs, and it's really too bad of Maria not to have come home. John, do you hear?"

"Oh dear yes. Go to sleep."

"But, what, suppose there's thieves, John?"

"Oh, bother!"

"Do you want to have your throat cut? Would you like that, John? Tell me that."

"I tell you that I ain't afraid. I don't believe thieves now-a-days come anywhere at a mere venture; and if they have any information they know deuced well that there is nothing to be got here."

Jack and Claude stepped away from the door of the room very carefully. They did not dare to shut it while the glover and his wife were wide awake, but in their hearts they thought the glover a very sensible man, and wished his wife anywhere but where she was.

"Another door-handle," whispered Jack.

"Open it then," said Claude.

"Hush. You really speak incautiously loud."

The glover's wife kept on talking, which was so fortunate that it covered any slight noise that Jack might make in opening the door of the other room which he had found. Fearing the lock might have the same peculiarity as the other one, he turned it sharply as he had done the first, and then he opened the door. The cold air of that room in a moment convinced him that it was empty.

"All's right," he whispered to Claude.

"How do you mean?"

"That no one is here. Come in—come in. Pass me, and I will shut the door. Hush! what a odd noise."

"It is the rain upon the glass," whispered Claude, after a moment or two's silence.

"Ah, so it is, and as I live there is a skylight in this room, which may do us good service. We must have a light now, Claude. Close the door as softly as you can before I set a match in a flame."

Claude closed the door carefully so as not to produce the smallest sound, and in a moment afterwards, Jack had lit a phosphorus match, and a faint blue light shot over the apartment. He then set light to the little bit of taper, and they both stood profoundly still for a few moments, while Jack held it above his head and glanced around the apartment.

It was rather a mean looking bed-chamber; one of those smothering machines called tent-bedsteads stood against a wall; and the appointments altogether were such as showed that nobody of any importance slept in that room.

The rain, too, was in a monotonous manner, at intervals of about half a minute, dropping from the sky-light on to the floor of the room.

"Not a very splendid chamber," said Claude.

"No; but just the thing for us. I only hope whoever is the tenant of it that they will not trouble it to-night. Now, Claude, can you give me a hoist up to the skylight?"

"Certainly."

By the assistance of Claude, Jack got up to the skylight, which was slanting, and about the size of a smallish door. He found that it would open outwards, and then he got down.

"We can manage nicely," he said. "That table, and a chair upon it, will make it an easy enough job to get out and in; and the only thing now we have to dread is, some one coming to this room. But it is no use now stopping for trifles."

"Not a bit, Jack; so here's the table, and here's the chair."

By judiciously placing the table and chair, they found that they could obtain a perfect command over the glass trap-door. Claude opened it, and then the rain come in in a thick mist, dashing against his face, and at once extinguishing the little light.

"Can you get out, Claude?"

"Oh, yes, easily. We must feel our way when we do get out through it, for no light will live on such a night as this."

"Be careful, Claude."

"Depend upon that, Jack. Follow me as closely as you can."

They both got out on to the roof of the glover's house, and so intensely dark was the night that, when they were there, they were for several minutes afraid to move. This was not the fear of cowardice though, for there was neither glory nor profit to be got by being dashed to pieces by a fall from a house-top.

"It would not have been amiss after all," whispered Jack, "if the night had been a little finer."

"Never mind," replied Claude. "Only wait a little, and we shall get accustomed to the very dim light that comes from the night sky. Already, objects are beginning to show me their outlines more distinctly. Do you not see something very black just before us?"

"Yes; it is a stack of chimneys."

"Then, upon the other side is the wall of the prison."

"You are right, Claude; and, as you say, objects are now getting each moment more and more distinct. We shall be able after all, I think, to see our way tolerably well."

"Hark!"

A clock, belonging to one of the Universities, struck two.

"I had no idea it was so late," said Claude. "We really must lose no time, Jack. Let us creep round the chimney shaft, and have a look at the wall of the jail."

Cautiously, Claude crept over, and Jack followed him. A tile got loose and rolled along the roof, and then fell into the street, with a sudden crash. They both paused for a few moments, but as no notice was taken of the noise, they concluded it had given no alarm, and they proceeded as before.

It was not a difficult matter to get round the chimney; and when they were upon the other side of it, they found that, rising to the slope of the roof, the wall of the prison was not far short of ten feet above them. Still, that height was not so great but that assisting each other, they could climb it. The great difficulty now consisted in the fact that there was some jagged iron work on the top of the wall.

"We must be careful," said Claude, "of those spikes."

"I think it would be better to remove them with the crow-bar," said Jack. "They have most probably been up since the jail was built; and so, in all likelihood, are as rotten as possible, being exposed for so long a time to all weathers. If you will give me a hoist up, Claude, I think I can bring them down."

Claude was quite strong enough to support Jack kneeling upon his shoulders; and so Jack could easily reach the iron work, which he found to be even more thin and rotten than he had supposed, for a large space of it came away with very little force, indeed; and Jack handed it down to Claude to place gently against the chimney shaft. By this process, about four feet of the prison wall was left perfectly clear for them to get upon; and the next thing they had to think of was the mode of fastening the ropes, so as to descend in safety on the other side, and so as likewise to leave them in such a state that they could make a rapid escape.

Their eighty feet of rope gave them plenty to spare; so after a very brief consultation, they resolved to fasten one end right round the chimney shaft, and then carrying the other over the wall and down into the prison-yard beneath, where it would easily reach.

This was no sooner decided upon, than it was done; and in such experienced

hands, it was done well too. In the course of three or four minutes, Jack had slid down the rope into the prison-yard, and Claude followed him.

The darkness in that yard was very great, surrounded as it was by high walls and buildings, and the rain had reduced it to a most wofully sloppy state, unequally paved as it was; but those little disagreeables were of small consequence. The great thing was to meet with no prison official, which most probably would have been the case, had the night been not the boisterous and inclement one that it was.

As it happened, not a soul was to be seen. They stood close to the wall for a few moments, crouching down and listening intently, and watching the various windows of the jail. In only one was there the faint vestige of a light.

"All's right," said Jack. "Have you the plan of the prison well in your mind, Claude?"

"Yes; so well, that I can lead you direct to Dick's cell; but we shall have a couple of doors to open."

"I don't think they will be very serious obstacles."

"I hope not. Come on."

Claude crossed the paved yard; and after feeling along the wall of the building, he stopped at a small door, near which was a pump that they could just dimly see standing up before them.

"This," he said, "is the door we seek. See about the opening it, Jack."

While Claude kept watch, Jack carefully examined the fastenings of the door, and found that they were all outside; as from the paved yard, it was never expected any attempt upon it would be made. There were two bolts and a large lock. The latter took some time to pick, for it happened to be unusually good; but, at length, Jack succeeded, and as he had already drawn back the bolts, the door yielded.

"Come in," he whispered. "We are safer out of the yard."

"Wonderfully safer," said Claude: "and not a little more comfortable, for the rain is coming down faster than ever, Jack."

They both passed through the door-way, and Jack closed the massive door again. The darkness in which they found themselves now was truly of the most profound character. Claude could not see the smallest vestige of his hand before his face; and as they felt pretty certain none of the officials of the prison were there, Jack began to procure a light.

In a few moments he had ignited the little taper, and they began then to look about them.

## CHAPTER CXCIII.

### THE ALARM, AND THE RE-CAPTURE OF DICK TURPIN.

THE place in which our adventurers now found themselves was anything but an inviting one. It was one of the long, damp, dismal passages of the prison, narrow and inconvenient; and even in the day time, when the sun was brightly shining, it was a place of gloom; but in the eyes of Claude and Jack, it had a special recommendation; for it was the route they sought, and which they knew, by their plan of the prison, would lead them to Turpin's cell.

"This will do," said Claude.

"Hush! Do not speak so loud. We don't know who may occupy one of the neighbouring cells, and some prisoner might think it no bad way of carrying favour with the magistracy, to give an alarm, that something unusual was going on."

"You are right, Jack,"

"This is the way," added Jack, in the same cautious whisper in which he spoke. "This is the way, right on, and then an abrupt turn to the left."

"Yes, I recollect," replied Claude. "So says our plan, and, no doubt, that can be relied upon."

"Oh, most implicitly, I should say."

Jack's little taper light was of immense assistance to them; and while its flame was so small, that it was not at all likely to send a wandering ray through every key-hole, or under any door, yet it sufficiently enlightened them how to act, and how to proceed.

They found that the passage in which they were was no less than forty paces in length before they came to the abrupt turn to the left, which the plan indicated to them. But when they reached that turning they knew that they were in the very passage from which the cell of their friend Turpin's opened.

"Here are the little doors," said Jack. "These ought to be eight of them; and it is quite a mercy that that officer at the public-house was so loquacious as to let us know in which Dick is."

"Yes, and here is the number."

They both paused now opposite to the cell door, and Claude placed his ear against it to listen if he could hear any one stirring within it; but all was as still as the very grave itself.

"Do you hear anything?" said Jack.

"Not a sound."

"What if they have removed him to some other part of the prison?"

"Then our trouble is all for nothing, and we can only get back as quickly as we can the way we came. I don't feel disposed to give it up quite so easily, though."

With this, Duval placed his mouth to the key-hole of the door, and in a prolonged whisper, he said—

"Dick Turpin—Dick, Dick—It is I—Claude Duval."

They heard a stir in the cell as if some one had fallen to the floor of it, and then a voice said—

"Confound it, what have I been dreaming about to fall off this shelf that they call a bed, in this den? I wonder what the time is?"

"Rather late," said Claude through the key-hole.

"Ah—what? Who is that?"

"Hush!—not so loud. Don't you know my voice?"

A sudden rush was made against the inside of the cell door that made it shake again, and Turpin said, in a much louder voice than caution would have dictated—

"Who is there? Speak again—speak again, I say, if it be not after all a mere dream."

"Hush, Dick."

"Ah, again I hear you. Who are you?"

"Hush, Dick; if you speak so loud you will ruin all. It is I, Claude, and Jack. We will get you out of this fix if we can. Be quiet until we get the door open, and then we will tell you all."

Not a sound came from the interior of the cell, and while Claude held the light, Jack began upon its fastenings. They consisted of a strong, long, and an iron bar, that went right across the door, and fitted into a kind of looped socket, to which was appended a massive padlock.

"Can you manage it?" said Claude.

"Oh, yes, I think so. All this fuss, after all, only takes up two locks, and I hope to be able to pick them both."

"Do so, then, as quickly as you can."

The actual lock of the cell door did not present any very serious obstacle to Jack; he soon forced back its bolt into the lock again, but the padlock was of some very primitive construction, and none of his false keys would touch it.

"We must appeal to the saws, Claude," he said.

"Will not the crowbar do?"

"I think not; I will try one of them. Ah, there it goes snap in too. I thought

as much ; it's not the fault of the jemmy, but the real fact is, we asked it to do too much, and getting beyond its strength, it broke. Now for the saw."

Jack produced a small saw, that did not look as if it could cope with an iron bar, but it did so, and it was truly astonishing with what celerity it cut into the metal, passing through it in the course of about five minutes, and without making any more than a slight grating noise.

"All's right," said Jack, "now the door ought to open. Why don't it, Claude, I wonder."

"It seems as tight as ever, Jack."

"It only sticks, I am convinced. Tell Turpin to push it on the inside ; you see, we cannot get any good hold of it, or we should soon enough have it open."

"Push the door, Dick," whispered Claude, through the key-hole.

The push that Dick Turpin gave the door upon this intimation, was enough to drive it down from its hinges ; as it was, it flew open with such a force, that Turpin rolled out into the passage nearly upsetting both Claude and Jack.

"Hilloa !" said Jack, "not quite so fast."

"Where are you going, Dick ?" said Claude.

Turpin was upon his feet again in a moment, notwithstanding he was grievously encumbered by his fetters, and holding out both his manacled hands, he said—

"Good gracious, Claude and Jack, how in the name of all that's wonderful came you both here ? I can't yet persuade myself that I am in my senses. This must surely be some too vivid dream merely. Speak to me."

"It is real, Dick."

"Quite real," said Jack, "and we hope to get you out of this stone jug by the same route that we came into it. You don't suppose that we can have any other errand here ?

"And is it possible that you two have broken into the jail to rescue me ? Can I believe as much ?"

"It is tolerably possible, Dick," said Claude. "The impossibility would have been in our at all deserting you under such circumstances, while anything remained to be done with a chance to your rescue. But every minute is of value to us. Jack, relieve him of his fetters, and then we will be off directly."

"Oh, my friends," said Turpin, clasping his hands. "What can I, what ought I to say ?"

"Nothing at all, just now, Dick" added Claude. "We shall, I hope, have plenty of time to talk, when we are outside of the walls of this not very inviting abode."

Jack at once busied himself with the fetters. They were revitted on to Dick so that it was only by the help of the exquisite steel saws that he had with him that he, Jack, could succeed in freeing Dick from the heavy shackles in which he was confined.

"I shall feel something like myself," said Dick, "when all this infernal ironmongery is off my limbs. Nothing depresses a man so much as putting him in fetters. They have such an effect upon me, that they almost stop me from thinking, and I almost doubt if I should have had the courage to make an attempt at escape from this place while I wore them."

"There they go," said Jack, as he sawed through the last of the rings and freed Dick from them.

"I feel myself already free," said Dick.

"Don't let us cry out," said Claude, "before we are out of the wood. I hope and expect that nothing very material will come in our way, but still unexpected events do happen, and all I have to say to you, Dick, is, to do nothing rashly."

"I will be guided by you."

"Very well, then, let us come on. Ten minutes ought to place us in safety now, if we meet with no obstruction."

"Hush !" said Jack.

"What's the matter ?"



"Don't you hear the bell ringing violently?—Come this way."

They all went to the corner which they had to turn to get into the long passage, and when there, they distinctly heard the violent ringing of a bell, but from the manner in which it was rung and from the time of night at which it sounded, it was tolerably clear that it portended something being rather amiss within the prison.

"Come on," said Claude: "Boldness may save us now. But I feel assured that we have no time to lose. That bell may concern us, and indeed I don't know how we can translate it otherwise, just now; I will lead the way. Put out the light, Jack, the moment we get to the end of the long passage."

"I will," said Jack.

Off went Claude at a race down the passage, and he was closely followed by Dick Turpin and Jack. The little light would not stand any such violent progress through the cold air, and the consequence was, that out it went before Jack had taken half-a-dozen steps. They all went on, however, through the intense darkness as well as they could, and as the passage was tolerably straight and very narrow they could not go far wrong, although they did, by making accidental deviations to the right or to the left, bump themselves occasionally against the walls.

By holding out his hands before him, Claude prevented himself from coming with any great concussion against the door at the end of the passage, and opening it quickly he passed out into the court-yard.

The rain was falling quickly.

"On, on," he cried.

They followed him quickly, and then a gun went off somewhere in the prison with a loud report. It was not fired in that court-yard at all, so the only way they could account for it was, that it was a signal that something was amiss and that the turnkeys and warders were all to be on duty and on the alert.

The distance from the doorway through which our adventurers issued to the court and then to the place where the ropes hung from the wall top, was by no means very great, and through the dashing rain Claude went at great speed. He felt now that rapidity of action was a safer thing to look to than quietness, so he did not hesitate to cross that court-yard at a scamper.

By a little feeling on the wall, he soon touched the rope, and turning to Dick, he said—

"You can climb?"

"Like a cat, they say."

"Very good. Go up this rope, and when you cross the wall you will find a good enough footing on a house-top, and there wait for us. I hope we shall be soon with you."

"No," said Dick. "If a thousand deaths were behind me I would not go first. The danger is great to the last one, and I will be that last: That is my determination."

"Up, Dick—up."

"No, Claude! I cannot. Remember what time is lost by trying in vain to change my fixed resolve."

"By Heaven! that is true!" said Claude. "Follow me, Jack, as quick as you can."

Claude seized the rope, and by an exertion of great strength in the arms, he began to ascend it with rapidity. When he had got about six feet up, Jack followed, and the moment that he did so, the trampling of feet was heard in the court-yard, and through the murky sloppy night air come the flash of a lantern. A loud voice called out,—

"This way! this way! They must be close by here."

Neither Claude, Jack, nor Dick now spoke, but the former, by making gigantic efforts, reached the top of the wall; and there he paused, hanging over it and peering down into the court-yard to see what was going on. Jack was

very near the top of the rope, but Dick was not many feet from the ground, when with a loud shout, the armed party in the court-yard rushed to the spot, and holding up their lanterns, at once exhibited the whole scene that was enacting.

CHAPTER CXCIV.

TURPIN IS TRIED AND CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

THE situation of Turpin was now most critical, as was indeed that of Jack likewise. It was an agony to Claude to see the peril of his friends, to feel that from where he was he could render them no assistance, and that he was compelled to be a mere spectator of what was going on.

There might be unknown perils behind him. The glover's house, for all he knew to the contrary, might be full by that time of foes; but he had ears for nothing and eyes for nothing, but the proceedings in that dismal court-yard into which the rain was pelting with such fury.

He called aloud for Turpin.

"Dick! Dick! Be quick! I pray you. Make an effort, and you are safe! Get six feet higher! I will shoot the first man who dares to molest you!"

"Oh, will you really?" said a voice from among the officers. "There, my lads, you see that man on the wall! Can none of you take a good enough aim to pick him off?"

In a moment, thus licensed to do so, for it was the governor of the jail who spoke, a couple of pistols were fired at Claude, and the bullets of both hit the wall some three or four feet below where he was.

A rush was made to the end of the rope, and it was quite impossible, shaken violently as it was, for Turpin to do more than cling to it; Jack got hold of Claude's hand and was drawn up, despite another shot that was fired at him.

"Where's Dick?" was Jack's first question, for he had only heard a tumult behind him, as by incredible exertions he ascended the rope and reached the parapet.

"Look below," said Claude.

The whole scene was now quite clearly to be seen in the court-yard. The rope was still shaken so violently by a couple of turnkeys that Dick could only hold on; he might, to be sure, have slid down, and doubtless that was what they wanted him to do; but he would not, and in a few moments the same voice that urged the turnkeys to use their pistols upon Claude, called out:—

"Turpin, if you don't come down this moment and surrender yourself, you will be shot. I will myself put an end to this suspense by taking your life."

"Fire away," cried Dick.

"He is lost," said Jack.

"I fear so," said Claude, who had a pistol in his hand pointed to the throng of persons in the court-yard, and quite ready to use if any urgent occasion should arise for it.

The lantern showed a tolerably bright light upon what was going on, and now Claude and Jack saw a man run from the group of prison officials and in a few seconds return with a ladder of about twenty feet long. He was a strong tall man; and unwieldy as that ladder was, he managed to move it with tolerable care and facility. To the indignation of both Claude and Jack, the man with the ladder struck Dick Turpin with it so severely that he fell from the rope heavily to the pavement of the court-yard, where he lay apparently insensible from the sudden blow and the fall combined.

"Did you see that?" said Jack.

"I did," said Claude, and at the same instant he fired his pistol, and the man with the ladder fell with a loud cry, and rolled over twice, ladder and all, on the pavement. "Did you see that, Jack?"

"Yes, Claude, and I never saw a shot that pleased me better. But we do no good by remaining here; Dick is among the Philistines, and we cannot help him now. We may be able to do so by taking care of ourselves."

"You are right, Jack. Come on."

Claude took the lead, and Jack followed him closely, over the slippery and un-



THE PRISON SMITH KNOCKING OFF DICK TURPIN'S FETTERS.

certain tiles of the glover's house. They reached with some difficulty the skylight, by which they had got out of the attic; and it was a great satisfaction, even, in the midst of all this disappointment, to find that it was in the same state as when they had left it; the table and the chairs still remained in their places, so that the descent into the room was easily enough managed.

"Come on, Jack," said Claude, "it's all clear; it's a good thing that whoever sleeps in this bed has not come home yet."

"Yes ; but we will yet think of something to aid Dick, Claude."

"We will aid him, Jack."

"You will be a little nearer to him than you think presently," cried a voice ; a man precipitated himself upon Claude at the same time that another seized Jack by the legs before he could get off the table that was under the skylight.

Duval, under these trying circumstances, preserved his admirable presence of mind, and made no immediate resistance beyond keeping his arms free from the other's gripe.

"Help," cried Jack.

"All's right," said Claude. "Pray, my friend, who are you when you are at home, that has got hold of my throat?"

"An officer, and one who is determined to take you to jail, my fine fellow, be you who you may."

Claude in a moment slipped his body down to the waist of the man, and by an effort he flung him right over upon his head with a tremendous bounce on the floor of the room. The door at that moment opened, and a man with a light appeared, saying :—

"Have you caught the rogues, Mr. Tomkins?"

"Oh, yes, old boy," cried Claude, and then, observing Jack's rather awkward position, he with one blow of his fist knocked him down over his already prostrate companion. Another officer was in the room, but he only stood up against the wall with a little gilt staff in his hand, crying—

"Come, come, this won't do, you know ; come, come, come."

"What's the matter with you?" said Claude.

"Come, come, come."

Claude snatched the staff out of his hand, and flinging it at the man with the candle, who was standing open-mouthed at the door of the room, and who was no other than the glover himself, who had risen and found his skylight open, and so had gone next door to the prison, and given the information that had produced the failure of the whole enterprise.

Believing that now he was all but a murdered man, he dropped the candle, and going backwards he forgot that the staircase was behind him, and away he went from the top to the bottom of it.

The candle did not go out by its fall, and Claude picked it up, saying—

"Come along, Jack, I don't think we have any more work to do here, and we may as well be lighted down stairs, as go tumbling along in the dark."

"Are you hurt at all, Claude?"

"Not a bit. Come on, all's right, now, I think, with us, if it be not so with poor Dick."

They hastily descended the stairs, and upon the first landing they came to, they found a young girl of about eighteen or twenty years of age, with only her night-clothes on, and a small bed-room taper in her hand, looking the picture of fright. She certainly mistook Claude and Jack for the officers, seeing them coming down very composedly with a light.

"Oh, gentlemen," she said, "have you caught the horrid wretches?"

"Yes, my dear, and all we want in return, is a kiss from those rosy lips."

"A what, sir?"

"A kiss," added Claude, as without further ceremony he took one, and Jack then followed his example, after which they descended the remainder of the stairs, and finding the street-door open, they both at once sallied out into the street.

"Well," said the girl, as she ascended the stairs to the upper rooms, "I had no idea the officers were such nice men. I wonder where uncle is, to be sure. Uncle ! uncle !"

The rain was still falling in perfect torrents, when Jack and Claude, after all their dangers and really hair-breadth escapes, rushed out of the glover's house into the streets of Oxford. They kept well together, and hurried down the first turning they come to, so as to get as far from the jail as possible, and for the space of about five minutes neither of them spoke. The speed they went at,

however, attracted the attention of a watchman, who in his mortal stupidity thought that two powerful men would of course allow themselves to be taken into custody by him. Stepping out of his box on to the pavement, he cried—

“Hilloa! stop!”

“Well?” said Claude,

“Come, come, I can’t allow anybody to go on at this rate. You look suspicious people, and that is quite enough for me.”

“Well?” said Claude again, for he knew if he only hurried on, that the watchman would alarm the whole city with his rattle that hung by his girdle.

“But I say it isn’t well,” cried the watchman.

“Oh, he says he ain’t well, Jack,” said Claude. “What a pity it is, that a guardian of the night should not be well. We are learned doctors, I assure you, my friend, and I have no doubt we shall be able to do you a world of good.”

“Do me good? Come, come, I shall take you both into custody, and march you off to the round-house. You are just the sort of characters we take up in Oxford.”

“And you,” said Claude, “are just the sort of character that we always knock down anywhere.”

As he spoke, Claude made a dash at the watchman and caught him by the throat.

“Throw away his rattle, Jack,” he said.

“It’s gone,” said Jack, as he broke it from the hold of the officious guardian of the night, and cast it down a neighbouring area. “It’s gone, Claude.”

“That will do.”

Claude held the watchman so tightly by the throat that so far from his being able to cry out, it was only with the greatest difficulty imaginable he could draw breath enough to support life, and then with one thrust he flung him into the watch-box, and shutting it all up upon him, he cried—

“Give it a hoist, Jack. Once, twice—that will do.”

Down went the watch-box upon its face with a crash upon the pavement, and the unfortunate guardian of the night found himself fairly imprisoned and as firmly fixed, as though he had been entombed alive.

The first person that passed that way fell sprawling over the watch-box, but by that time Claude and Jack had got quite out of the city, and were hastening, despite the rain that still fell in torrents, towards the Inn where their horses were waiting for them.

Before they reached that place Claude paused, and spoke to Jack, saying—

“By the morning this affair will have got wind on Oxford, with such additions and embellishments as such a story is pretty sure to carry with it, and as you and I will be tolerably well described, it will not at all do for us to linger here.”

“Of course not,” said Jack. “I think the best way will be to go to the stable-yard and get out our cattle ourselves, and be off.”

“Where to, Jack?”

“Heaven only knows. If I thought there was the smallest chance of doing any good to Dick, I should say, let us remain in Oxford; but I am afraid that is now all gone and past.”

“I don’t feel quite sure of that, Jack.”

“Indeed, Claude?”

“No, and I don’t like to leave Oxford while there is life in our friend.”

“Do not then. I am as willing to stay as possible. From our vallises we can easily get the means of making such alteration in our appearance as would puzzle a conjuror, and as the trial will be to-morrow, or rather we may say to-day, now, we shall not have long to wait.”

“That is my thought, Jack. Something may arise yet, to enable us to be of use to Dick.”

“I don’t deny the possibility, Claude.”

“But you think the probability small?”

"I own I do, and you must think so too; but in our time we have seen such improbable things come to pass, that I am willing to hope and expect something even against all my convictions."

"And I, too; so let us get our horses and then we can go right through the city and put up at some house at the end of it, where I dare say for a few days we shall be all safe and right enough."

By this time they had reached the fence at the back of the Inn garden, which they had crossed before so well.

## CHAPTER CXCIV.

### AN UNEXPECTED SCENE AT AN EXECUTION NEAR OXFORD.

CLAUDE felt that this was the only course to pursue, and he and Jack in a very few moments were in the large stable-yard of the Inn, and creeping along in search of the door of the stable in which Jack had seen their steeds put up for the night.

"Are you sure you know it, Jack?" whispered Claude.

"Quite. What a pool of rain this yard is to be sure. Come on. This way, Claude—this way. Ah, here is the door, and it is not locked—all's right."

"I will keep watch, Jack, while you go in and saddle the horses as quickly as you can. Be careful about the girths, for who knows but we may have a gallop yet to-night."

"I will, Claude."

Jack disappeared into the stable, and Claude stood quite close to the door, in order that if any one should be accidentally looking from the Inn, they should not detect his figure against the night sky. Jack was compelled to procure a light in order to saddle the two horses, and the faint gleam of it came through a large chink in the ill-fitting door of the stable.

Suddenly, then, as Claude looked up at the Inn windows, he saw a light cross one of them, evidently from the inside, and then suddenly disappeared. He felt certain by that that some one was stirring in the Inn, and he whispered to Jack,—

"Quick! everybody don't sleep sound to-night."

"Ah! is it so?"

"Yes. But we may have time yet."

"Plenty. Here's your horse, Claude. Mount him at once, and I will get mine ready. We must and will be off if all the world should say no to it. In another hour hence, we don't know what may happen in this disagreeable town."

"As quick as you can with your horse, Jack."

"You be off, Claude."

"No, no! You know better than that while you say it. When did I be off, and leave you in any danger?"

"Never," said Jack, from the stable, while he was busy putting on the saddle on his own horse; but let a person be as quick as he may, such an operation as saddling two horses will occupy some few minutes; and although few, if any, could surpass Jack in the speed of such an operation, yet the person who was up in the old Inn had time to come down into the yard. Claude was not a little surprised to see a man in his night-dress, carrying a lighted candle, suddenly appear at a door that opened into the stable yard.

The moment that he did so, out went his light, which the wind and the rain were not at all likely to permit to exist many moments; but this circumstance did not seem to have the least effect upon the man, who, still holding the candle and candlestick exactly as if the former were in a state of ignition and doing him a deal of good in showing him his way, walked slowly and calmly into the stable yard.

"What on earth can be the meaning of all this?" thought Claude. "Whoever

that is he takes it remarkably easy. Jack, are you quite ready now? Here's some one coming, or else a ghost."

"A ghost?" said Jack, as he appeared at the stable door with his horse, already ready for the road. "A ghost! did you say, Claude?"

"Yes, I did. Only look where that figure in white glides along by the wall there. Do you not see it?"

"I do, indeed. Who is it?"

"Perhaps if you were to say, 'what is it?' you would be nearer the mark for surely it cannot be a living man."

"Let us mount, and be off," said Jack, as he sprang into his saddle. "I don't half like these kind of sights. Mount, Claude, mount at once, and let us get into the meadows."

Claude mounted, but yet he lingered.

"Stay a bit, Jack," he said. "This is too curious not to make one wish to stay and see the end of it. I pray you to stop a bit."

"If you wish it, Claude."

"I do, indeed, Jack. Only look where the mysterious figure comes. You can see how he holds the candlestick, and he believes that it lights him on his way. Only see how he steps over the puddles. By all that's good, ghost or no ghost, you will have a wet skin on such a night as this."

"I don't half like it, Claude. It looks ominous."

"Pho! pho! You hold the bridle of my horse. If we go away without finding out what all this means, we shall be puzzling ourselves about it at other times when we may be better employed. Hold the horse, Jack."

"What would you do Claude?"

"Go and meet the figure. If it be mortal, I should like to let him see that we are not afraid of him; and if anything else come to warn us of anything, I am determined it shall not have any excuse for leaving the warning in obscurity, for I will speak to it."

"Claude! Claude! you are fool-hardy, indeed you are. I beg that you will not go; it is much better to let these kind of sights be. Do not seek to make it more frightful than it is."

"Upon my word, Jack," said Claude as he dismounted, "I did not think you were so superstitious. I never yet saw anything worse than myself, and I don't think, do you know, that I ever shall; so whatever you do, don't let the horse stray. I will be back to you in a few moments."

Jack saw Claude stride across the yard in the direction of the figure with evident misgivings; but yet he took the bridle of the horse, and strung it round his arm so that it should not be startled into flight by whatever might happen. Claude did not for a moment pause in his progress towards the curious figure all in white, nor did that figure in any manner shrink from or avoid him, so that it was quite a curious thing to see them by the dim morning light and in the rain, gradually approaching each other.

It chilled Jack to look on at such a scene, for it was beyond his imagination to guess how it could possibly end; and now he saw Claude pause and step aside, and the white figure passed him without the remotest notice, and come on as though there had been no such person in its immediate vicinity.

"By Heaven!" said Jack, "it's to me it is coming! It won't speak to Claude. It's some visitor to me only, that is quite clear, and if it get's me to wait for it, I'm a Dutchman; flesh and blood is one thing, but ghosts in white are another, and I don't care how little I have to do with them."

With this, Jack did not wait another moment for Claude, but turning the horses' heads towards the slight fence that divided the Inn yard from the meadows, he made them both clear it at a bound. He had no intention of doing more than place the fence between him and the spectre, and when he had done so, he faced about again to look for Claude. He soon saw him running across the yard.

"Come!" said Jack; "come, Claude! quick! I cannot stay here. He is coming to me."

"And what then?" said Claude, as he placed his hands on the top of the little fence to vault over. At the moment that Claude made his spring, bang went some fire-arms from one of the windows of the Inn, and Jack thought he was hit, for Claude rolled on to the green sward on the meadow side of the fence, instead of alighting on his feet.

Jack saw the window from which the flash of the gun came, and drawing a pistol from his saddle, he at once fired at it, and from the crash of broken glass he was quite satisfied that he had hit his mark.

"All's right," said Claude, as he bounded to his feet and sprang to his saddle.

"You are not hurt, Claude?"

"Not a bit. The sudden noise startled me, and I slipped in taking my leap, that was all."

"Thank the fates for that. But look at the figure. It has turned again."

"It's only the landlord walking in his sleep, Jack."

"Walking in his sleep?"

"Yes. Did you never hear of that sort of thing before?"

"Oh, yes, often, and seen it too. I only wonder that it did not at once strike me as a solution of the mystery. But that gun or pistol shot was not fired by any one in their sleep, Claude."

"Not a bit of it. We have enemies now on the foot, Jack. My impression is that we are traced in some sort of way from Oxford. Ah, here they come. Now we shall see what they mean by it, and what force they are in."

The private back door of the Inn was suddenly now opened, and several persons with lanterns issued forth. A group of men immediately behind them appeared, and running across the yard, one cried,—

"Get us out some cattle as quick as you can, ostler. Take anybody's. It's on public service, and it will be all right. Stop! you villains! Surrender this instant, or it will be worse for you. You have shot Mr. Wolf."

"You don't say so?" said Claude. "And pray who is Mr. Wolf when he is at home?"

"The chief constable of Oxford, you villains! Oh, you will swing for this as sure as eggs are eggs. You had better give in at once, for there are eight of us, and we are determined fellows."

"Come on, Jack," said Claude. "That will do. We will leave these eight determined fellows to mount at their leisure."

Jack and Claude turned their horses' heads, but the moment they did so, bang, bang, bang, went no less than three pistols at them. In a moment Claude turned, and drawing one of his own pistols, he fired, crying,—"It was cowardly to keep your fire till our backs were to you. Now blaze away!"

With a shriek, one of the officers fell into the arms of his comrade, and everybody there was by far too busy to think of firing again at Claude and Jack, who once more tried to retreat; but they had not got many paces before a rattling volley of pistol-shots was sent after them, and one bullet struck Claude on the heel of his boot.

"A little higher," said Claude, "and it might have spoilt my dancing. Come on, Jack. I have no idea of being made an animated target of by a parcel of blundering police-officers, who might knock one over by chance."

"Not at all pleasant," said Jack.

They gave their horses their heads, and off they went over the meadows at a quick pace. The rain still came down, but not so heavily as it had, and the ground was disagreeably heavy; but still it was amazing the speed they made by going lightly over it, and finally coming to a privet hedge, they leaped it, and found themselves in a road that was tolerably hard and good.

"I don't want a race with those officers," said Claude. "We have other fish to fry."

"Certainly," replied Jack. "Let us trot along this road. We may come to some shelter for ought we know to the contrary."



"Very good. I shall not be very particular as to what it is if we can only give them the double in any way."

With this view, they trotted on, Claude taking slightly the lead; and as the dawn had now made considerable progress, they could see about them very well. In the course of a few moments they came to the lodge gates of some estate, and Claude at once drew up, saying, "Jack, this is the very place;" and then, without waiting for the smallest reply from Jack, he rung a smart peal at a bell, the handle of which hung close at hand.

"Who is there?" said a voice from one of the lodge windows.

"I," said Claude, in a voice of authority. "How dare you ask who is there? Open the gates directly."

"Yes, sir;—beg pardon, sir;—coming, sir," said the voice.

"So much for the power of impudence," said Claude to Jack. "Now, that fool thinks I am some one of great authority, although he cannot know me from Adam. You will see how obsequious he will be when he opens the gate."

"But he will find out his mistake, Claude."

"Not a bit of it. Do you think after the sample that he has of my temper, he will venture to ask me a question? Not he. Take my word for it, Jack, impudence in this world, which may be anybody's capital, if they know how to use it, goes a very long way indeed."

## CHAPTER CXCVI.

TURPIN'S FATE APPEARS TO BE FIXED, BUT IS NOT SO.

JACK had hardly so much faith as Claude in the power of assurance; but he had to have his infidelity in that particular corrected, for in a few moments, the lodge-keeper, half dressed, rushed out of his little residence, and flung the gates wide open, saying as he did,—

"I am sorry, sir, I was not up. Hope you will excuse it, sir."

"Hold your noise!" said Claude.

The gate-keeper only bowed. "Of course," he thought to himself, "this must be some very great man, indeed, or he never could speak in such a tone to any one." Claude, followed by Jack, rode into the open space in front of the lodge, and then glancing about, he, seeing a little enclosed paddock of about a quarter of an acre close at hand, he said, sharply, "There are none of them up at the house yet, I suppose?"

"No, sir, if you please," said the gate-keeper.

"Ah! so I thought; I won't disturb them though. Quite time enough to put them all out of their way, and give them no end of trouble, and then the fidgets, for fear everything should not be just as I like, when they do get up. Here, turn the two horses into that paddock. Don't touch their gear—I and my friend will sit down in your little room here for a time."

"Yes, sir, of course, sir. I will set light to the fire. The family are early risers, sir, at the hall, and in an hour now, I daresay, the old gentleman will be stirring."

"Oh, will he! How is he looking now?"

"Pretty well, sir; but his lame leg will never let him be what he was."

"What! Ain't that any better?"

"No, sir, they say not."

Claude and Jack walked into the lodge, and they had hardly been there two minutes when, like a whirlwind, by swept some half dozen mounted men, no doubt from the Inn. Claude went to the little latticed window of the lodge, which commanded a tolerable view of the road, and he had the satisfaction to see the officers disappear, they, no doubt, having the full impression that they were in full cry after the two highwaymen. Claude thought it advisable to wait a few moments longer; and then, looking at his superb watch—the diamonds round the rim of which dazzled the eyes of the gate-keeper—he turned to Jack, and said—

"General, what say you to a canter, and then for us to come back here? By that time they will be up and stirring."

Jack, of course, understood Claude's aim, so he replied in a tone of well-assumed deference—

"As your Grace pleases."

When the gate-keeper heard that one of his guests was a general and the other a "Grace," they might both have wiped their boots on his back, if they had been so inclined, for the poor creature had been so accustomed all his life to look upon the possessors of titles as some superior creation that he had never the remotest idea that they were but poor frail mortals like himself.

"The horses to the gate," said Claude, with a sharpness that made the man jump as though a pistol had gone off close to his ear.

"Oh, yes—yes my lord—that your grace. Yes, directly."

"What an idiot," said Jack, when he left the little room to obey Claude's imperious orders.

"One of many, Jack."

"No doubt of it. But what a humiliating thing it is to think of, that one of God's creatures, with some brains in his head, should make himself such a crawling sycophant to another."

"It is, Jack. But you will find that it is the slave that always makes the tyrant, and not the tyrant the slave."

"I believe you are right, Claude."

This little highly philosophical conversation was put a stop to, by the gate-keeper crawling into the room to say that the horses were ready, upon which strode Claude and Jack, and without so much as a "thank you," or one word of civility, they mounted their steeds and rode off, the gate-keeper keeping his body bent quite at a right angle until they were out of sight.

"Ah," he said, as he closed the gate. "There's real gentlemen for you. Don't come for nobody at all, and gives as much trouble as possible, and ready to snap your head off for nothing. That's how you may always know a real gentleman from the sham ones. A duke, no doubt, and some general. I'll run up to the house and see if anybody's up, and tell 'em they will have visitors to breakfast soon."

Claude and Jack took precisely the other direction to that which the officers took, and soon placed a couple of miles between them and the Inn which had so nearly been the scene of a serious misadventure to them. They then came out upon a much broader road than the one they were upon, and they saw a finger-post, upon which the words "To Oxford" let them know in which direction to go.

"You don't wish me to abandon Dick?" said Claude. "You have no disinclination, I hope, to return to Oxford, Jack, even after what has taken place?"

"None in the least, Claude."

"I am glad of that. I don't like like to do anything against your judgment, Jack, but in good truth I know that both you and I are such adepts in disguises that I feel assured if we once get an opportunity of changing our apparel, we shall do remarkably well. Who is this coming along the road?"

"A Jew," said Jack, "I think.—Yes—look at his bag."

"You are right. I wonder if he resides at Oxford. If so, I should not be at all disinclined to trust him to some extent. A confidant would be invaluable to us just now, Jack; and it is highly probable he might be bought for a hundred pounds or so, which would be no great object to us, as we could make somebody in Oxford pay it in all likelihood before we left."

"Easily," said Jack. "Shall we speak to him and sound him a little upon the matter?"

"Yes—yes, do it."

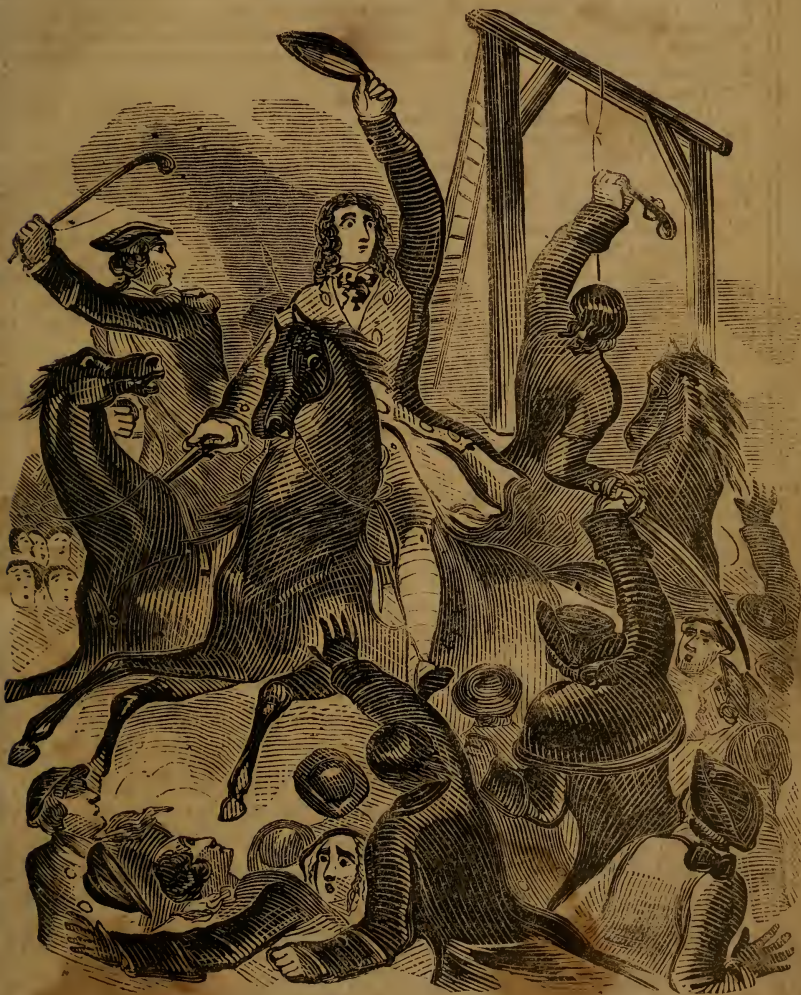
By this time the Jew, who was rather a poor looking man, and to all appearance old, and a little lame, had got close up to them, and then he paused, and shading his eyes from the light which came strongly in that direction, he said—

"Yes, it's all right. Claude Duval, my dear, how are you? and, Jack, my boy, I hope you are well?"

"Why, how is this, sir?" said Claude; "you know us?"

"Yes, surely, haven't I been looking for you and trudging about the roads for the last four hours, ever since that shindy at the stone jug? To be sure I have."

"But I am certain I never saw you before," said Claude.



CLAUDE AND JACK RESCUING TURPIN FROM THE SCAFFOLD.

"Nor I," said Jack.

"But I have seen you both in London. At the White Bear in Oxford Street I saw you twice, and I don't forget people in your line of business. Be so good as to read that."

With these words the Jew took from his pocket a common horn snuff-box, and

after unscrewing the lid with a squeak that set all Claude's and Jack's teeth on edge, he handed the former a little scrap of paper, upon which was written :

"Trust Zadoc. Dick Turpin."

"Oh, then, you are a friend of Dick's?"

"I am in the business and a friend of all customers. I have a little place in the town and a little place out of it; and between the two I pick up a crust. Dick, who is in the jug, knows me, and gave me that, in case I wanted to do a little business with any friend of his. I heard all about what happened at the jail, and I at once knew that when the nabs mentioned you they were right. But they don't know Jack."

"Then how did you know me?" said Jack.

"Oh, I knew you and Claude were together, so I guessed it was you; but all the roads will be too hot to hold you in another hour. The beaks and the judges will take a little trouble, and they are going to swear in a hundred special constables on purpose for you, so that they are determined to have you if they can. The only safe thing for you is, off and away."

"And that I do not like," said Claude.

"Not like?" said the Jew, "No: like?"

"No, Zadoc! I have made up my mind, and so has Jack made up his, to stay and see the last of Dick if we cannot save him. I hope that something will yet turn up to enable us to do him a good turn; but go we will not until the breath is fairly out of his body."

The Jew considered for a few moments, and then he said:—

"Well, well! wilful men must have their way. Follow me, if you wish to be free from the grabs for the rest of to-day. Come this way, and I will take you to where you will have time to think without being feared to look about you."

"I thank you," said Claude; "but of course this is a matter of business."

"Quite."

"Then you will allow us to convince you that you will not be badly paid; take this fifty-pound-note as an earnest of our bargain together, and half-a-dozen such shall not stand in the way of Dick's release from limbo."

The Jew held the note up between his eyes and the sky for a few moments, and then with a nod of approbation he rolled it up into a little ball and put it in his pocket.

"Good," he said.

"I hope so," said Claude.

"Excuse me," said Zadoc, "I did not allude to the note; I meant that we were quite agreed that everything was to be done that could be done for Dick. I have often heard, Claude Duval, that you were more than liberal, and this proves it. It is a sound policy to pay men like me well. You will find that out in the long run."

"I have found it out long ago," said Claude, "so now lead on, Master Zadoc, to this place of safety that you talk of, where we may have the privilege of thinking without the necessity of keeping our eyes on the stretch for enemies."

"That I will do," said Zadoc. "Come on."

He went to the side of the road and opened a large white gate, which looked as if it led into some orchard, but Claude was not one who ever hesitated. He trusted, or he did not; and if he did, he trusted implicitly; so, without a moment's hesitation he followed the Jew through the white gate, and Jack followed Claude.

Zadoc closed the gate again, and locked it. Then he took a small silver whistle from his pocket and blew a wailing kind of note upon it that at the moment, if no one had seen how it was produced, might have puzzled them to say whether it was the call of some wild bird or a mere artificial sound.

In the course of two or three minutes then, during which, Zadoc conversed in a low tone with Claude, an old man and a boy came round some large laurel bushes and bowed to the party. Zadoc spoke to the old man and boy in a language unknown to Claude, and then turning to him, he said—

"If you will let him take your horses they will be well cared for, and whether I am here or not he will deliver them to you. He will not forget you, and to summon him you have only to whistle with as prolonged a note as possible, as he is not very bright in hearing, and his little grandson is not always here."

Claude and Jack at once dismounted, and gave their steeds to the old man and the boy.

"I have a whistle," said Jack, "which I always carry with me in case Claude and I should be separated by any accident, so that I shall easily be able to give him the signal."

"That is all right," said the Jew; "but I don't expect that there will be any hurry or emergency, or that you will have occasion to come here without me; but it is as well to be provided against any possible emergency."

"You are quite right," said Claude. "This is your country place then, I suppose, in which you transact business?"

"Yes, but I don't let all my customers come here. It is only such as yourselves that I let into this secret. Follow me to the house. It is but a cottage, and yet you will find yourselves more secure in it than in many a palace."

"There is not a doubt of that," said Claude. "I have no great faith in the security of palaces."

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## CHAPTER CXCVII.

### SOMETHING ENERGETIC IS DONE FOR DICK TURPIN.

CLAUDE was specially well pleased at their meeting with the Jew; and following his established rule in such cases, he trusted him implicitly. The reader will not fail to recollect how frequently Claude has insisted upon this rule of confidence as being one well worth the following.

Jack could not feel so fully and fearlessly, as Claude, a confidence in any one, and the consequence was that he followed with much more of a look of doubt the footsteps of Zadoc.

The distance to the Jew's cottage was sufficient to remove it from the high-road, so that it was completely out of ear-shot of any chance passenger.

"You will always find this, if you please to avail yourself of it," said Zadoc, "a place of refuge. All I ask of you or Jack is what I think I have a right to ask."

"And what may that be?" said Claude.

"Simply, that you will never come to it or leave it when, to your knowledge, any one can observe you, for if once the police set an eye of suspicion upon this little place, its usefulness will be gone at once, and for ever."

"That is a condition that we shall not forget," said Claude. "You hear it, Jack, and of course subscribe to it?"

"Certainly," replied Jack. "It would, indeed be a monstrous thing to avail oneself of the hospitality of any place, and then for ever afterwards invest it with such a suspicion, that it shall be of no use to any one else. I would die at the gate of this place, rather than I would enter while to my knowledge a human eye was upon me."

"I thank you both," said the Jew. "Your promises are quite sufficient for me, and here then you may find yourselves quite at home, and I daresay you have no sort of objection to such a breakfast as we can find for you."

The door of the house yielded to Zadoc's touch, and he slipped on one side to allow his visitors to enter the place. They did so fearlessly, and found themselves in a pleasant enough cottage-like residence, amply, and indeed handsomely, provided with every requisite for comfort. The Jew closed the door after them, and then in the style of an Eastern monarch summoning his slaves, he clapped his hands thrice together, upon which an old woman made her appearance, and

with great demonstrations of respect, awaited the commands of Zadoc, who she evidently looked upon as some very superior being.

"Esther," said Zadoc, "may we trespass upon your larder for a breakfast this morning? These are friends of mine."

The old woman made no reply in words, but by a very low and reverential obeisance, she signified with what perfect submission she received the order, and how willing she was to execute it. She then went hastily away again through the door she had arrived by.

"You have a willing servant," said Claude.

"She is a member of my own family," replied Zadoc.

"I beg your pardon then, for naming her in connexion with anything like servitude."

"Do not fancy that it is any offence. Esther and I belong to the same race. She serves me for love, and I am but too happy to be able to make her old age comfortable. Step this way, and you will soon see, unless I am very much mistaken, and we have happened to take Esther more than unusually at unawares, that she can manage to get up an extemporaneous breakfast that need not be despised."

Jack and Claude followed the Jew into a very pretty apartment of the cottage, and as they did so, they could but exchange looks of surprise, for since crossing his own threshold the whole manner of Zadoc had altered, and there was an elevation of style and manner about him, such as they could hardly have expected.

Claude knew, however, quite enough of the singular and highly interesting people to whom Zadoc belonged, scarcely to wonder at any strange transformation of character that took place with them in their own houses in distinction to their appearance abroad among the Gentiles.

The room in which they now were was a pretty one, with long windows opening into a small, but charmingly kept conservatory, where the orange tree presented its tempting-looking fruit, and where the fig sent forth its broad leaves in abundance. Numerous flowers, too, graced that little place; and as a view from the room, it was enough to make any one believe, that he had been transported suddenly by the wand of an enchanter to some much more favoured clime, than our bleak and somewhat inhospitable one.

"Where I you," said Claude, "I should spend many an hour here."

"I do," replied Zadoc, "as many as I can. Yon greenhouse has in it many shrubs and plants from that land, which all of my people regard with veneration."

"And which you all hope to see again?"

"It is more than a hope," said the Jew, quietly. "It is a certainty. They have been promised it by one who performs all promises, and we know that the time will come, when we shall be great in the land of our fathers, and when, as a mighty nation, we shall raise again from the ashes of our ancient glory."

The Jew's eyes flashed with enthusiasm as he spoke, and Claude, as he looked at him, could not but feel how likely it was that such a conviction would maintain, as it had maintained, this scattered people through all difficulties and under all privations.

The entrance of Esther, with a tray containing some of the materials for breakfast, put a stop to a conversation that was evidently becoming by far too exciting for the Jew. In the course of a few minutes a marvellously well-laid table was laid out, and Claude and Jack partook of as hearty a breakfast as ever they had enjoyed in all their lives. When Zadoc saw that they had quite satisfied themselves, he rose, saying,—

"Now, then, to business."

"With all my heart," said Claude.

"Follow me, then, and we will consult together in the garden about what is best to be done, and leave Esther at her own good leisure to remove the remains of our repast."

Claude and Jack followed Zadoc through the conservatory into the garden

beyond, which was completely protected from observation by close growing trees, and between them a complete labyrinth of interlacing evergreens. It was, in truth, a charming spot.

"It is settled, then," said Zadoc, "that you will do something for Turpin?"

"Quite."

"Well, all that remains for us to conclude is that that something shall be as likely of success as possible, and as little hazardous."

"Precisely."

"He will be tried to-day, and ordered for execution—for that he will be found guilty will not once permit of a doubt."

"This is Friday!"

"Yes, and he will be hanged on Monday morning, unless something in the meantime can be done. After the failure at the jail last night, there is no chance of anything being accomplished in that quarter. Turpin will be taken in a cart to the common, outside the town, and there executed, and his body will be hung in chains, no doubt. Now, with a knowledge of all these circumstances, what, in your calm, cool, deliberate judgment can be done?"

Claude was silent.

"Can you take him from the prison? No! Can you wrest him from the court, in the presence of the judges and all the ministers of the law? No! Can you rescue him on the way to execution? No! Can you save him on the scaffold? Yes!"

Claude and Jack both started at this sudden transition to all the Jew's negatives.

"What mean you? Are you serious?" said Claude.

"I am to the full as serious as such a subject ought to make me. If you don't mind five hundred pounds I think it may be done."

"Not a straw! Double the sum, if you like."

"Very good. We will say one thousand pounds?"

Jack plucked Claude by the sleeve, and he understood it as a friendly admonition to put some bounds to his prodigality.

"My friend," said Zadoc, "when one of my people offers you anything for five hundred pounds, never offer him one thousand pounds, for that is then his price."

"I will not draw back from my offer," said Claude. "I have said one thousand pounds, and it shall be that amount if Turpin is free."

"Five hundred pounds," said Zadoc, "for the attempt, and another five hundred if it be successful. Will that do?"

"Perfectly well; and now tell me by what wonderful means you will accomplish this undertaking. It seems to me at this present moment as though you would require more than mortal means to carry out what you propose. I am all impatience."

"Draw nearer both of you, and you shall hear."

Claude stood close to the Jew on one side, and Jack upon the other, and then he spoke in a clear voice, saying—

"We may take for granted all the facts, namely: that Turpin will be tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death on the common on Monday morning next; and we may take for granted that any attempt between this time and that to do anything will be perfectly futile, and indeed only recoil on our own heads."

Claude nodded.

"Well, on Monday morning at seven o'clock it will be found out that the hangman is very ill and cannot rise from his bed to perform his duties. But he will recommend a man of whom he knows a little to officiate, and the sheriff will be delighted to snatch at any one in the emergency."

"But—but——"

"Nay, hear me out."

"I will. Excuse the interruption. I will not say another word until you have concluded your plans."

"Well, that hangman's substitute will ride in the cart with Turpin to the place of execution, after promising him the clergyman of the jail will likewise be with them. Then that hangman's deputy will seize a sharp knife from his girdle, with which he will be well prepared, and in a moment cut the cords that bind the prisoner, and he can so manage, that only one on each side will have to be cut at all; and having as they ride along told Turpin what to do, he will jump from the cart to where a man is mounted on a fleet horse, and holding another by the bridle, he will mount the led horse and be off. The hangman's deputy will, then, if he have the opportunity, affect to pursue them, and make his way here, where he will find his own gallant and well-trained steed waiting for him."

"Waiting for him here?" cried Claude.

"His steed?" said Jack. "The deputy hangman's gallant steed?"

"Precisely."

"But how will you get that man to play his part so well?" said Claude.

"Don't you think you could do it?"

"I?"

"Yes. Who else could be depended upon in such a case? Who but you must play the executioner's substitute? and who but Jack must wait with the led horse close to the scaffold? Whose steed but yours do you think I would have here waiting?"

"By all that's good," said Claude, as he drew a long breath, "it will do; and whether it will or not, it is the only plan at all likely of success. What say you, Jack, to it? Will you undertake it?"

"If you will, Claude, yes."

"Assuredly I will; and we must have a first-rate horse for Turpin,"

"I have his own brave mare Bess, as he calls her, in my stable," said the Jew, quietly.

"You have? Then if once he gets on her back he is as safe and free as the wind!"

"I think so likewise. 'Tis in good truth a noble creature. We will take care to give her some white blemishes by Monday morning to prevent her recognition by any eye that may be curious in horse-flesh, and more than usually knowing about Turpin's steed."

"Yes, that can easily be done. But how will you secure the regular hangman's co-operation in this affair?"

"He is human."

"Are you certain of him?"

"I am."

"Then, for the life of me, I do not see why the plan should not succeed. All that it requires are good disguises, and boldness and address. Don't you think well of the scheme, Jack?"

"I think better of it the more I get familiarised with it."

"That is a good sign," said the Jew. "A plan which loses no attraction, upon a closer scrutiny, is likely to wear well. But if we determine upon this, we must be up and doing. Is it agreed upon, without doubt and without reservation, by both of you?"

"By me, yes," said Claude.

"And by me," said Jack.

"Very well; then no doubt you would like to be present at the trial, which will be on in another hour, at the court house. Come into the cottage, and I shall be able to provide you with complete disguises, so that you may walk into Oxford, and no one will be a bit the wiser as to whom you may be. I will conduct the affair with the executioner entirely myself. Come in. In truth, I do think you will save him."



## CHAPTER CXCVIII.

## TURPIN'S RESCUE.—A SCENE OF EXCITEMENT ON THE COMMON.

IN the course of half an hour more, Claude and Jack were deliberately walking into Oxford, in the disguise of a couple of graziers; and so capitally was their costume arranged and put on, that those who knew them the most intimately could never have suspected who they were.

Claude represented a man past the prime of life. He was stuffed out to look three times his real size, and the grizzly whiskers that the Jew put him, in truth, most effectually disguised him. A light-coloured wig transformed Jack into a much younger looking man than he really was; and so, with a perfect confidence in the excellence of their disguises, they fully intended to be present at Dick Turpin's trial.

The information of the Jew regarding the coming on of the trial on that morning was perfectly correct, and it will be seen that his information upon other points was equally to the purpose. At that time, hanging for highway robbery was quite a common thing, and it was very usual to execute the culprit upon or very near to the spot upon which the offence for which he specifically suffered was committed; and when the party apprehended was so well known and widely circulated a knight of the road as Dick Turpin, it was very charitably supposed that a very small amount of evidence sufficed, both with judge and jury, to convict him.

The court was very much crowded, so much so that the conscientious door-keepers adopted the London practice, and began not to find room for any one unless they were paid; but that was no object to Claude and Jack, and they had no ambition to draw upon themselves any sort of attention by carping at anything; so they soon found themselves, by virtue of one shilling each, in the court. It was with difficulty they got standing room in rather an obscure corner.

Dick Turpin had only just been placed at the dock, and from his pale face, and the marks of several scars upon it, it was quite evident that he had suffered considerably on the previous night in the prison-yard, upon the occasion of the bold attempt to escape.

He was placed upon his trial directly, and the counsel for the prosecution very unfairly made a long exodium about the attempted escape from the prison; in which he ought to have been stopped by the court, for it had really nothing to do with the case. From this, however, both Claude and Jack learned that it was no other than the Governor of the jail that the former had shot, and that he was dead.

"Serve him right," said a voice near Claude.

Jack felt at the moment a great disposition to say something; but a slight sign from Claude warned him to be silent. Zadoc had particularly cautioned them both to make no acquaintance in the town or in the court.

Dick Turpin pleaded not guilty to the charge made against him; but he did so with the listless air of a man who feels that his fate is determined upon, and that nothing can save him.

With the proceedings of the trial the readers of this narrative need not be troubled, inasmuch as it was one of the most ordinary description, and indeed it was hurried over with a most unseemly haste, as though judge and jury had been fully agreed in the propriety of hanging Dick Turpin, but felt it to be just necessary to go through a certain formula beforehand in the matter.

"Guilty," said the foreman of the jury, almost before the question was well out of the lips of the proper officer.

"Very good," said the judge. "Richard Turpin, you have been convicted by a careful, conscientious, and intelligent jury of your fellow countrymen, of the offence laid to your charge. Have you anything to say why the sentence of the law should not be passed upon you in due form?"

"It is needless," said Dick, "to say anything. I know very well I am to be shuffled out of the world because of my reputation. Well, be it so. It was the

end I looked to, and now my last words are—'Thanks to the two kind friends who, last night, did all they could for me.'"

"You ought to be thinking of other things," said the judge, "you unhappy man, than thinking of two reprobates, who will soon be in the hands of offended justice."

"There I differ with you," said Dick. "You have not caught them yet. I know by what you say, that you have not, and therefore I feel very confident you will not catch them at all. It is a wonderful comfort to me at such a time as this, to feel that they who risked so much for me have not suffered by that amount of gallant friendship. God bless them both!"

"This is indeed terrible," said the judge, "to find a criminal over the brink of eternity with so little consciousness of his situation."

"Perhaps, my lord," said Dick, "you will hardly think it right to hang a man who is in such an imperfect state of mind?"

"I can really," said the judge, who found that question a very difficult one indeed to answer—"I can really listen to no more of this. It is too sad and afflicting."

He then, with all due solemnity, passed sentence of death upon Dick Turpin, concluding with the usual kind hope that the Almighty would have mercy upon him, as none would be shown him in this world.

"Farewell to you all!" cried Dick, "and if anybody here should happen to see Claude Duval or a friend of his whom I won't name, as he might not wish it, tell them what I said of them, and how they treated me up here at Oxford, for little or nothing, but because they had heard of the old proverb, that says—'Give a dog an ill name and hang him.'"

"Remove the prisoner," said the judge, shaking his head until the powder flew out of his wig. "Remove the prisoner!"

Dick was instantly laid hold of by the officials of the jail, and hurried from the dock.

"Come," whispered Claude to Jack, and they both made their way out of the court as quickly as they could.

"Well," said Claude, "what do you think of all that, Jack?"

"Think? I could hardly contain myself in court, I was half-maddened, Claude, at the whole scene; and when poor Dick spoke of us it was with difficulty I kept myself from calling out to him to be of good cheer, for we had not deserted him yet."

"It was well you did not, Jack."

"Yes, I feel that for any such exhibition of interest in the fate of the prisoner might have been fatal to our disguise. No, Claude, I had enough self-command left not to do it, although it certainly was rather a struggle to me."

"That I can well suppose."

"But ought we not now immediately to seek our friend, Zadoc? I did not notice him among the crowd, and yet he said he would be in the court during the trial."

"Amid such a sea of faces as that court presented, I can very easily imagine we may miss sight of any one in particular; but if he said he would be there I would wager anything that there he was."

"And here he is," said Jack, as the Jew suddenly stepped up to them.

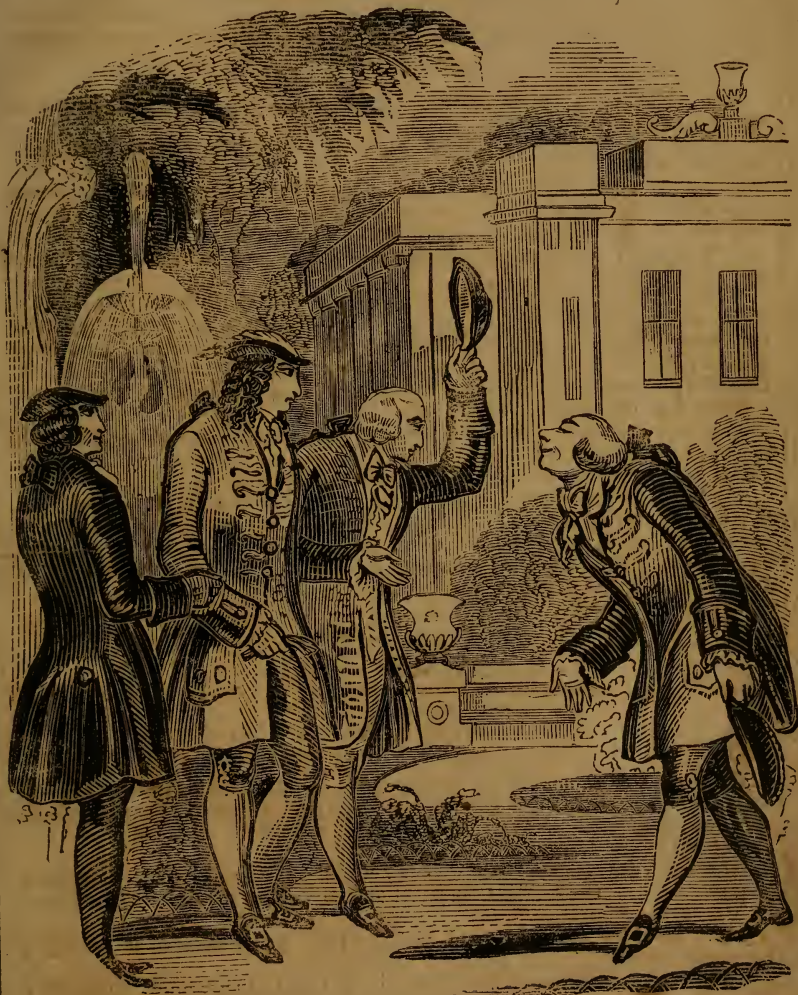
"Ah, welcome!" said Claude; "all has gone in the court as you thought and said that it would, Zadoc."

"Yes, of course it has; I knew it was all settled before-hand. I have found a lodging for you until Monday, for it will not be safe for you to be at my house, as it is known that I do not take in strangers, and your presence with me might awaken suspicion. I allude to my house in the town, for as regards the cottage it should only be gone to upon an emergency, and never to remain in it for a longer period than the emergency may last. Follow me."

"In all things as regards this affair," said Claude, "we, of course, yield implicitly to your guidance."

They now followed Zadoc past one of the college gates ; and in a small but pretty street of houses, Zadoc stopped and tapped at the little parlour window of one of them. The door was immediately opened by a young woman.

‘Here are your lodgers,’ said the Jew. ‘You will find them quiet enough, and if you don’t interfere with them, they won’t interfere with you.’



THE THREE ADVENTURERS RECEIVE AN INVITATION TO A CHRISTENING.

‘Oh, surely not,’ replied the woman. ‘Walk in, gentlemen, walk in ! Here’s the room, and the bed-rooms are both above.’

‘That will do very well,’ said Claude. And when the young woman had left them alone with Zadoc, the latter said :—

‘I would by no means advise you to keep yourselves prisoners here. The impression in this house is, that you have some business connected with the assizes.

Go out and about as much as you like, but take care always to be at home between nine and ten—three and four—eight and nine,—for it will be during some of those hours that I will call upon you. And as regards all the minor arrangements we were to do, you may make your minds perfectly easy. They will all go on smoothly enough, so that if the plan succeed it will fairly do so upon its own merits; if it fail, it will not be from any hitch in the machinery.”

“It is pleasant to hear you say all that,” replied Claude. “There is only one thing else that, if it could be by any possibility managed, would give both myself and Jack great pleasure.”

“What is it?”

“In letting Dick Turpin know by some means that he is not quite destitute, and may not give hope adieu.”

“I have been thinking of that and will try it; it would give me great satisfaction, and, besides, it would keep up Dick’s strength, for he will need it all; and when a man fancies there is no longer any hope for him in this world, he is apt to be careless enough of his food and drink. Now, as he is condemned to death, they will let him have, in a reasonable way, all that he likes.”

“To be sure; and he might get himself well up to any excitement by Monday next,” said Jack.

“Yes; and the new governor of the prison is quite amiably disposed towards him,” added Zadoc, “since it has been all through him and his friends that the vacancy was made, that enabled him to slip into the situation. Therefore, you may depend that I will do what I can to let Dick know that he should take care of himself until Monday morning; if I cannot, I will let you know.”

With this, the Jew left them; but Claude and Jack felt so dull in their lodging that they were glad enough to avail themselves of the advice of Zadoc, to go out. They took good care, however, to be in at the time he had named, and it was on Sunday morning that he came to them again.

“Dick knows something,” he said. “I ascertained that they had placed him in a cell not very far removed from the outer wall of the prison, and last night I got a man to sing a ballad in such a stentorian style of voice that he could not but hear it. They have taken the man into custody, but I feel tolerably certain that Dick knows something will be attempted for him.”

“What ballad was it?” said Jack.

“It’s only a piece of doggrel, got up for the occasion. It ran thus,—

‘We wish him to eat and to drink;  
And Bess, she is well taken care of.  
C— and J—, both are in town,  
And they won’t let the grabs hurt a hair of  
His head, tol lol de rol lol!’

And there was much more to the same purpose, which, I feel assured, Dick was sharp-witted enough to understand in a moment; but I doubt if the police could make anything of it, and, even if they did, it will puzzle them, and they won’t know what to do.”

“I am of your opinion,” said Claude; “and I shall sleep more comfortably to-night, when I think that Dick don’t look forward to the dance upon nothing on Monday morning next.”

“But, about the hangman,” said Jack. “Have you succeeded in arranging anything with him?”

“Yes; and to-night, at eleven o’clock, I will take you both to his house, for it is necessary that he should know you; and once again, let me assure you that you may banish all idea of anything in the shape of trickery upon his part. He is to well paid by me in more ways than one, and he is much more my servant than he is the servant of the corporation.”

“We shall be ready to the minute,” said Claude.

We need not go through with the trivial events of that Sunday in Oxford. Suffice it to say, that it hung frightfully heavy upon the hands of Jack and Claude,

and that the incessant bell-ringing was enough to drive any reasonable persons right out of their wits. The hour, however, came at last for the very interesting interview with the executioner to take place.

Zadoc came to the lodging at about a quarter before the time appointed, and as both Claude and Jack had been ready for him some time, they immediately all sallied out together.

"Nothing new, I suppose?" said Claude.

"No; except a confirmation of my opinion, that Dick Turpin quite fully understood the song, for I hear that he demands nothing but mutton chops and port wine."

"And do they give them to him?"

"I shouldn't wonder but they do. It's an old custom to be liberal to any one condemned to death, and whom the authorities feel tolerably certain will not be reprieved; so we have nothing to fear from the idea of Dick being weak and out of condition to-morrow morning."

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## CHAPTER CXCIX.

### THE COMMON NEAR OXFORD, AND THE TUMULT UPON IT.

THE Oxford hangman's house was about half a mile on the outside of the town. It was a pretty enough place, surrounded by a little garden, so far as Claude and Jack could see of it at that hour of the night.

"What do you expect to find this man?" said Zadoc, as they rung at the gate-bell of the cottage belonging to the executioner.

"He should be," said Claude, "rather a burly ruffian."

"Yes," said Jack, "and with nothing but animal appetites, and about as small a share of intellect as may enable anybody to get through the ordinary course of everyday life."

"You really think so?"

"Such an idea of a hangman comes up to our notions of what he ought to be," said Claude; "but I have seen quite enough of life to know how our ideal notions of things, and of people, are often to be at striking variance with the fact."

"You are right there," said Zadoc; "you should always distrust what your imagination tells you. I never went to a strange place in my life but what it turned out to be as different as it possibly could from what my fancy had pictured it; and I never got into the company of a person that I had heard of, and formed an idea concerning, that I did not find him or her something widely different from all that I had previously, perhaps at great pains, pictured."

"From all which," said Jack, "we are to conclude that we are very wrong about the Oxford hangman?"

The Jew nodded.

"Well," said Claude, "so long as he does not play us false, and answers our purpose regarding poor Dick, he may be what he likes, and I shall consider him the pearl of executioners, and always sha'l have a friendly feeling for him. What say you, Jack?"

"I will strive to cultivate the same feeling," said Jack, very gently, "although it will be perhaps to me, Claude, a little more difficult than it can be by any means to you."

"Excuse me, Jack," whispered Claude, "if this is a subject upon which you do not like jesting. I did not think of you, and what you had gone through, at the moment."

"Don't mention it," said Jack, as he smiled faintly.

Poor Jack! He still could not forget the horrors he had passed through at his own execution, from which he had emerged into life again so very strangely, but to be only half the man he was.

While this little quiet bit of conversation was in an under tone going on between Claude and Jack, Zadoc had rung the bell at the garden gate of the hangman's house; and in a few moments, like a moving star in the darkness, a candle, in the custody of some one, came down to the gate, and a soft musical voice then said—

"Who is there?"

"I want your father, my dear," said the Jew; "you know me?"

"Oh, yes; you are our friend, Mr. Zadoc. Come in—come in. Father said that he expected you would come, and bring two gentlemen with you."

"Yes, and here they are."

The little girl—for such she was, and not above twelve years of age—held up the light, and curtsied to Claude and Jack, as she held open the garden gate for them to enter by. The faint rays of the light fell upon her face, and Claude was astonished at her rare and exquisite beauty. As for Jack, he could hardly take his eyes off her, she was really such a piece of miniature loveliness to look upon.

"Your father is quite alone, of course?" said the Jew.

"Oh yes, sir, quite; and he is expecting you."

The little girl led the way up a trimly kept narrow garden path, and the Jew said to her as he followed her—

"You are as fond of your garden as ever, Emma, I presume, by the way in which you keep it. I see it is as trim and carefully got up as ever; even now I can smell the perfume of the sweet flowers that you have in such rare abundance, and which do you so much credit in the rearing."

"Oh, yes," she replied. "You know, Mr. Zadoc, that next to Pa, I love the flowers and the little garden."

"Next to Pa!" whispered Jack to Claude, "she loves the——"

"Hush! hush!"

Jack did not complete his sentence, and then the little girl paused at the door of the little cottage, and holding it open she motioned them to enter. The door was so low, that both Claude and Jack had to pause and stoop at its threshold. The Jew was able to enter without that ceremony.

The little girl lighted them into the parlour of the cottage, and then herself retired to the kitchen. For a moment or two, neither Claude nor Jack saw that the parlour was tenanted, but a very small soft voice said suddenly—

"Gentlemen, you are welcome," and then from a couch there rose a short and very slimly made fair man, with a small portion of hair upon his head, and apparently cast in nature's weakest physical mould.

"Allow me," said Zadoc, "to introduce you both to him whom you seek."

"What," said Claude, "are you the——?"

"Hush," said Zadoc. "The word that was upon your lips is never, by any accident, mentioned in this house."

"It shall not then pass my lips," said Claude.

"Nor mine," said Jack, with a shudder, for different as the Oxford hangman was from all his ideal notions of such a character, he could not but shake a little to find himself in the presence of one who filled that awful office, let him be in manner or appearance what he might.

The hangman very carefully closed the door of the room, and then he said—

"Gentlemen, Mr. Zadoc has said that a certain word is never by any accident mentioned in this house. It is true, and it is not that I myself so dread the word, but my little girl, Emma, is all the tie I have that binds me to the world. My wife is gone, and I have no children but her, and she knows not what her father is."

"You astonish me!" said Claude.

"And me," said Jack. "One would think it a thing of impossibility to keep such a secret from her."

"Doubtless," said the hangman, "the day will come, when some officious person will step between us, and kill her with the knowledge of what I am, and

by what means I have fed and clothed her, and brought her up to gentleness and truth ; but as yet she knows it not, and I am happy to be able to come home to one who does not shrink from me."

"One would think," said Claude, "that her very playmates would tell her, children are such bad keepers of secrets."

"She has no playmates, sir. She lives here, the secluded life of a little nun. For five years she has never once crossed the threshold of the gate which she opened to admit you to the garden. All her delights, and she has many, are concentrated in this cottage and garden. She and I talk together, but never of the world without, and she has no desire to go from the precincts of this humble home, and I need not tell you we are not troubled with many visitors."

"This is indeed most singular," said Claude. "You must live though in constant dread of the secret oozing out through some channel."

He covered his face with his hands, and rocked to and fro.

"Come, come," said Zadoc, "I have not seen you like this for years, and you promised us you would get over all this kind of feeling ; I think, too, that now of all times you ought to be able to do battle with it, for I know of nothing that can prevent your almost immediate departure for the new world."

"Yes, yes," said the hangman, "what a cheering thought that is. I will take my child with me, and thousands of miles from here, there will be no one to whisper the dreadful truth in her young ears, and turn her heart from me for ever."

"Yes," added Zadoc, "with the money which these gentlemen give me for you, and which you will earn by the service you will do them on Monday next, you will be able to go to America as soon as you like."

"Oh, yes, yes. What a cheering thought that is."

"It no doubt is, and ought to be," said Claude. "I will rejoice, indeed, that this transaction will not only, as I hope, save my friend, but likewise enable you to achieve so great a good. You can take to some other course of life in America, and no one need guess for a moment who or what you were in England."

"You think they will not suspect?"

"How can they?" said Zadoc. "You do not carry the insignia of your calling stamped upon your face."

"No. I think I do not."

"Quite the contrary," said Claude. "There is not a man breathing who from hundreds would pick you out as likely to be what you now are."

"It is cheering to me to here you all say that ; and yet, do you know, at times I have possessed myself with the idea, that there is a something about my looks which proclaims the dreadful truth ; and when I have least expected it, my child has shrunk from me with a shudder, as though nature, in some mysterious way, had let her know that my arms were to be avoided as a terror and a pollution."

"All that is imagination," said Zadoc.

"It can be nothing else," said Claude ; and yet, even as he spoke, he could not but fancy that there was a strangeness about the eyes of the hangman, which he had not noticed upon first coming into the room. Jack, however, who had said the least, had noticed the peculiarly more quickly than Claude had done, and had noticed it with a kind of inward shudder ; that made him wish himself out of the cottage again, and in the open air.

But after all, perhaps, while Claude and Jack were accusing the hangman of being the slave of his imagination to too great an extent, they were in reality giving the reins of their own fancy, and seeing things in him that had no real existence whatever ; for if nature had given him a little peculiarity about the eyes, no one who did not know his calling would probably hit upon the fact of his being a hangman in consequence.

"You will get rid of all these feelings and fancies," said Zadoc, "and before you have been one month out of Oxford."

"I hope so."

"That is pretty clear, But now let us decide upon what is to be done on the

Monday. All money matters will be settled with Mr. Zadoz. Now I hope that no obstacle occurs to your mind to the carrying out the plan of operation laid down."

"None whatever," said the hangman. "It has one good recommendation, and that is its boldness."

"I am glad you think that a recommendation, for it gives me a kind of assurance that you will not shrink from what you have to do, from any fears of the result."

"My good, sir, what I have to do is so little, that, let me shrink how I might, I cannot hurt your plot. As I understand it, all I have to do is to be so unwell at an early hour on Monday morning, as to feel that it is quite impossible I can attend to the execution, and then from fear that the sheriff should be left in an unpleasant dilemma, I send you as a substitute."

"That is it," said Zadoz.

"Precisely," said Claude. "After that all depends upon ourselves I am aware, and I only hope you will not be troubled about it."

"I have no apprehensions. What can they do? My story will be simple enough. You came to me, I will say, and I did not know who you were, and recommended you to the office from the well-known difficulty of getting any one to perform it, especially in an emergency, and only *pro tem*."

"Exactly, and you may depend upon me, let the affair terminate how it may, making my story tally with yours."

"I thank you; and if you are taken and condemned for your own offences to die, they must seek another hangman, for I am determined that my indisposition shall continue until I leave Oxford, which will be now as soon as I can do so, without attracting the attention and suspicion of the authorities. I must not be at all precipitate in the matter."

"Then it is settled," said Zadoz, "that this gentleman comes at an early hour here on Monday morning?"

"Yes, quite. Take care to be dressed accordingly. A shabby suit of rather common clothes will be best; and I should say that you were a coffin maker by trade, and that I have instructed you how to officiate as my deputy upon the occasion required."

"Very good," said Claude; "call me what you please, I will take good care to dress the character. I fancy my best plan will be to make myself up to look like a dissipated idle mechanic."

"You may safely leave all that to me," said Zadoz.

"Not a doubt of that," said Claude. "And now we will leave you, and hope you will be happy enough in the new world."

"It is a hope," said the hangman.

Jack noticed that he never offered his hand to either of them, or spoke one word about any refreshments. No doubt the wretched man felt that he was too much repudiated by society even to take that liberty with a highwayman.

The little girl with her cheerful pretty face let them all out again, and bade them good night with a soft musical voice as she closed the garden gate upon them.

## CHAPTER CC.

### A RIOT AT AN EXECUTION.—THE RACE FROM OXFORD.

CLAUDE and Jack had now but little rest until the eventful Monday morning, as that was to decide whether this daring plan would suffice or not for the rescue of Dick Turpin.

At the hour of six in the morning, Zadoz called for them both, and took them to his cottage. By seven he had equipped Claude in the costume which he thought most likely to deceive the authorities with regard to his real character.



Claude upon this occasion wore a rusty ragged suit of clothes that might have been those of a mechanic that he kept for his Sunday suit in prosperous times, but which he had long taken recklessly into ordinary use, and subjected to all the wear and tear of a dissolute life. A dirty apron was twisted round his waist with a ragged corner of it hanging down, and the Jew, with amazing art, painted the face of Claude so that he looked a good ten years older than he really was.

When Duval looked at himself in a glass, he cried out—

"This disguise is perfect. What do you think of it, Jack?"

"That it could not be better. Now, Mr. Zadoc, what do you advise me to wear upon this interesting occasion?"

"I have thought of that," said the Jew. "You will not only be mounted yourself, but you will have the care of Claude's horse, and of Dick Turpin's; so I shall put you in the costume of a common livery-stable helper, in order to give the affair the appearance as if you had been sent out with the two horses either to take them somewhere, or ordered as merely to give them a little exercise. It will then look very natural that passing by the place of execution, you should stop to see what is going on, and get as close to the scaffold as you can."

"Yes," said Jack, "nothing could be better than that. Pray, Mr. Zadoc, be so good as to equip me as quickly as you can in my stable costume, and you may safely trust me to act the character."

"Of that I have no doubt."

There was now but little time to lose, and with great alacrity Jack was got up in the costume that Zadoc had mentioned. He wore a pair of very voluminous shorts, with a good assortment of pearl buttons at the knees, and they were then fastened, after being given that peculiar twist that is so much affected by those who occupy a stable position. Below these he wore drab gaiters. All that he had upon his upper man was a very low-flapped waistcoat, with sleeves to it; and on his head he wore a seal-skin cap. Around his neck he had a pink spotted cravat; and when he was thus completed, and stood with the end of a long straw in his mouth, as though he had just come in a highly contemplative mood from some stable-yard, he looked quite picturesque.

"Upon my word, Jack," said Claude, "I don't think I should have known you myself; the transformation is, indeed, most complete."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said the Jew; "for, somehow or another, the authorities of Oxford have got a pretty good description of both your persons now."

"Have they, indeed?"

"Yes; and I suppose it has been from the Innkeeper where you put up, when first you arrived, before the hazardous attempt upon the prison."

"Not a doubt—not a doubt. Well, if they don't find us out now, I will forgive them for finding us upon that occasion; and this much I will say, that if I and Dick get mounted, they won't need to give themselves the trouble of coming after us, for it will be all in vain if they do. We shall go three miles to their two. If that don't quickly distance them, I don't know what will."

"Nor I, either," said Zadoc. "Are you both ready?"

"Quite! quite!"

"Then you, Jack, go to the stable, and get the horses ready; and you, Claude, come along with me, to the hangman's cottage, for he will be not a little impatient about this affair, I'll warrant, since you know what a great object he has in view regarding it."

"Yes; that was what tempted him, no doubt."

"It was."

"And you knew that it would tempt him?"

"Fortunately I did, or I should hardly have risked my position in the city, by tampering with him; I believe that I am the only friend he has in the whole of Oxford, and he has always been grateful to me, because I did not despise him, but at times passed an hour or so at his cottage along with him and his little girl."

"It is a capital thing for us, that you thought even of doing so, for, without

his connivance, this plan, which, the more I look at it, seems to me the more possible and likely of success, would have been but a piece of madness, resulting in the throwing away of our lives."

"Good-by, Claude," said Jack; "if anything happens amiss, let this be a farewell."

"No, Jack, we will not take leave of each other now. It looks like anticipating the future. I will not say good-by, but I will say good-day."

"Well," said Jack, "well, be it so; I will only say good-day."

They shook hands, and separated.

"Do you think," said Zadoc, "that he will be firm enough?"

"Yes, quite so; I never knew Jack to fail once in an enterprise yet, when it comes to the actual execution of it, whatever might be his feelings beforehand."

"I am glad to hear you say that; it gives one confidence."

They soon cleared the distance between the Jew's cottage and the hangman's little abode, and, as before, they were let in by the little girl, who had not the smallest recollection of Claude, and would evidently have gladly kept him outside, in consequence of his disreputable appearance, had it not been that Zadoc said to her,—

"It is all right, my dear; I know this person. He is going to do some work in the city, for your father."

Upon this, there was no further opposition on the part of the little girl, and Claude and Zadoc were in a few moments in the parlour where they had seen the executioner on the preceding evening.

By the open light of day, Claude was still more struck by his weakly and diminutive appearance than he had been overnight; but there was no time for any conversation now. The hangman merely handed Claude a letter, addressed to the sheriff, and then added,—

"I will go to bed at once the moment you leave, for it is just possible they may send an officer to know if I am really ill, and in that case I must of course be prepared to play my part; and even if they should send the jail surgeon, I think I can baffle him, for I will take some drug that will make me very sick in the course of a few minutes, if I have from my little girl notice of his coming; so now go, and success attend you. You have my best wishes; and until I hear from popular rumour that you have succeeded, I shall pass, shut up here, but a very miserable time of it, from my anxiety upon the matter."

"Come," said Zadoc. "You will see me this evening here, my friend."

"All's right upon that score. I am quite satisfied," said the hangman; "of course you will be sure to find me at home."

Claude guessed that these few words between them had reference to the money, and he paid no attention to them, for he did not think he ought to interfere with Zadoc's arrangements in that particular, so long as the hangman was satisfied.

They now set off, and when they got close to the town, Zadoc said,—"Now, my friend, I leave you to your own resources, and to play your part as best as you may. You will go direct to the jail with the letter, and, when they find it is addressed to the sheriff, they will let you into the lobby at once, and allow you to wait for an answer there. Of course, now, all depends upon your own address."

"I know it. You and I will meet again as agreed."

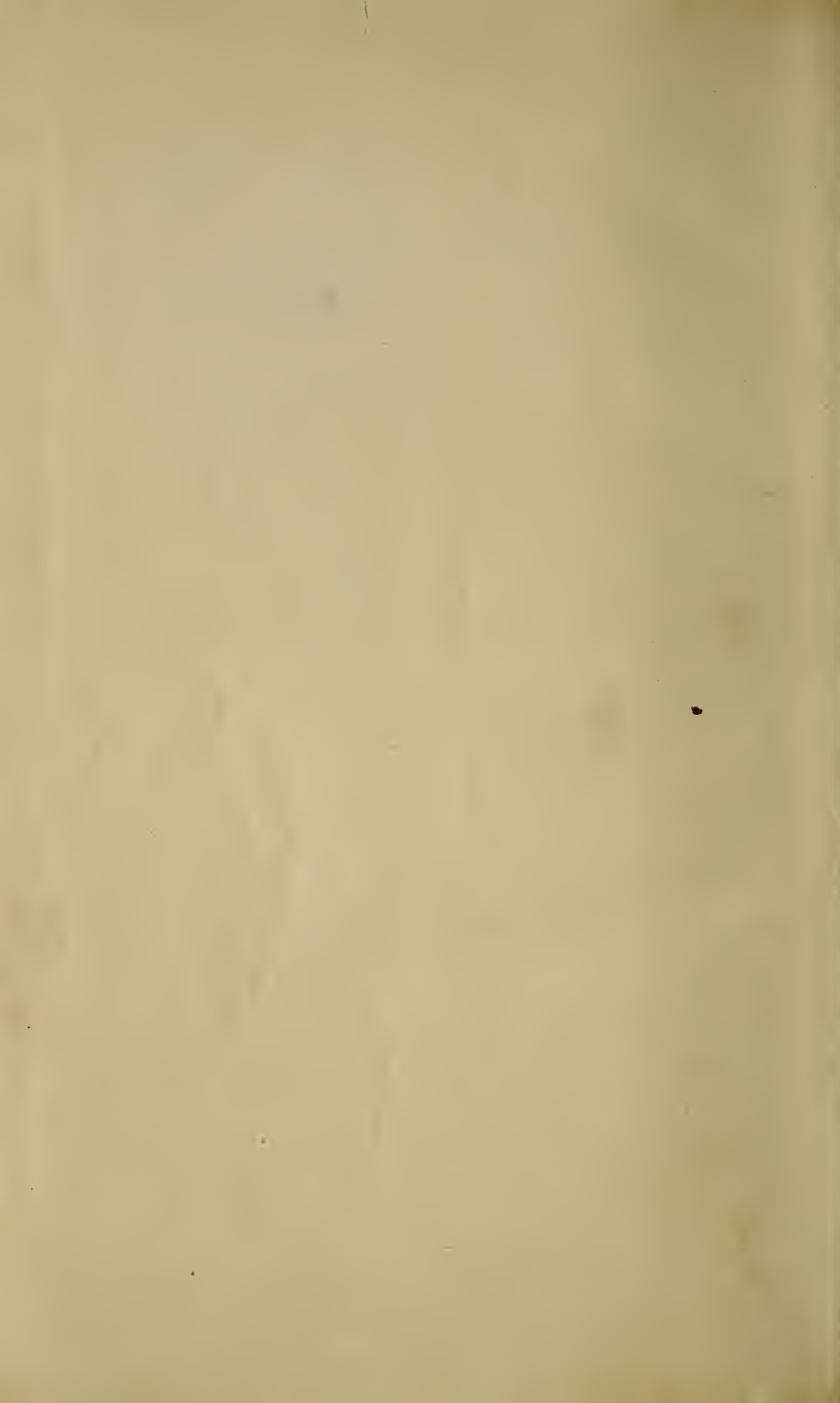
"That will do."

With a mutual nod merely, they separated, and Claude went upon certainly one of the most truly hazardous enterprises that in his life of strange adventures he had ever achieved or thought of achieving. Not only Dick's life but his own, and, in all likelihood, Jack's, hung upon the events of the next few hours; but yet he did not feel any degree of shrinking or even of nervousness. All he felt was deep anxiety for the result, and a determination that it should not fail to be a satisfactory one from any fault of his.

He walked rapidly and soon reached the jail.

Oh, if the authorities of Oxford could but for one moment have guessed who it was that appeared at the wicket-gate of the prison, with what glad rapidity they









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