

OLD SAINT PAUL'S
VOLUME II
BY
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AINSWORTH

Old Saint Paul's Volume II by William Harrison Ainsworth

MAY, 1665.

I.

PROGRESS OF THE PESTILENCE.

Towards the middle of May, the bills of mortality began to swell greatly in amount, and though but few were put down to the plague, and a large number to the spotted fever (another frightful disorder raging at the period), it is well known that the bulk had died of the former disease. The rigorous measures adopted by the authorities (whether salutary or not has been questioned), in shutting up houses and confining the sick and sound within them for forty days, were found so intolerable, that most persons were disposed to run any risk rather than be subjected to such a grievance, and every artifice was resorted to for concealing a case when it occurred. Hence, it seldom happened, unless by accident, that a discovery was made. Quack doctors were secretly consulted, instead of the regular practitioners; the searchers were bribed to silence; and large fees were given to the undertakers and buriers to lay the deaths to the account of some other disorder. All this, however, did not blind the eyes of the officers to the real state of things. Redoubling their vigilance, they entered houses on mere suspicion; inflicted punishments where they found their orders disobeyed or neglected; sent the sound to prison,—the sick to the pest-house; and replaced the faithless searchers by others upon whom they could place reliance. Many cases were thus detected; but in spite of every precaution, the majority escaped; and the vent was no sooner stopped in one quarter than it broke out with additional violence in another.

By this time the alarm had become general. All whose business or pursuits permitted it, prepared to leave London, which they regarded as a devoted city, without delay. As many houses were, therefore, closed from the absence of the inhabitants as from the presence of the plague, and this added to the forlorn appearance of the streets, which in some quarters were almost deserted. For a while, nothing was seen at the great outlets of the city but carts, carriages, and other vehicles, filled with goods and movables, on their way to the country; and, as may be supposed, the departure of their friends did not tend to abate the dejection of those whose affairs compelled them to remain behind.

One circumstance must not be passed unnoticed, namely, the continued fineness and beauty of the weather. No rain had fallen for upwards of three weeks. The sky was bright and cloudless; the atmosphere, apparently, pure and innoxious; while the heat was as great as is generally experienced in the middle of summer. But instead of producing its

usual enlivening effect on the spirits, the fine weather added to the general gloom and apprehension, inasmuch as it led to the belief (afterwards fully confirmed), that if the present warmth was so pernicious, the more sultry seasons which were near at hand would aggravate the fury of the pestilence. Sometimes, indeed, when the deaths were less numerous, a hope began to be entertained that the distemper was abating, and confidence was for a moment restored; but these anticipations were speedily checked by the reappearance of the scourge, which seemed to baffle and deride all human skill and foresight.

London now presented a lamentable spectacle. Not a street but had a house in it marked with a red cross—some streets had many such. The bells were continually tolling for burials, and the dead-carts went their melancholy rounds at night and were constantly loaded. Fresh directions were issued by the authorities; and as domestic animals were considered to be a medium of conveying the infection, an order, which was immediately carried into effect, was given to destroy all dogs and cats. But this plan proved prejudicial rather than the reverse, as the bodies of the poor animals, most of which were drowned in the Thames, being washed ashore, produced a horrible and noxious effluvium, supposed to contribute materially to the propagation of the distemper.

No precautionary measure was neglected; but it may be doubted whether any human interference could have averted the severity of the scourge, which, though its progress might be checked for a few days by attention, or increased in the same ratio by neglect, would in the end have unquestionably fulfilled its mission. The College of Physicians, by the king's command, issued simple and intelligible directions, in the mother tongue, for the sick. Certain of their number, amongst whom was the reader's acquaintance, Doctor Hodges, were appointed to attend the infected; and two out of the Court of Aldermen were required to see that they duly executed their dangerous office. Public prayers and a general fast were likewise enjoined. But Heaven seemed deaf to the supplications of the doomed inhabitants—their prayers being followed by a fearful increase of deaths. A vast crowd was collected within Saint Paul's to hear a sermon preached by Doctor Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury,—a prelate greatly distinguished during the whole course of the visitation, by his unremitting charity and attention to the sick; and before the discourse was concluded, several fell down within the sacred walls, and, on being conveyed to their own homes, were found to be infected. On the following day, too, many others who had been present were seized with the disorder.

A fresh impulse was given to the pestilence from an unlooked for cause. It has been mentioned that the shutting up of houses and seclusion of the sick were regarded as an intolerable grievance, and though most were compelled to submit to it, some few resisted, and tumults and disturbances ensued. As the plague increased, these

disturbances became more frequent, and the mob always taking part against the officers, they were frequently interrupted in the execution of their duty.

About this time a more serious affray than usual occurred, attended-with loss of life and other unfortunate consequences, which it may be worth while to relate, as illustrative of the peculiar state of the times. The wife of a merchant, named Barcroft, residing in Lothbury, being attacked by the plague, the husband, fearing his house would be shut up, withheld all information from the examiners and searchers. His wife died, and immediately afterwards one of his children was attacked. Still he refused to give notice. The matter, however, got wind. The searchers arrived at night, and being refused admittance, they broke into the house. Finding undoubted evidence of infection, they ordered it to be closed, stationed a watchman at the door, and marked it with the fatal sign. Barcroft remonstrated against their proceedings, but in vain. They told him he might think himself well off that he was not carried before the Lord Mayor, who would undoubtedly send him to Ludgate; and with other threats to the like effect, they departed.

The unfortunate man's wife and child were removed the following night in the dead-cart, and, driven half-mad by grief and terror, he broke open the door of his dwelling, and, plunging a sword in the watchman's breast, who opposed his flight, gained the street. A party of the watch happened to be passing at the time, and the fugitive was instantly secured. He made a great clamour, however,—calling to his neighbours and the bystanders to rescue him, and in another moment the watch was beaten off, and Barcroft placed on a post, whence he harangued his preservers on the severe restraints imposed upon the citizens, urging them to assist in throwing open the doors of all infected houses, and allowing free egress to their inmates.

Greedily listening to this insane counsel, the mob resolved to act upon it. Headed by the merchant, they ran down Thread-needle-street, and, crossing Stock's Market, burst open several houses in Bearbinder-lane, and drove away the watchmen. One man, more courageous than the others, tried to maintain his post, and was so severely handled by his assailants, that he died a few days afterwards of the injuries he had received. Most of those who had been imprisoned within their dwellings immediately issued forth, and joining the mob, which received fresh recruits each moment, started on the same errand.

Loud shouts were now raised of—"Open the doors! No plague prisoners! No plague prisoners!" and the mob set off along the Poultry. They halted, however, before the Great Conduit, near the end of Bucklersbury, and opposite Mercer's Hall, because they perceived a company of the Train-bands advancing to meet them. A council of war was held, and many of the rabble were disposed to fly; but Barcroft again urged them to

proceed, and they were unexpectedly added by Solomon Eagle, who, bursting through their ranks, with his brazier on his head, crying, "Awake! sleepers, awake! the plague is at your doors! awake!" speeded towards the Train-bands, scattering sparks of fire as he pursued his swift career. The mob instantly followed, and, adding their shouts to his outcries, dashed on with such fury that the Train-bands did not dare to oppose them, and, after a slight and ineffectual resistance, were put to rout.

Barcroft, who acted as leader, informed them that there was a house in Wood-street shut up, and the crowd accompanied him thither. In a few minutes they had reached Bloundel's shop, but finding no one on guard—for the watchman, guessing their errand, had taken to his heels—they smeared over the fatal cross and inscription with a pail of mud gathered from the neighbouring kennel, and then broke open the door. The grocer and his apprentice hearing the disturbance, and being greatly alarmed at it, hurried to the shop, and found it full of people.

"You are at liberty Mr. Bloundel," cried the merchant, who was acquainted with the grocer. "We are determined no longer to let our families be imprisoned at the pleasure of the Lord Mayor and aldermen. We mean to break open all the plague houses, and set free their inmates."

"For Heaven's sake, consider what you are about, Mr. Barcroft," cried the grocer. "My house has been closed for nearly a month. Nay, as my son has entirely recovered, and received his certificate of health from Doctor Hodges, it would have been opened in three days hence by the officers; so that I have suffered all the inconvenience of the confinement, and can speak to it. It is no doubt very irksome, and may be almost intolerable to persons of an impatient temperament: but I firmly believe it is the only means to check the progress of contagion. Listen to me, Mr. Barcroft—listen to me, good friends, and hesitate before you violate laws which have been made expressly to meet this terrible emergency."

Here he was checked by loud groans and upbraidings from the bystanders.

"He tells you himself that the period of his confinement is just over," cried Barcroft. "It is plain he has no interest in the matter, except that he would have others suffer as he has done. Heed him not, my friends; but proceed with the good work. Liberate the poor plague prisoners. Liberate them. On! on!"

"Forbear, rash men" cried Bloundel, in an authoritative voice. "In the name of those you are bound to obey, I command you to desist."

"Command us!" cried one of the bystanders, raising his staff in a menacing manner. "Is this your gratitude for the favour we have just conferred upon you? Command us, forsooth! You had better repeat the order, and see how it will be obeyed."

"I do repeat it," rejoined the grocer, firmly. "In the Lord Mayor's name, I command you to desist, and return to your homes."

The man would have struck him with his staff, if he had not been himself felled to the ground by Leonard. This was the signal for greater outrage. The grocer and his apprentice were instantly assailed by several others of the mob, who, leaving them both on the floor covered with bruises, helped themselves to all they could lay hands on in the shop, and then quitted the premises.

It is scarcely necessary to track their course further; and it may be sufficient to state, that they broke open upwards of fifty houses in different streets. Many of the plague-stricken joined them, and several half-naked creatures were found dead in the streets on the following morning. Two houses in Blackfriars-lane were set on fire, and the conflagration was with difficulty checked; nor was it until late on the following day that the mob could be entirely dispersed. The originator of the disturbance, Barcroft, after a desperate resistance, was shot through the head by a constable.

The result of this riot, as will be easily foreseen, was greatly to increase the pestilence; and many of those who had been most active in it perished in prison of the distemper. Far from being discouraged by the opposition offered to their decrees, the city authorities enforced them with greater rigour than ever, and, doubling the number of the watch, again shut up all those houses which had been broken open during the late tumult.

Bloundel received a visit from the Lord Mayor, Sir John Lawrence, who, having been informed of his conduct, came to express his high approval of it, offering to remit the few days yet unexpired of his quarantine. The grocer, however, declined the offer, and with renewed expressions of approbation, Sir John Lawrence took his leave.

Three days afterwards, the Examiner of Health pronounced the grocer's house free from infection. The fatal mark was obliterated from the door; the shutters were unfastened; and Bloundel resumed his business as usual. Words are inadequate to describe the delight that filled the breast of every member of his family, on their first meeting after their long separation. It took place in the room adjoining the shop. Mrs. Bloundel received the joyful summons from Leonard, and, on descending with her children, found her husband and her son Stephen anxiously expecting her. Scarcely able to make up her mind as to which of the two she should embrace first, Mrs. Bloundel was decided by the

pale countenance of her son, and rushing towards him, she strained him to her breast, while Amabel flew to her father's arms. The grocer could not repress his tears; but they were tears of joy, and that night's happiness made him ample amends for all the anxiety he had recently undergone.

"Well, Stephen, my dear child," said his mother, as soon as the first tumult of emotion had subsided,— "well, Stephen," she said, smiling at him through her tears, and almost smothering him with kisses, "you are not so much altered as I expected; and I do not think, if I had had the care of you, I could have nursed you better myself. You owe your father a second life, and we all owe him the deepest gratitude for the care he has taken of you."

"I can never be sufficiently grateful for his kindness," returned Stephen, affectionately.

"Give thanks to the beneficent Being who has preserved you from this great danger, my son, not to me," returned Bloundel. "The first moments of our reunion should be worthily employed."

So saying, he summoned the household, and, for the first time for a month, the whole family party assembled, as before, at prayer. Never were thanksgivings more earnestly, more devoutly uttered. All arose with bright and cheerful countenances; and even Blaize seemed to have shaken off his habitual dread of the pestilence. As he retired with Patience, he observed to her, "Master Stephen looks quite well, though a little thinner. I must ascertain from him the exact course of treatment pursued by his father. I wonder whether Mr. Bloundel would nurse me if I were to be suddenly seized with the distemper?"

"If he wouldn't, I would," replied Patience.

"Thank you, thank you," replied Blaize. "I begin to think we shall get through it. I shall go out to-morrow and examine the bills of mortality, and see what progress the plague is making. I am all anxiety to know. I must get a fresh supply of medicine, too. My private store is quite gone, except three of my favourite rufuses, which I shall take before I go to bed to-night. Unluckily, my purse is as empty as my phials."

"I can lend you a little money," said Patience. "I haven't touched my last year's wages. They are quite at your service."

"You are too good," replied Blaize; "but I won't decline the offer. I heard a man crying a new anti-pestilential elixir, as he passed the house yesterday. I must find him out and

buy a bottle. Besides, I must call on my friend Parkhurst, the apothecary.—You are a good girl, Patience, and I'll marry you as soon as the plague ceases."

"I have something else to give you," rejoined Patience. "This little bag contains a hazelnut, from which I have picked the kernel, and filled its place with quicksilver, stopping the hole with wax. Wear it round your neck, and you will find it a certain preservative against the pestilence."

"Who told you of this remedy?" asked Blaize, taking the bag.

"Your mother," returned Patience.

"I wonder I never heard of it," said the porter.

"She wouldn't mention it to you, because the doctor advised her not to put such matters into your head," replied Patience. "But I couldn't help indulging you. Heigho! I hope the plague will soon be over."

"It won't be over for six months," rejoined Blaize, shaking his head. "I read in a little book, published in 1593, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and written by Simon Kelway, 'that when little children flock together, and pretend that some of their number are dead, solemnizing the burial in a mournful sort, it is a certain token that a great mortality is at hand.' This I have myself seen more than once. Again, just before the great sickness of 1625, the churchyard wall of St. Andrew's, Holborn, fell down. I need not tell you that the same thing occurred after the frost this winter."

"I heard of it," replied Patience: "but I did not know it was a bad sign."

"It is a dreadful sign," returned Blaize, with a shudder "The thought of it brings back my old symptoms. I must have a supper to guard against infection—a slice of toasted bread, sprinkled with, vinegar, and powdered with nutmeg."

And chattering thus, they proceeded to the kitchen.

Before supper could be served, Dr. Hodges made his appearance. He was delighted to see the family assembled together again, and expressed a hearty wish that they might never more be divided. He watched Amabel and Leonard carefully, and seemed annoyed that the former rather shunned than favoured the regards of the apprentice.

Leonard, too, looked disconcerted; and though he was in possession of his mistress's promise, he did not like to reclaim it. During the whole of the month, he had been

constantly on the watch, and had scarcely slept at night, so anxious was he to prevent the possibility of any communication taking place between Rochester and his mistress. But, in spite of all his caution, it was possible he might be deceived. And when on this, their first meeting, she returned his anxious gaze with averted looks, he felt all his jealous misgivings return.

Supper, meanwhile, proceeded. Doctor Hodges was in excellent spirits, and drank a bottle of old sack with great relish. Overcome by the sight of his wife and children, the grocer abandoned himself to his feelings. As to his wife, she could scarcely contain herself, but wept and laughed by turns—now embracing her husband, now her son, between whom she had placed herself. Nor did she forget Doctor Hodges; and such was the exuberance of her satisfaction, that when the repast was ended, she arose, and, flinging her arms about his neck, termed him the preserver of her son.

"If any one is entitled to that appellation it is his father," replied Hodges, "and I may say, that in all my experience I have never witnessed such generous self-devotion as Mr. Bloundel has exhibited towards his son. You must now be satisfied, madam, that no person can so well judge what is proper for the safety of his family as your husband."

"I never doubted it, sir," replied Mrs. Bloundel.

"I must apprise you, then, that he has conceived a plan by which he trusts to secure you and his children and household from any future attack," returned Hodges.

"I care not what it is, so it does not separate me from him," replied Mrs. Bloundel.

"It does not," replied the grocer. "It will knit us more closely together than we have yet been. I mean to shut up my house, having previously stored it with provisions for a twelvemonth, and shall suffer no member of my family to stir forth as long as the plague endures."

"I am ready to remain within doors, if it continues twenty years," replied his wife. "But how long do you think it will last, doctor?"

"Till next December, I have no doubt," returned Hodges.

"So long?" exclaimed Amabel.

"Ay, so long," repeated the doctor. "It has scarcely begun now. Your father is right to adopt these precautions. It is the only way to insure the safety of his family."

"But——" cried Amabel.

"I am resolved," interrupted Bloundel, peremptorily. "Who ever leaves the house—if but for a moment—never returns."

"And when do you close it, father?" asked Amabel.

"A week hence," replied the grocer; "as soon as I have laid in a sufficient stock of provisions."

"And am I not to leave the house for a year?" cried Amabel, with a dissatisfied look.

"Why should you wish to leave it?" asked her father, curiously.

"Ay, why?" repeated Leonard, in a low tone. "I shall be here."

Amabel seemed confused, and looked from her father to Leonard. The former, however, did not notice her embarrassment, but observed to Hodges—"I shall begin to victual the house to-morrow."

"Amabel," whispered Leonard, "you told me if I claimed your hand in a month, you would yield it to me. I require the fulfilment of your promise."

"Give me till to-morrow," she replied, distractedly.

"She has seen Rochester," muttered the apprentice, turning away.

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II.

IN WHAT MANNER THE GROCER VICTUALLED HIS HOUSE.

Leonard Holt was wrong in his suspicions. Amabel had neither seen nor heard from Rochester. But, if the truth must be told, he was never out of her mind, and she found, to her cost, that the heart will not be controlled. Convinced of her noble lover's perfidy, and aware she was acting wrongfully in cherishing a passion for him, after the exposure of his base designs towards herself, no reasoning of which she was capable could banish him from her thoughts, or enable her to transfer her affections to the apprentice.

This conflict of feeling produced its natural result. She became thoughtful and dejected—was often in tears—had no appetite—and could scarcely rouse herself sufficiently to undertake any sort of employment. Her mother watched her with great anxiety, and feared—though she sought to disguise it from herself—what was the real cause of her despondency.

Things were in this position at the end of the month, and it occasioned no surprise to Mrs. Bloundel, though it afflicted her deeply, to find that Amabel sedulously avoided the apprentice's regards on their first meeting. When Doctor Hodges was gone, and the rest of the family had retired, she remarked to her husband, "Before you shut up the house as you propose, I should, wish one important matter settled."

The grocer inquired what she meant.

"I should wish to have Amabel married," was the answer.

"Married!" exclaimed Bloundel, in astonishment. "To whom?"

"To Leonard Holt."

Bloundel could scarcely repress his displeasure.

"It will be time enough to talk of that a year hence," he answered.

"I don't think so," returned his wife; "and now, since the proper time for the disclosure of the secret has arrived, I must tell you that the gallant who called himself Maurice

Wyvil, and whom you so much dreaded, was no other than the Earl of Rochester."

"Rochester!" echoed the grocer, while an angry flush stained his cheek; "has that libertine dared to enter my house?"

"Ay, and more than once," replied Mrs. Bloundel.

"Indeed!" cried her husband, with difficulty controlling his indignation. "When was he here?—tell me quickly."

His wife then proceeded to relate all that had occurred, and he listened with profound attention to her recital. At its close, he arose and paced the chamber for some time in great agitation.

At length he suddenly paused, and, regarding his wife with great sternness, observed, in a severe tone, "You have done very wrong in concealing this from me, Honora—very wrong."

"If I have erred, it was to spare you uneasiness," returned Mrs. Bloundel, bursting into tears. "Doctor Hodges agreed with me that it was better not to mention the subject while you had so many other anxieties pressing upon you."

"I have a stout heart, and a firm reliance on the goodness of Heaven, which will enable me to bear up against most evils," returned the grocer. "But on this point I ought, under any circumstances, to have been consulted. And I am greatly surprised that Doctor Hodges should advise the contrary."

"He was influenced, like myself, by the kindest feelings towards you," sobbed Mrs. Bloundel.

"Well, well, I will not reproach you further," returned the grocer, somewhat moved by her tears. "I have no doubt you conceived you were acting for the best. But I must caution you against such conduct for the future." After a pause, he added, "Is it your opinion that our poor deluded child still entertains any regard for this profligate nobleman?"

"I am sure she does," replied Mrs. Bloundel; "and it is from that conviction that I so strongly urge the necessity of marrying her to Leonard Holt."

"I will never compel her to do anything to endanger her future happiness," returned the grocer. "She must not marry Leonard Holt without loving him. It is better to risk an uncertain evil, than to rush upon a certain one."

"Then I won't answer for the consequences," replied his wife.

"What!" cried Bloundel; "am I to understand you have no reliance on Amabel? Has all our care been thrown away?"

"I do not distrust her," returned Mrs. Bloundel; "but consider whom she has to deal with. She is beset by the handsomest and most fascinating man of the day—by one understood to be practised in all the arts most dangerous to our sex—and a nobleman to boot. Some allowance must be made for her."

"I will make none," rejoined Bloundel, austere. "She has been taught to resist temptation in whatever guise it may present itself; and if the principles I have endeavoured to implant within her breast had found lodgment there, she would have resisted it. I am deeply grieved to find this is not the case, and that she must trust to others for protection, when she ought to be able to defend herself."

The subject was not further discussed, and the grocer and his wife shortly afterwards retired to rest.

On the following morning, Bloundel remarked to the apprentice as they stood together in the shop, "Leonard, you are aware I am about to shut up my house. Before doing so, I must make certain needful arrangements. I will not disguise from you that I should prefer your remaining with me, but at the same time I beg you distinctly to understand that I will not detain you against your will. Your articles are within two months of expiring; and, if you desire it, I will deliver them to you to-morrow, and release you from the rest of your time."

"I do not desire it, sir," replied Leonard; "I will remain as long as I can be serviceable to you."

"Take time for reflection," rejoined his master, kindly. "In all probability, it will be a long confinement, and you may repent, when too late, having subjected yourself to it."

"Last month's experience has taught me what I have to expect," remarked Leonard, with a smile. "My mind is made up, I will stay with you."

"I am glad of it," returned Bloundel, "and now I have something further to say to you. My wife has acquainted me with the daring attempt of the Earl of Rochester to carry off Amabel."

"Has my mistress, also, told you of my attachment to your daughter?" demanded Leonard, trembling, in spite of his efforts to maintain a show of calmness.

Bloundel nodded an affirmative.

"And of Amabel's promise to bestow her hand upon me, if I claimed it at the month's end?" continued the apprentice.

"No!" replied the grocer, a good deal surprised—"I heard of no such promise. Nor was I aware the matter had gone so far. But have you claimed it?"

"I have," replied Leonard; "but she declined giving an answer till to-day."

"We will have it, then, at once," cried Bloundel "Come with me to her."

So saying, he led the way to the inner room, where they found Amabel and her mother. At the sight of Leonard, the former instantly cast down her eyes.

"Amabel," said her father, in a tone of greater severity than he had ever before used towards her, "all that has passed is known to me. I shall take another and more fitting opportunity to speak to you on your ill-advised conduct. I am come for a different purpose. You have given Leonard Holt a promise (I need not tell you of what nature), and he claims its fulfilment."

"If he insists upon my compliance," replied Amabel, in a tremulous voice, "I must obey. But it will make me wretched."

"Then I at once release you," replied Leonard. "I value your happiness far more than my own."

"You deserve better treatment, Leonard," said Bloundel; "and I am sorry my daughter cannot discern what is for her good. Let us hope that time will work a change in your favour."

"No," replied the apprentice, bitterly; "I will no longer delude myself with any such vain expectation."

"Amabel," observed the grocer, "as your father—as your wellwisher—I should desire to see you wedded to Leonard. But I have told your mother, and now tell you, that I will not control your inclinations, and will only attempt to direct you so far as I think likely to be

conducive to your happiness. On another point, I must assume a very different tone. You can no longer plead ignorance of the designs of the depraved person who besets you. You may not be able to forget him—but you can avoid him. If you see him alone again—if but for a moment—I cast you off for ever. Yes, for ever," he repeated, with stern emphasis.

"I will never voluntarily see him again," replied Amabel, tremblingly.

"You have heard my determination," rejoined her father. "Do you still adhere to your resolution of remaining with me, Leonard?" he added, turning to the apprentice. "If what has just passed makes any alteration in your wishes, state so, frankly."

"I will stay," replied Leonard.

"There will be one advantage, which I did not foresee, in closing my house," remarked the grocer aside to the apprentice. "It will effectually keep away this libertine earl."

"Perhaps so," replied the other. "But I have more faith in my own vigilance than in bolts and bars."

Bloundel and Leonard then returned to the shop, where the former immediately began to make preparations for storing his house; and in the prosecution of his scheme he was greatly aided by the apprentice.

The grocer's dwelling, as has been stated, was large and commodious. It was three stories high; and beneath the ground-floor there were kitchens and extensive cellars. Many of the rooms were spacious, and had curiously carved fireplaces, walls pannelled with fine brown oak, large presses, and cupboards.

In the yard, at the back of the house, there was a pump, from which excellent water was obtained. There were likewise three large cisterns, supplied from the New River. Not satisfied with this, and anxious to obtain water in which no infected body could have lain, or clothes have been washed, Bloundel had a large tank placed within the cellar, and connecting it by pipes with the pump, he contrived an ingenious machine, by which he could work the latter from within the house—thus making sure of a constant supply of water direct from the spring.

He next addressed himself to the front of the house, where he fixed a pulley, with a rope and hook attached to it, to the beam above one of the smaller bay windows on the second story. By this means, he could let down a basket or any other article into the street, or draw up whatever he desired; and as he proposed using this outlet as the sole

means of communication with the external world when his house was closed, he had a wooden shutter made in the form of a trap-door, which he could open and shut at pleasure.

Here it was his intention to station himself at certain hours of the day, and whenever he held any communication below, to flash off a pistol, so that the smoke of the powder might drive back the air, and purify any vapour that found entrance of its noxious particles.

He laid down to himself a number of regulations, which will be more easily shown and more clearly understood, on arriving at the period when his plans came to be in full operation. To give an instance, however—if a letter should be conveyed to him by means of the pulley, he proposed to steep it in a solution of vinegar and sulphur; and when dried and otherwise fumigated, to read it at a distance by the help of strong glasses.

In regard to provisions, after a careful calculation, he bought upwards of three thousand pounds' weight of hard sea-biscuits, similar to those now termed captain's biscuits, and had them stowed away in hogsheads. He next ordered twenty huge casks of the finest flour, which he had packed up with the greatest care, as if for a voyage to Barbadoes or Jamaica. As these were brought in through the yard an accident had well-nigh occurred which might have proved fatal to him. While superintending the labours of Leonard and Blaize, who were rolling the casks into the house—having stowed away as many as he conveniently could in the upper part of the premises—he descended to the cellar, and, opening a door at the foot of a flight of steps leading from the yard, called to them to lower the remaining barrels with ropes below. In the hurry, Blaize rolled a cask towards the open door, and in another instant it would have fallen upon the grocer, and perhaps have crushed him, but for the interposition of Leonard. Bloundel made no remark at the time; but he never forgot the service rendered him by the apprentice.

To bake the bread required an oven, and he accordingly built one in the garret, laying in a large stock of wood for fuel. Neither did he neglect to provide himself with two casks of meal.

But the most important consideration was butcher's meat; and for this purpose he went to Rotherhithe, where the plague had not yet appeared, and agreed with a butcher to kill him four fat bullocks, and pickle and barrel them as if for sea stores. He likewise directed the man to provide six large barrels of pickled pork, on the same understanding. These were landed at Queenhithe, and brought up to Wood-street, so that they passed for newly-landed grocery.

Hams and bacon forming part of his own trade, he wrote to certain farmers with whom he was in the habit of dealing, to send him up an unlimited supply of flitches and gammons; and his orders being promptly and abundantly answered, he soon found he had more bacon than he could possibly consume. He likewise laid in a good store of tongues, hung beet, and other dried meats.

As to wine, he already had a tolerable stock; but he increased it by half a hogshead of the best canary he could procure; two casks of malmsey, each containing twelve gallons; a quarter-cask of Malaga sack; a runlet of muscadine; two small runlets of aqua vitae; twenty gallons of aniseed water; and two eight-gallon runlets of brandy. To this he added six hogsheads of strongly-hopped Kent ale, calculated for keeping, which he placed in a cool cellar, together with three hogsheads of beer, for immediate use. Furthermore, he procured a variety of distilled waters for medicinal purposes, amongst which he included a couple of dozen of the then fashionable and costly preparation, denominated plague-water.

As, notwithstanding all his precautions, it was not impossible that some of his household might be attacked by the distemper, he took care to provide proper remedies, and, to Blaize's infinite delight, furnished himself with mithridates, Venice treacle, diascorium, the pill rufus (oh! how the porter longed to have the key of the medicine chest!), London treacle, turpentine, and other matters. He likewise collected a number of herbs and simples; as Virginian snakeweed, contrajerva, pestilence-wort, angelica, elecampane, zedoary, tormentil, valerian, lovage, devils-bit, dittany, master-wort, rue, sage, ivy-berries, and walnuts; together with bole ammoniac, terra sigillata, bezoar-water, oil of sulphur, oil of vitriol, and other compounds. His store of remedies was completed by a tun of the best white-wine vinegar, and a dozen jars of salad-oil.

Regulating his supplies by the provisions he had laid in, he purchased a sufficient stock of coals and fagots to last him during the whole period of his confinement; and he added a small barrel of gunpowder, and a like quantity of sulphur for fumigation.

His eatables would not have been complete without cheese; and he therefore ordered about six hundredweight from Derbyshire, Wiltshire, and Leicestershire, besides a couple of large old cheeses from Rostherne, in Cheshire—even then noted for the best dairies in the whole county. Several tubs of salted butter were sent him out of Berkshire, and a few pots, from Suffolk.

It being indispensable, considering the long period he meant to close his house, to provide himself and his family with every necessary, he procured a sufficient stock of wearing apparel, hose, shoes and boots. Spice, dried fruit, and other grocery articles, were not required, because he already possessed them. Candles also formed an article of

his trade, and lamp-oil; but he was recommended by Doctor Hodges, from a fear of the scurvy, to provide a plentiful supply of lemon and lime juice.

To guard against accident, he also doubly stocked his house with glass, earthenware, and every article liable to breakage. He destroyed all vermin, such as rats and mice, by which the house was infested; and the only live creatures he would suffer to be kept were a few poultry. He had a small hutch constructed near the street-door, to be used by the watchman he meant to employ; and he had the garrets fitted up with beds to form an hospital, if any part of the family should be seized with the distemper, so that the sick might be sequestered from the sound.

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III.

THE QUACK DOCTORS.

Patience, it may be remembered, had promised Blaize to give him her earnings to enable him to procure a fresh supply of medicine, and about a week after he had received the trifling amount (for he had been so constantly employed by the grocer that he had no opportunity of getting out before), he sallied forth to visit a neighbouring apothecary, named Parkhurst, from whom he had been in the habit of purchasing drugs, and who occupied a small shop not far from the grocer's, on the opposite side of the street. Parkhurst appeared overjoyed to see him, and, without giving him time to prefer his own request, inquired after his master's family—whether they were all well, especially fair Mistress Amabel—and, further, what was the meaning of the large supplies of provision which he saw daily conveyed to the premises? Blaize shook his head at the latter question, and for some time refused to answer it. But being closely pressed by Parkhurst, he admitted that his master was about to shut up his house.

"Shut up his house!" exclaimed Parkhurst. "I never heard of such a preposterous idea. If he does so, not one of you will come out alive. But I should hope that he will be dissuaded from his rash design."

"Dissuaded!" echoed Blaize. "You don't know my master. He's as obstinate as a mule when he takes a thing into his head. Nothing will turn him. Besides, Doctor Hodges sanctions and even recommends the plan."

"I have no opinion of Doctor Hodges," sneered the apothecary. "He is not fit to hold a candle before a learned friend of mine, a physician, who is now in that room. The person I speak of thoroughly understands the pestilence, and never fails to cure every case that comes before him. No shutting up houses with him. He is in possession of an infallible remedy."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Blaize, pricking up his ears. "What is his name?"

"His name!" cried Parkhurst, with a puzzled look. "How strange it should slip my memory! Ah, now I recollect. It is Doctor Calixtus Bottesham."

"A singular name, truly," remarked Blaize; "but it sounds like that of a clever man."

"Doctor Calixtus Bottesham is a wonderful man," returned the apothecary. "I have never met with his like. I would trumpet forth his merits through the whole city, but that it would ruin my trade. The plague is our harvest, as my friend Chowles, the coffin-maker, says, and it will not do to stop it—ha! ha!"

"It is too serious a subject to laugh at," returned Blaize, gravely.

"But are the doctor's fees exorbitant?"

"To the last degree," replied Parkhurst. "I am afraid to state how much he asks."

"I fear I shall not be able to consult him, then," said Blaize, turning over the coin in his pocket; "and yet I should greatly like to do so."

"Have no fear on that score," returned the apothecary. "I have been able to render him an important service, and he will do anything for me. He shall give you his advice gratis."

"Thank you! thank you!" cried Blaize, transported with delight.

"Wait here a moment, and I will ascertain whether he will see you," replied Parkhurst.

So saying, he quitted the porter, who amused himself during his absence by studying the labels affixed to the jars and bottles on the shelves. He had much ado to restrain himself from opening some of them, and tasting their contents.

Full a quarter of an hour elapsed before the apothecary appeared.

"I am sorry to have detained you so long," he said; "but I had more difficulty with the doctor than I expected, and for some time he refused to see you on any terms, because he has a violent antipathy to Doctor Hodges, whom he regards as a mere pretender, and whose patient he conceives you to be."

"I am not Doctor Hodges' patient," returned Blaize; "and I regard him as a pretender myself."

"That opinion will recommend you to Doctor Bottesham," replied Parkhurst; "and since I have smoothed the way for you, you will find him very affable and condescending. He has often heard me speak of your master; and if it were not for his dislike of Doctor Hodges, whom he might accidentally encounter, he would call upon him."

"I wish I could get my master to employ him instead of the other," said

Blaize.

"I wish so too," cried Parkhurst, eagerly. "Do you think it could be managed?"

"I fear not," returned Blaize.

"There would be no harm in making the trial," replied Parkhurst. "But you shall now see the learned gentleman. I ought to apprise you that he has two friends with him—one a young gallant, named Hawkswood, whom he has recently cured of the distemper, and who is so much attached to him that he never leaves him; the other, a doctor, like himself, named Martin Furbisher, who always accompanies him in his visits to his patients, and prepares his mixtures for him. You must not be surprised at their appearance. And now come with me."

With this, he led the way into a small room at the back of the shop, where three personages were seated at the table, with a flask of wine and glasses before them. Blaize detected Doctor Bottesham at a glance. He was an ancient-looking man, clad in a suit of rusty black, over which was thrown a velvet robe, very much soiled and faded, but originally trimmed with fur, and lined with yellow silk. His powers of vision appeared to be feeble, for he wore a large green shade over his eyes, and a pair of spectacles of the same colour. A venerable white beard descended almost to his waist. His head was protected by a long flowing grey wig, over which he wore a black velvet cap. His shoulders were high and round, his back bent, and he evidently required support when he moved, as a crutch-headed staff was reared against his chair. On his left was a young, handsome, and richly-attired gallant, answering to the apothecary's description of Hawkswood; and on the right sat a stout personage precisely habited like himself, except that he wore a broad-leaved hat, which completely overshadowed his features. Notwithstanding this attempt at concealment, it was easy to perceive that Doctor Furbisher's face was covered with scars, that he had a rubicund nose, studded with carbuncles, and a black patch over his left eye.

"Is this the young man who desires to consult me?" asked Doctor Calixtus Bottesham, in the cracked and quavering voice of old age, of Parkhurst.

"It is," replied the apothecary, respectfully. "Go forward," he added to Blaize, "and speak for yourself."

"What ails you?" pursued Bottesham, gazing at him through his spectacles. "You look strong and hearty."

"So I am, learned sir," replied Blaize, bowing to the ground; "but understanding from Mr. Parkhurst that you have an infallible remedy against the plague, I would gladly procure it from you, as, if I should be attacked, I may not have an opportunity of consulting you."

"Why not?" demanded Bottesham. "I will come to you if you send for me."

"Because," replied Blaize, after a moment's hesitation, "my master is about to shut up his house, and no one will be allowed to go forth, or to enter it, till the pestilence is at an end."

"Your master must be mad to think of such a thing," rejoined Bottesham. "What say you, brother Furbisher?—is that the way to keep off the plague?"

"Gallipots of Galen! no," returned the other; "it is rather the way to invite its assaults."

"When does your master talk of putting this fatal design—for fatal it will be to him and all his household—into execution?" demanded Bottesham.

"Very shortly, I believe," replied Blaize. "He meant to begin on the first of June, but as the pestilence is less violent than it was, Doctor Hodges has induced him to defer his purpose for a few days."

"Doctor Hodges!" exclaimed Bottesham, contemptuously. "It was an unfortunate day for your master when he admitted that sack-drinking impostor into his house."

"I have no great opinion of his skill," replied Blaize, "but, nevertheless, it must be admitted that he cured Master Stephen in a wonderful manner."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Bottesham, "that was mere accident. I heard the particulars of the case from Parkhurst, and am satisfied the youth would have recovered without his aid. But what a barbarian Mr. Bloundel must be to think of imprisoning his family in this way!"

"He certainly does not consult my inclinations in the matter," returned Blaize.

"Nor those of his wife and daughter, I should imagine," continued Bottesham. "How do they like it?"

"I cannot exactly say," answered Blaize. "What a dreadful thing it would be if I should be attacked by the plague, and no assistance could be procured!"

"It would be still more dreadful if so angelic a creature as Bloundel's daughter is represented to be—for I have never seen her—should be so seized," observed Bottesham. "I feel so much interested about her that I would do anything to preserve her from the fate with which she is menaced."

"Were it not inconsistent with your years, learned sir, I might suspect you of a tenderer feeling towards her," observed Blaize, archly. "But, in good sooth, her charms are so extraordinary, that I should not be surprised at any effect they might produce."

"They would produce no effect on me," replied Bottesham. "I am long past such feelings. But in regard to yourself. You say you are afraid of the plague. I will give you an electuary to drive away the panic;" and he produced a small jar, and handed it to the porter. "It is composed of conserve of roses, gillyflowers, borage, candied citron, powder of laetificans Galeni, Roman zedoary, doricum, and saffron. You must take about the quantity of a large nutmeg, morning and evening."

"You make me forever your debtor, learned sir," rejoined Blaize. "What a charming mixture!"

"I will also add my remedy," said Furbisher. "It is a powder compounded of crabs' eyes, burnt hartshorn, the black tops of crabs' claws, the bone from a stag's heart, unicorn's horn, and salt of vipers. You must take one or two drams—not more—in a glass of hot posset-drink, when you go to bed, and swallow another draught of the same potion to wash it down."

"I will carefully observe your directions," replied Blaize, thankfully receiving the powder.

"Of all things," said Bottesham, claiming the porter's attention by tapping him on the head with his cane, "take care never to be without vinegar. It is the grand specific, not merely against the plague, but against all disorders. It is food and physic, meat and medicine, drink and julep, cordial and antidote. If you formerly took it as a sauce, now take it as a remedy. To the sound it is a preservative from sickness, to the sick, a restorative to health. It is like the sword which is worn not merely for ornament, but for defence. Vinegar is my remedy against the plague. It is a simple remedy, but an effectual one. I have cured a thousand patients with it, and hope to cure a thousand more. Take vinegar with all you eat, and flavour all you drink with it. Has the plague taken away your appetite, vinegar will renew it. Is your throat ulcerated, use vinegar as a gargle. Are you disturbed with phlegmatic humours, vinegar will remove them. Is your brain laden with vapours, throw vinegar on a hot shovel, and inhale its fumes, and you will obtain instantaneous relief. Have you the headache, wet a napkin in vinegar, and apply it to your temples, and the pain will cease. In short, there is no ailment that vinegar will not cure. It is the grand panacea; and may be termed the elixir of long life."

"I wonder its virtues have not been found out before," observed Blaize, innocently.

"It is surprising how slow men are in discovering the most obvious truths," replied Bottesham. "But take my advice, and never be without it."

"I never will," returned Blaize. "Heaven be praised, my master has just ordered in three tuns. I'll tap one of them directly."

"That idea of the vinegar remedy is borrowed from Kemp's late treatise on the pestilence and its cure," muttered Furbisher. "Before you enter upon the new system, young man," he added aloud to Blaize, "let me recommend you to fortify your stomach with a glass of canary."

And pouring out a bumper, he handed it to the porter, who swallowed it at a draught.

"And now," said Bottesham, "to return to this mad scheme of your master's—is there no way of preventing it?"

"I am aware of none," replied Blaize.

"Bolts and bars!" cried Furbisher, "something must be done for the fair Amabel. We owe it to society not to permit so lovely a creature to be thus immured. What say you, Hawkswood?" he added to the gallant by his side, who had not hitherto spoken.

"It would be unpardonable to permit it—quite unpardonable," replied this person.

"Might not some plan be devised to remove her for a short time, and frighten him out of his project?" said Bottesham. "I would willingly assist in such a scheme. I pledge you in a bumper, young man. You appear a trusty servant."

"I am so accounted, learned sir," replied Blaize, upon whose brain the wine thus plentifully bestowed began to operate—"and I may add, justly so."

"You really will be doing your master a service if you can prevent him from committing this folly," rejoined Bottesham.

"Let us have a bottle of burnt malmsey, with a few bruised raisins in it, Mr. Parkhurst. This poor young man requires support. Be seated, friend."

With some hesitation, Blaize complied, and while the apothecary went in search of the wine, he observed to Bottesham, "I would gladly comply with your suggestion, learned sir, if I saw any means of doing so."

"Could you not pretend to have the plague?" said Bottesham. "I could then attend you."

"I should be afraid of playing such a trick as that," replied Blaize.

"Besides, I do not see what purpose it would answer."

"It would enable me to get into the house," returned Bottesham, "and then I might take measures for Amabel's deliverance."

"If you merely wish to get into the house," replied Blaize, "that can be easily managed. I will admit you this evening."

"Without your master's knowledge?" asked Bottesham, eagerly.

"Of course," returned Blaize.

"But he has an apprentice?" said the doctor.

"Oh! you mean Leonard Holt," replied Blaize. "Yes, we must take care he doesn't see you. If you come about nine o'clock, he will be engaged with my master in putting away the things in the shop."

"I will be punctual," replied Bottesham, "and will bring Doctor Furbisher with me. We will only stay a few minutes. But here comes the burnt malmsey. Fill the young man's glass, Parkhurst. I will insure you against the plague, if you will follow my advice."

"But will you insure me against my master's displeasure, if he finds me out?" said Blaize.

"I will provide you with a new one," returned Bottesham. "You shall serve me if you wish to change your place."

"That would answer my purpose exactly," thought Blaize. "I need never be afraid of the plague if I live with him. I will turn over your proposal, learned sir," he added, aloud.

After priming him with another bumper of malmsey, Blaize's new friends suffered him to depart. On returning home, he proceeded to his own room, and feeling unusually drowsy, he threw himself on the bed, and almost instantly dropped asleep. When he awoke, the fumes of the liquor had, in a great degree, evaporated, and he recalled, with considerable self-reproach, the promise he had given, and would gladly have recalled it, if it had been possible. But it was now not far from the appointed hour, and he momentarily expected the arrival of the two doctors. The only thing that consoled him was the store of medicine he had obtained, and, locking it up in his cupboard, he descended to the kitchen. Fortunately, his mother was from home, so that he ran no risk

from her; and, finding Patience alone, after some hesitation, he let her into the secret of his anticipated visitors. She was greatly surprised, and expressed much uneasiness lest they should be discovered; as, if they were so, it would be sure to bring them both into trouble.

"What can they want with Mistress Amabel?" she cried. "I should not wonder if Doctor Calixtus Bottesham, as you call him, turns out a lover in disguise."

"A lover!" exclaimed Blaize. "Your silly head is always running upon lovers. He's an old man—old enough to be your grandfather, with a long white beard, reaching to his waist. He a lover! Mr. Bloundel is much more like one."

"For all that, it looks suspicious," returned Patience; "and I shall have my eyes about me on their arrival."

Shortly after this, Blaize crept cautiously up to the back yard, and, opening the door, found, as he expected, Bottesham and his companion. Motioning them to follow him, he led the way to the kitchen, where they arrived without observation. Patience eyed the new-comers narrowly, and felt almost certain, from their appearance and manner, that her suspicions were correct. All doubts were removed when Bottesham, slipping a purse into her hand, entreated her, on some plea or other, to induce Amabel to come into the kitchen. At first she hesitated; but having a tender heart, inclining her to assist rather than oppose the course of any love-affair, her scruples were soon overcome. Accordingly she hurried upstairs, and chancing to meet with her young mistress, who was about to retire to her own chamber, entreated her to come down with her for a moment in the kitchen. Thinking it some unimportant matter, but yet wondering why Patience should appear so urgent, Amabel complied. She was still more perplexed when she saw the two strangers, and would have instantly retired if Bottesham had not detained her.

"You will pardon the liberty I have taken in sending for you," he said, "when I explain that I have done so to offer you counsel."

"I am as much at a loss to understand what counsel you can have to offer, sir, as to guess why you are here," she replied.

"Amabel," returned Bottesham, in a low tone, but altering his voice, and slightly raising his spectacles so as to disclose his features; "it is I—Maurice Wyvil."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, in the utmost astonishment.

"I told you we should meet again," he rejoined; "and I have kept my word."

"Think not to deceive me, my lord," she returned, controlling her emotion by a powerful effort. "I am aware you are not Maurice Wyvil, but the Earl of Rochester. Your love is as false as your character. Mistress Mallet is the real object of your regards. You see I am acquainted with your perfidy."

"Amabel, you are deceived," replied Rochester. "On my soul, you are. When I have an opportunity of explaining myself more fully, I will prove to you that I was induced by the king, for an especial purpose, to pay feigned addresses to the lady you have named. But I never loved her. You alone are the possessor of my heart, and shall be the sharer of my title. You shall be Countess of Rochester."

"Could I believe you?" she cried.

"You may believe me," he answered. "Do not blight my hopes and your own happiness a second time. Your father is about to shut up his house for a twelvemonth, if the plague lasts so long. This done, we shall meet no more, for access to you will be impossible. Do not hesitate, or you will for ever rue your irresolution."

"I know not what to do," cried Amabel, distractedly.

"Then I will decide for you," replied the earl, grasping her hand.

"Come!"

While this was passing, Furbisher, or rather, as will be surmised, Pillichody, had taken Blaize aside, and engaged his attention by dilating upon the efficacy of a roasted onion filled with treacle in the expulsion of the plague. Patience stationed herself near the door, not with a view of interfering with the lovers, but rather of assisting them; and at the very moment that the earl seized his mistress's hand, and would have drawn her forward, she ran towards them, and hastily whispered, "Leonard Holt is coming downstairs."

"Ah! I am lost!" cried Amabel.

"Fear nothing," said the earl. "Keep near me, and I will soon dispose of him."

As he spoke, the apprentice entered the kitchen, and, greatly surprised by the appearance of the strangers, angrily demanded from Blaize who they were.

"They are two doctors come to give me advice respecting the plague," stammered the porter.

"How did they get into the house?" inquired Leonard.

"I let them in through the back door," replied Blaize.

"Then let them out by the same way," rejoined the apprentice. "May I ask what you are doing here?" he added, to Amabel.

"What is that to you, fellow?" cried Rochester, in his assumed voice.

"Much, as you shall find, my lord," replied the apprentice; "for, in spite of your disguise, I know you. Quit the house instantly with your companion, or I will give the alarm, and Amabel well knows what the consequences will be."

"You must go, my lord," she replied.

"I will not stir unless you accompany me," said Rochester.

"Then I have no alternative," rejoined Leonard. "You know your father's determination—I would willingly spare you, Amabel."

"Oh, goodness! what will become of us?" cried Patience—"if there isn't Mr. Bloundel coming downstairs."

"Amabel," said Leonard, sternly, "the next moment decides your fate. If the earl departs, I will keep your secret."

"You hear that, my lord," she cried; "I command you to leave me."

And disengaging herself from him, and hastily passing her father, who at that moment entered the kitchen, she rushed upstairs.

On hearing the alarm of the grocer's approach, Pillichody took refuge in a cupboard, the door of which stood invitingly open, so that Bloundel only perceived the earl.

"What is the matter?" he cried, gazing around him. "Whom have we here?"

"It is a quack doctor, whom Blaize has been consulting about the plague," returned Leonard.

"See him instantly out of the house," rejoined the grocer, angrily, "and take care he never enters it again. I will have no such charlatans here."

Leonard motioned Rochester to follow him, and the latter reluctantly obeyed.

As soon as Bloundel had retired, Leonard, who had meanwhile provided himself with his cudgel, descended to the kitchen, where he dragged Pillichody from his hiding-place, and conducted him to the back door. But he did not suffer him to depart without belabouring him soundly. Locking the door, he then went in search of Blaize, and administered a similar chastisement to him.

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IV.

THE TWO WATCHMEN.

On the day following the events last related, as Leonard Holt was standing at the door of the shop,—his master having just been called out by some important business,—a man in the dress of a watchman, with a halberd in his hand, approached him, and inquired if he was Mr. Bloundel's apprentice.

Before returning an answer, Leonard looked hard at the newcomer, and thought he had never beheld so ill-favoured a person before. Every feature in his face was distorted. His mouth was twisted on one side, his nose on the other, while his right eyebrow was elevated more than an inch above the left; added to which he squinted intolerably, had a long fell of straight sandy hair, a sandy beard and moustache, and a complexion of the colour of brickdust.

"An ugly dog," muttered Leonard to himself, as he finished his scrutiny; "what can he want with me? Suppose I should be Mr. Bloundel's apprentice," he added, aloud, "what then, friend?"

"Your master has a beautiful daughter, has he not?" asked the ill-favoured watchman.

"I answer no idle questions," rejoined Leonard, coldly.

"As you please," returned the other, in an offended tone. "A plan to carry her off has accidentally come to my knowledge. But, since incivility is all I am likely to get for my pains in coming to acquaint you with it, e'en find it out yourself."

"Hold!" cried the apprentice, detaining him; "I meant no offence. Step indoors for a moment. We can converse there more freely."

The watchman, who, notwithstanding his ill-looks, appeared to be a good-natured fellow, was easily appeased. Following the apprentice into the shop, on the promise of a handsome reward, he instantly commenced his relation.

"Last night," he said, "I was keeping watch at the door of Mr. Brackley, a saddler in Aldermanbury, whose house having been attacked by the pestilence is now shut up,

when I observed two persons, rather singularly attired, pass me. Both were dressed like old men, but neither their gait nor tone of voice corresponded with their garb."

"It must have been the Earl of Rochester and his companion," remarked Leonard.

"You are right," replied the other; "for I afterwards heard one of them addressed by that title. But to proceed. I was so much struck by the strangeness of their appearance, that I left my post for a few minutes, and followed them. They halted beneath a gateway, and, as they conversed together very earnestly, and in a loud tone, I could distinctly hear what they said. One of them, the stoutest of the two, complained bitterly of the indignities he had received from Mr. Bloundel's apprentice (meaning you, of course), averring that nothing but his devotion to his companion had induced him to submit to them; and affirming, with many tremendous oaths, that he would certainly cut the young man's throat the very first opportunity."

"He shall not want it then," replied Leonard contemptuously; "neither shall he lack a second application of my cudgel when we meet. But what of his companion? What did he say?"

"He laughed heartily at the other's complaints," returned the watchman, "and told him to make himself easy, for he should soon have his revenge. 'To-morrow night,' he said, 'we will carry off Amabel, in spite of the apprentice or her father; and, as I am equally indebted with yourself to the latter, we will pay off old scores with him.'"

"How do they intend to affect their purpose?" demanded Leonard.

"That I cannot precisely tell," replied the watchman. "All I could hear was, that they meant to enter the house by the back yard about midnight. And now, if you will make it worth my while, I will help you to catch them in their own trap."

"Hum!" said Leonard. "What is your name?"

"Gregory Swindlehurst," replied the other.

"To help me, you must keep watch with me to-night," rejoined Leonard.

"Can you do so?"

"I see nothing to hinder me, provided I am paid for my trouble," replied Gregory. "I will find someone to take my place at Mr. Brackley's. At what hour shall I come?"

"Soon after ten," said Leonard. "Be at the shop-door, and I will let you in."

"Count upon me," rejoined Gregory, a smile of satisfaction illumining his ill-favoured countenance. "Shall I bring a comrade with me? I know a trusty fellow who would like the job. If Lord Rochester should have his companions with him, assistance will be required."

"True," replied Leonard. "Is your comrade a watchman, like yourself?"

"He is an old soldier, who has been lately employed to keep guard over infected houses," replied Gregory. "We must take care his lordship does not overreach us."

"If he gets into the house without my knowledge, I will forgive him," replied the apprentice.

"He won't get into it without mine," muttered Gregory, significantly.

"But do you not mean to warn Mistress Amabel of her danger?"

"I shall consider of it," replied the apprentice.

At this moment Mr. Bloundel entered the shop, and Leonard, feigning to supply his companion with a small packet of grocery, desired him, in a low tone, to be punctual to his appointment, and dismissed him. In justice to the apprentice, it must be stated that he had no wish for concealment, but was most anxious to acquaint his master with the information he had just obtained, and was only deterred from doing so by a dread of the consequences it might produce to Amabel.

The evening passed off much as usual. The family assembled at prayer; and. Blaize, whose shoulders still ached with the chastisement he had received, eyed the apprentice with sullen and revengeful looks. Patience, too, was equally angry, and her indignation was evinced in a manner so droll, that at another season it would have drawn a smile from Leonard.

Supper over, Amabel left the room. Leonard followed her, and overtook her on the landing of the stairs.

"Amabel," he said, "I have received certain intelligence that the Earl of Rochester will make another attempt to enter the house, and carry you off to-night."

"Oh! when will he cease from persecuting me?" she cried.

"When you cease to encourage him," replied the apprentice, bitterly.

"I do not encourage him, Leonard," she rejoined, "and to prove that I do not, I will act in any way you think proper tonight."

"If I could trust you," said Leonard, "you might be of the greatest service in convincing the earl that his efforts are fruitless."

"You may trust me," she rejoined.

"Well, then," returned Leonard, "when the family have retired to rest, come downstairs, and I will tell you what to do."

Hastily promising compliance, Amabel disappeared; and Leonard ran down the stairs, at the foot of which he encountered Mrs. Bloundel.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing—nothing," replied the apprentice, evasively.

"That-will not serve my turn," she rejoined. "Something, I am certain, troubles you, though you do not choose to confess it. Heaven grant your anxiety is not occasioned by aught relating to that wicked Earl of Rochester! I cannot sleep in my bed for thinking of him. I noticed that you followed Amabel out of the room. I hope you do not suspect anything."

"Do not question me further, madam, I entreat," returned the apprentice. "Whatever I may suspect, I have taken all needful precautions. Rest easy, and sleep soundly, if you can. All will go well."

"I shall never rest easy, Leonard," rejoined Mrs. Bloundel, "till you are wedded to my daughter. Then, indeed, I shall feel happy. My poor child, I am sure, is fully aware how indiscreet her conduct has been; and when this noble libertine desists from annoying her—or rather, when he is effectually shut out—we may hope for a return of her regard for you."

"It is a vain hope, madam," replied Leonard; "there will be no such return. I neither expect it nor desire it."

"Have you ceased to love her?" asked Mrs. Bloundel, in surprise.

"Ceased to love her!" echoed Leonard, fiercely. "Would I had done so!—would I could do so! I love her too well—too well."

And repeating the words to himself with great bitterness, he hurried away.

"His passion has disturbed his brain," sighed Mrs. Bloundel, as she proceeded to her chamber. "I must try to reason him into calmness to-morrow."

Half an hour after this, the grocer retired for the night; and Leonard, who had gone to his own room, cautiously opened the door, and repaired to the shop. On the way he met Amabel. She looked pale as death, and trembled so violently, that she could scarcely support herself.

"I hope you do not mean to use any violence towards the earl, Leonard?" she said in a supplicating voice.

"He will never repeat his visit," rejoined the apprentice, gloomily.

"Your looks terrify me," cried Amabel, gazing with great uneasiness at his stern and determined countenance. "I will remain by you. He will depart at my bidding."

"Did he depart at your bidding before?" demanded Leonard, sarcastically.

"He did not, I grant," she replied, more supplicatingly than before. "But do not harm him—for mercy's sake, do not—take my life sooner. I alone have offended you."

The apprentice made no reply, but, unlocking a box, took out a brace of large horse-pistols and a sword, and thrust them into his girdle.

"You do not mean to use those murderous weapons?" cried Amabel.

"It depends on circumstances," replied Leonard. "Force must be met by force."

"Nay, then," she rejoined, "the affair assumes too serious an aspect to be trifled with. I will instantly alarm my father."

"Do so," retorted Leonard, "and he will cast you off for ever."

"Better that, than be the cause of bloodshed," she returned. "But is there nothing I can do to prevent this fatal result?"

"Yes," replied Leonard. "Make your lover understand he is unwelcome to you. Dismiss him for ever. On that condition, he shall depart unharmed and freely."

"I will do so," she rejoined.

Nothing more was then said. Amabel seated herself and kept her eyes fixed on Leonard, who, avoiding her regards, stationed himself near the door.

By-and-by a slight tap was heard without, and the apprentice cautiously admitted Gregory Swindlehurst and his comrade. The latter was habited like the other watchman, in a blue night-rail, and was armed with a halberd. He appeared much stouter, much older, and, so far as could be discovered of his features—for a large handkerchief muffled his face—much uglier (if that were possible) than his companion. He answered to the name of Bernard Boutefeu. They had no sooner entered the shop, than Leonard locked the door.

"Who are these persons?" asked Amabel, rising in great alarm.

"Two watchmen whom I have hired to guard the house," replied Leonard.

"We are come to protect you, fair mistress," said Gregory, "and, if need be, to cut the Earl of Rochester's throat."

"Oh heavens!" exclaimed Amabel.

"Ghost of Tarquin!" cried Boutefeu, "we'll teach him to break into the houses of quiet citizens, and attempt to carry off their daughters against their will. By the soul of Dick Whittington, Lord Mayor of London! we'll maul and mangle him."

"Silence! Bernard Boutefeu," interposed Gregory. "You frighten Mistress Amabel by your strange oaths."

"I should be sorry to do that," replied Boutefeu—"I only wish to show my zeal for her. Don't be afraid of the Earl of Rochester, fair mistress. With all his audacity, he won't dare to enter the house when he finds we are there."

"Is it your pleasure that we should thrust a halberd through his body, or lodge a bullet in his brain?" asked Gregory, appealing to Amabel.

"Touch him not, I beseech you," she rejoined. "Leonard, I have your promise that, if I can prevail upon him to depart, you will not molest him."

"You have," he replied.

"You hear that," she observed to the watchmen.

"We are all obedience," said Gregory.

"Bless your tender heart!" cried Boutefeu, "we would not pain you for the world."

"A truce to this," said Leonard. "Come to the yard, we will wait for him there."

"I will go with you," cried Amabel. "If any harm should befall him, I should never forgive myself."

"Remember what I told you," rejoined Leonard, sternly; "it depends upon yourself whether he leaves the house alive."

"Heed him not," whispered Gregory. "I and my comrade will obey no one but you."

Amabel could not repress an exclamation of surprise.

"What are you muttering, sirrah?" demanded Leonard, angrily.

"Only that the young lady may depend on our fidelity," replied Gregory.

"There can be no offence in that. Come with us," he whispered to Amabel.

The latter part of his speech escaped Leonard, but the tone in which it was uttered was so significant, that Amabel, who began to entertain new suspicions, hesitated.

"You must come," said Leonard, seizing her hand.

"The fault be his, not mine," murmured Amabel, as she suffered herself to be drawn along.

The party then proceeded noiselessly towards the yard. On the way,

Amabel felt a slight pressure on her arm, but, afraid of alarming Leonard, she made no remark.

The back-door was opened, and the little group stood in the darkness. They had not long to wait. Before they had been in the yard five minutes, a noise was heard of footsteps and muttered voices in the entry. This was followed by a sound like that occasioned by fastening a rope-ladder against the wall, and the next moment two figures were perceived above it. After dropping the ladder into the yard, these persons, the foremost of whom the apprentice concluded was the Earl of Rochester, descended. They had no sooner touched the ground than Leonard, drawing his pistols, advanced towards them.

"You are my prisoner, my lord," he said, in a stern voice, "and shall not depart with life, unless you pledge your word never to come hither again on the same errand."

"Betrayed!" cried the earl, laying his hand upon his sword.

"Resistance is in vain, my lord," rejoined Leonard. "I am better armed than yourself."

"Will nothing bribe you to silence, fellow?" cried the earl. "I will give you a thousand pounds, if you will hold your tongue, and conduct me to my mistress."

"I can scarcely tell what stays my hand," returned Leonard, in a furious tone. "But I will hold no further conversation with you. Amabel is present, and will give you your final dismissal herself."

"If I receive it from her own lips," replied the earl, "I will instantly retire—but not otherwise."

"Amabel," said Leonard in a low tone to her, "you hear what is said. Fulfil your promise."

"Do so," cried a voice, which she instantly recognised, in her ear—"I am near you."

"Ah!" she exclaimed.

"Do you hesitate?" cried the apprentice, sternly.

"My lord," said Amabel, in a faint voice, "I must pray you to retire, your efforts are in vain. I will never fly with you."

"That will not suffice," whispered Leonard; "you must tell him you no longer love him."

"Hear me," pursued Amabel; "you who present yourself as Lord Rochester, I entertain no affection for you, and never wish to behold you again."
"Enough!" cried Leonard.

"Admirable!" whispered Gregory. "Nothing could be better."

"Well," cried the supposed earl, "since I no longer hold a place in your affections, it would be idle to pursue the matter further. Heaven be praised, there are other damsels quite as beautiful, though not so cruel. Farewell for ever, Amabel."

So saying he mounted the ladder, and, followed by his companion, disappeared on the other side.

"He is gone," said Leonard, "and I hope for ever. Now let us return to the house."

"I am coming," rejoined Amabel.

"Let him go," whispered Gregory. "The ladder is still upon the wall; we will climb it."

And as the apprentice moved towards the house, he tried to drag her in that direction.

"I cannot—will not fly thus," she cried.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Leonard, suddenly turning.

"Further disguise is useless," replied the supposed Gregory Swindlehurst. "I am the Earl of Rochester. The other was a counterfeit."

"Ah!" exclaimed Leonard, rushing towards them, and placing a pistol against the breast of his mistress? "Have I been duped? But it is not yet too late to retrieve my error. Move a foot further, my lord,—and do you, Amabel, attempt to fly with him, and I fire."

"You cannot mean this?" cried Rochester. "Raise your hand against the woman you love?"

"Against the woman who forgets her duty, and the libertine who tempts her, the arm that is raised is that of justice," replied Leonard. "Stir another footstep, and I fire."

As he spoke, his arms were suddenly seized by a powerful grasp from behind, and, striking the pistols from his hold, the earl snatched up Amabel in his arms, and, mounting the ladder, made good his retreat.

A long and desperate struggle took place between Leonard and his assailant, who was no other than Pillichody, in his assumed character of Bernard Boutefeu. But notwithstanding the superior strength of the bully, and the advantage he had taken of the apprentice, he was worsted in the end.

Leonard had no sooner extricated himself, than, drawing his sword, he would have passed it through Pillichody's body, if the latter had not stayed his hand by offering to tell him where he would find his mistress, provided his life were spared.

"Where has the earl taken her?" cried Leonard, scarcely able to articulate from excess of passion.

"He meant to take her to Saint Paul's,—to the vaults below the cathedral, to avoid pursuit," replied Pillichody. "I have no doubt you will find her there."

"I will go there instantly and search," cried Leonard, rushing up the ladder.

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V.

THE BLIND PIPER AND HIS DAUGHTER

Scarcely knowing how he got there, Leonard Holt found himself at the great northern entrance of the cathedral. Burning with fury, he knocked at the door; but no answer being returned to the summons, though he repeated it still more loudly, he shook the heavy latch with such violence as to rouse the sullen echoes of the aisles. Driven almost to desperation, he retired a few paces, and surveyed the walls of the vast structure, in the hope of descrying some point by which he might obtain an entrance.

It was a bright moonlight night, and the reverend pile looked so beautiful, that, under any other frame of mind, Leonard must, have been struck with admiration. The ravages of time could not now be discerned, and the architectural incongruities which, seen in the broad glare of day, would have offended the eye of taste, were lost in the general grand effect. On the left ran the magnificent pointed windows of the choir, divided by massive buttresses,—the latter ornamented with crocketed pinnacles. On the right, the building had been new-faced, and its original character, in a great measure, destroyed by the tasteless manner in which the repairs had been executed. On this side, the lower windows were round-headed and separated by broad pilasters, while above them ran a range of small circular windows. At the western angle was seen one of the towers (since imitated by Wren), which flanked this side of the fane, together with a part of the portico erected, about twenty-five years previously, by Inigo Jones, and which, though beautiful in itself, was totally out of character with the edifice, and, in fact, a blemish to it.

Insensible alike to the beauties or defects of the majestic building, and regarding it only as the prison of his mistress, Leonard Holt scanned it carefully on either side. But his scrutiny was attended with no favourable result.

Before resorting to force to obtain admission, he determined to make the complete circuit of the structure, and with this view he shaped his course towards the east.

He found two small doors on the left of the northern transept, but both were fastened, and the low pointed windows beneath the choir, lighting the subterranean church of Saint Faith's, were all barred. Running on, he presently came to a flight of stone steps at the north-east corner of the choir, leading to a portal opening upon a small chapel

dedicated to Saint George. But this was secured like the others, and, thinking it vain to waste time in trying to force it, he pursued his course.

Skirting the eastern extremity of the fane—then the most beautiful part of the structure, from its magnificent rose window—he speeded past the low windows which opened on this side, as on the other upon Saint Faith's, and did not pause till he came to the great southern portal, the pillars and arch of which differed but slightly in character from those of the northern entrance.

Here he knocked as before, and was answered, as on the former occasion, by sullen echoes from within. When these sounds died away, he placed his ear to the huge key-hole in the wicket, but could not even catch the fall of a footstep. Neither could he perceive any light, except that afforded by the moonbeams, which flooded the transept with radiance.

Again hurrying on, he passed the cloister-walls surrounding the Convocation House; tried another door between that building and the church of Saint Gregory, a small fane attached to the larger structure; and failing in opening it, turned the corner and approached the portico,—the principal entrance to the cathedral being then, as now, on the west.

Erected, as before mentioned, from the designs of the celebrated Inigo Jones, this magnificent colonnade was completed about 1640, at which time preparations were made for repairing the cathedral throughout, and for strengthening the tower, for enabling it to support a new spire. But this design, owing to the disorganised state of affairs, was never carried into execution.

At the time of the Commonwealth, while the interior of the sacred fabric underwent every sort of desecration and mutilation,—while stones were torn from the pavement, and monumental brasses from tombs,—while carved stalls were burnt, and statues plucked from their niches,—a similar fate attended the portico. Shops were built beneath it, and the sculptures ornamenting its majestic balustrade were thrown down.

Amongst other obstructions, it appears that there was a "high house in the north angle, which hindered the masons from repairing that part of it." The marble door-cases, the capitals, cornices, and pillars were so much injured by the fires made against them, that it required months to put them in order. At the Restoration, Sir John Denham, the poet, was appointed surveyor-general of the works, and continued to hold the office at the period of this history.

As Leonard drew near the portico, he perceived, to his surprise, that a large concourse of people was collected in the area in front of it; and, rushing forward, he found the assemblage listening to the denunciations of Solomon Eagle, who was standing in the midst of them with his brazier on his head. The enthusiast appeared more than usually excited. He was tossing aloft his arms in a wild and frenzied manner, and seemed to be directing his menaces against the cathedral itself.

Hoping to obtain assistance from the crowd, Leonard resolved to await a fitting period to address them. Accordingly, he joined them, and listened to the discourse of the enthusiast.

"Hear me!" cried the latter, in a voice of thunder. "I had a vision last night and will relate it to you. During my brief slumbers, I thought I was standing on this very spot, and gazing as now upon yon mighty structure. On a sudden the day became overcast, and ere long it grew pitchy dark. Then was heard a noise of rushing wings in the air, and I could just discern many strange figures hovering above the tower, uttering doleful cries and lamentations. All at once these figures disappeared, and gave place to, or, it may be, were chased away by, others of more hideous appearance. The latter brought lighted brands which they hurled against the sacred fabric, and, in an instant, flames burst forth from it on all sides. My brethren, it was a fearful, yet a glorious sight to see that vast pile wrapped in the devouring element! The flames were so vivid—so intense—that I could not bear to look upon them, and I covered my face with my hands. On raising my eyes again the flames were extinguished, but the building was utterly in ruins—its columns cracked—its tower hurled from its place—its ponderous roof laid low. It was a mournful spectacle, and a terrible proof of the Divine wrath and vengeance. Yes, my brethren, the temple of the Lord has been profaned, and it will be razed to the ground. It has been the scene of abomination and impiety, and must be purified by fire. Theft, murder, sacrilege, and every other crime have been committed within its walls, and its destruction will follow. The ministers of Heaven's vengeance are even now hovering above it. Repent, therefore, ye who listen to me, and repent speedily; for sudden death, plague, fire, and famine, are at hand. As the prophet Amos saith, 'The Lord will send a fire, the Lord will commission a fire, the Lord will kindle a fire;' and the fire so commissioned and so kindled shall consume you and your city; nor shall one stone of those walls be left standing on another. Repent, or burn, for he cometh to judge the earth. Repent, or burn, I say!"

As soon as he concluded, Leonard Holt ran up the steps of the portico, and in a loud voice claimed the attention of the crowd.

"Solomon Eagle is right," he cried; "the vengeance of Heaven will descend upon this fabric, since it continues to be the scene of so much wickedness. Even now it forms the

retreat of a profligate nobleman, who has this night forcibly carried off the daughter of a citizen."

"What nobleman?" cried a bystander.

"The Earl of Rochester," replied Leonard. "He has robbed Stephen Bloundel, the grocer of Wood-street, of his daughter, and has concealed her, to avoid pursuit, in the vaults of the cathedral."

"I know Mr. Bloundel well," rejoined the man who had made the inquiry, and whom Leonard recognised as a hosier named Lamplugh, "and I know the person who addresses us. It is his apprentice. We must restore the damsel to her father, friends."

"Agreed!" cried several voices.

"Knock at the door," cried a man, whose occupation of a smith was proclaimed by his leathern apron, brawny chest, and smoke-begrimed visage, as well as by the heavy hammer which he bore upon his shoulder. "If it is not instantly opened, we will break it down. I have an implement here which will soon do the business."

A rush was then made to the portal, which rang with the heavy blows dealt against it. While this was passing, Solomon Eagle, whose excitement was increased by the tumult, planted himself in the centre of the colonnade, and vociferated—"I speak in the words of the prophet Ezekiel:—"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic. Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, and will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee!"

The crowd continued to batter the door until they were checked by Lamplugh, who declared he heard some one approaching, and the next moment the voice of one of the vergers inquired in trembling tones, who they were, and what they wanted.

"No matter who we are," replied Leonard, "we demand admittance to search for a young female who has been taken from her home by the Earl of Rochester, and is now concealed within the vaults of the cathedral."

"If admittance is refused us, we will soon let ourselves in," vociferated Lamplugh.

"Ay, that we will," added the smith.

"You are mistaken, friends," returned the verger, timorously. "The Earl of Rochester is not here."

"We will not take your word for it," rejoined the smith. "This will show you we are not to be trifled with."

So saying, he raised his hammer, and struck such a tremendous blow against the door, that the bolts started in their sockets.

"Hold! hold!" cried the verger; "sooner than violence shall be committed, I will risk your admission."

And he unfastened the door.

"Keep together," shouted the smith, stretching out his arms to oppose the progress of the crowd. "Keep together, I say."

"Ay, ay, keep together," added Lamplugh, seconding his efforts.

"Conduct us to the Earl of Rochester, and no harm shall befall you," cried Leonard, seizing the verger by the collar.

"I tell you I know nothing about him," replied the man. "He is not here."

"It is false! you are bribed to silence," rejoined the apprentice. "We will search till we find him."

"Search where you please," rejoined the verger; "and if you do find him, do what you please with me."

"Don't be afraid of that, friend," replied the smith; "we will hang you and the earl to the same pillar."

By this time, the crowd had pushed aside the opposition offered by the smith and Lamplugh. Solomon Eagle darted along the nave with lightning swiftness, and, mounting the steps leading to the choir, disappeared from view. Some few persons followed him, while others took their course along the aisles. But the majority kept near the apprentice.

Snatching the lamp from the grasp of the verger, Leonard Holt ran on with his companions till they came to the beautiful chapel built by Thomas Kempe, bishop of

London. The door was open, and the apprentice, holding the light forward, perceived there were persons inside. He was about to enter the chapel, when a small spaniel rushed forth, and, barking furiously, held him in check for a moment. Alarmed by the noise, an old man in a tattered garb, and a young female, who were slumbering on benches in the chapel, immediately started to their feet, and advanced towards them.

"We are mistaken," said Lamplugh; "this is only Mike Macascree, the blind piper and his daughter Nizza. I know them well enough."

Leonard was about to proceed with his search, but a slight circumstance detained him for a few minutes, during which time he had sufficient leisure to note the extraordinary personal attractions of Nizza Macascree.

In age she appeared about seventeen, and differed in the character of her beauty, as well as in the natural gracefulness of her carriage and demeanour, from all the persons he had seen in her humble sphere of life. Her features were small, and of the utmost delicacy. She had a charmingly-formed nose—slightly retroussé—a small mouth, garnished with pearl-like teeth, and lips as fresh and ruddy as the dew-steeped rose. Her skin was as dark as a gipsy's, but clear and transparent, and far more attractive than the fairest complexion. Her eyes were luminous as the stars, and black as midnight; while her raven tresses, gathered beneath a spotted kerchief tied round her head, escaped in many a wanton curl down her shoulders. Her figure was slight, but exquisitely proportioned; and she had the smallest foot and ankle that ever fell to the lot of woman. Her attire was far from unbecoming, though of the coarsest material; and her fairy feet were set off by the daintiest shoes and hose. Such was the singular and captivating creature that attracted the apprentice's attention.

Her father, Mike Macascree, was upwards of sixty, but still in the full vigour of life, with features which, though not ill-looking, bore no particular resemblance to those of his daughter. He had a good-humoured, jovial countenance, the mirthful expression of which even his sightless orbs could not destroy. Long white locks descended upon his shoulders, and a patriarchal beard adorned his chin. He was wrapped in a loose grey gown, patched with different coloured cloths, and supported himself with a staff. His pipe was suspended from his neck by a green worsted cord.

"Lie down, Bell," he cried to his dog; "what are you barking at thus?"

Lie down, I say."

"Something is the matter, father," replied Nizza. "The church is full of people."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the piper.

"We are sorry to disturb you," said Leonard; "but we are in search of a nobleman who has run away with a citizen's daughter, and conveyed her to the cathedral, and we thought they might have taken refuge in this chapel."

"No one is here except myself and daughter," replied the piper. "We are allowed this lodging by Mr. Quatremain, the minor canon."

"All dogs are ordered to be destroyed by the Lord Mayor," cried the smith, seizing Bell by the neck. "This noisy animal must be silenced."

"Oh, no! do not hurt her!" cried Nizza. "My father loves poor Bell almost as well as he loves me. She is necessary to his existence. You must not—will not destroy her!"

"Won't I?" replied the smith, gruffly; "we'll see that."

"But we are not afraid of contagion, are we, father?" cried Nizza, appealing to the piper.

"Not in the least," replied Mike, "and we will take care the poor beast touches no one else. Do not harm her, sir—for pity's sake, do not. I should miss her sadly."

"The Lord Mayor's commands must be obeyed," rejoined the smith, brutally.

As if conscious of the fate awaiting her, poor Bell struggled hard to get free, and uttered a piteous yell.

"You are not going to kill the dog?" interposed Leonard.

"Have you anything to say to the contrary?" rejoined the smith, in a tone calculated, as he thought, to put an end to further interference.

"Only this," replied Leonard, "that I will not allow it."

"You won't—eh?" returned the smith, derisively.

"I will not," rejoined Leonard, "so put her down and come along."

"Go your own way," replied the smith, "and leave me to mine."

Leonard answered by snatching Bell suddenly from his grasp. Thus liberated, the terrified animal instantly flew to her mistress.

"Is this the return I get for assisting you?" cried the smith, savagely. "You are bewitched by a pair of black eyes. But you will repent your folly."

"I shall never forget your kindness," replied Nizza, clasping Bell to her bosom, and looking gratefully at the apprentice. "You say you are in search of a citizen's daughter and a nobleman. About half an hour ago, or scarcely so much, I was awakened by the opening of the door of the southern transept, and peeping out, I saw three persons—a young man in the dress of a watchman, but evidently disguised, and a very beautiful young woman, conducted by Judith Malmayns, bearing a lantern,—pass through the doorway leading to Saint Faith's. Perhaps they are the very persons you are in search of."

"They are," returned Leonard; "and you have repaid me a hundredfold for the slight service I have rendered you by the information. We will instantly repair to the vaults. Come along."

Accompanied by the whole of the assemblage, except the smith, who skulked off in the opposite direction, he passed through the low doorway on the right of the choir, and descended to Saint Faith's. The subterranean church was buried in profound darkness, and apparently wholly untenanted. On reaching the charnel, they crossed it, and tried the door of the vault formerly occupied by the sexton. It was fastened, but Leonard knocking violently against it, it was soon opened by Judith Malmayns, who appeared much surprised, and not a little alarmed, at the sight of so many persons. She was not alone, and her companion was Chowles. He was seated at a table, on which stood a flask of brandy and a couple of glasses, and seemed a good deal confused at being caught in such a situation, though he endeavoured to cover his embarrassment by an air of effrontery.

"Where is the Earl of Rochester?—where is Amabel?" demanded Leonard Holt.

"I know nothing about either of them," replied Judith. "Why do you put these questions to me?"

"Because you admitted them to the cathedral," cried the apprentice, furiously, "and because you have concealed them. If you do not instantly guide me to their retreat, I will make you a terrible example to all such evil-doers in future."

"If you think to frighten me by your violence, you are mistaken," returned Judith, boldly. "Mr. Chowles has been here more than two hours—ask him whether he has seen any one."

"Certainly not," replied Chowles. "There is no Amabel—no Earl of Rochester here. You must be dreaming, young man."

"The piper's daughter affirmed the contrary," replied Leonard. "She said she saw this woman admit them."

"She lies," replied Judith, fiercely. But suddenly altering her tone, she continued, "If I had admitted them, you would find them here."

Leonard looked round uneasily. He was but half convinced, and yet he scarcely knew what to think.

"If you doubt what I say to you," continued Judith, "I will take you to every chamber in the cathedral. You will then be satisfied that I speak the truth. But I will not have this mob with me. Your companions must remain here."

"Ay, stop with me and make yourselves comfortable," cried Chowles. "You are not so much used to these places as I am, I prefer a snug crypt, like this, to the best room in a tavern—ha! ha!"

Attended by Judith, Leonard Holt searched every corner of the subterranean church, except the vestry, the door of which was locked, and the key removed; but without success. They then ascended to the upper structure, and visited the choir, the transepts, and the nave, but with no better result.

"If you still think they are here," said Judith, "we will mount to the summit of the tower?"

"I will never quit the cathedral without them," replied Leonard.

"Come on, then," returned Judith.

So saying, she opened the door in the wall on the left of the choir, and, ascending a winding stone staircase to a considerable height, arrived at a small cell contrived within the thickness of the wall, and desired Leonard to search it. The apprentice unsuspectingly obeyed. But he had scarcely set foot inside when the door was locked behind him, and he was made aware of the treachery practised upon him by a peal of mocking laughter from his conductress.

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VI.

OLD LONDON FROM OLD SAINT PAUL'S.

After repeated, but ineffectual efforts to burst open the door, Leonard gave up the attempt in despair, and endeavoured to make his situation known by loud outcries. But his shouts, if heard, were unheeded, and he was soon compelled from exhaustion to desist. Judith having carried away the lantern, he was left in total darkness; but on searching the cell, which was about four feet wide and six deep, he discovered a narrow grated loophole. By dint of great exertion, and with the help of his sword, which snapped in twain as he used it, he managed to force off one of the rusty bars, and to squeeze himself through the aperture. All his labour, however, was thrown away. The loophole opened on the south side of the tower, near one of the large buttresses, which projected several yards beyond it on the left, and was more than twenty feet above the roof; so that it would be certain destruction to drop from so great a height.

The night was overcast, and the moon hidden behind thick clouds. Still, there was light enough to enable him to discern the perilous position in which he stood. After gazing below for some time, Leonard was about to return to the cell, when, casting his eyes upwards, he thought he perceived the end of a rope about a foot above his head, dangling from the upper part of the structure. No sooner was this discovery made, than it occurred to him that he might possibly liberate himself by this unlooked for aid; and, regardless of the risk he ran, he sprang upwards and caught hold of the rope. It was firmly fastened above, and sustained his weight well.

Possessed of great bodily strength and activity, and nerved by desperation, Leonard Holt placed his feet against the buttress, and impelled himself towards one of the tall pointed windows lighting the interior of the tower; but though he reached the point at which he aimed, the sway of the rope dragged him back before he could obtain a secure grasp of the stone shaft; and, after another ineffectual effort, fearful of exhausting his strength, he abandoned the attempt, and began to climb up the rope with his hands and knees. Aided by the inequalities of the roughened walls, he soon gained a range of small Saxon arches ornamenting the tower immediately beneath the belfry, and succeeded in planting his right foot on the moulding of one of them; he instantly steadied himself, and with little further effort clambered through an open window.

His first act on reaching the belfry was to drop on his knees, and return thanks to Heaven for his deliverance. He then looked about for an outlet; but though a winding staircase existed in each of the four angles of the tower, all the doors, to his infinite disappointment, were fastened on the other side. He was still, therefore, a prisoner.

Determined, however, not to yield to despair, he continued his search, and finding a small door opening upon a staircase communicating with the summit of the tower, he unfastened it (for the bolt was on his own side), and hurried up the steps. Passing through another door bolted like the first within side, he issued upon the roof. He was now on the highest part of the cathedral, and farther from his hopes than ever; and so agonizing were his feelings, that he almost felt tempted to fling himself headlong downwards. Beneath him lay the body of the mighty fabric, its vast roof, its crocketed pinnacles, its buttresses and battlements scarcely discernible through the gloom, but looking like some monstrous engine devised to torture him.

Wearied with gazing at it, and convinced of the futility of any further attempt at descent, Leonard Holt returned to the belfry, and, throwing himself on the boarded floor, sought some repose. The fatigue he had undergone was so great, that, notwithstanding his anxiety, he soon dropped asleep, and did not awake for several hours. On opening his eyes, it was just getting light, and shaking himself, he again prepared for action. All the events of the night rushed upon his mind, and he thought with unutterable anguish of Amabel's situation. Glancing round the room, it occurred to him that he might give the alarm by ringing the enormous bells near him; but though he set them slightly in motion, he could not agitate the immense clappers sufficiently to produce any sound.

Resolved, however, to free himself at any hazard, he once more repaired to the summit of the tower, and leaning over the balustrade, gazed below. It was a sublime spectacle, and, in spite of his distress, filled him with admiration and astonishment. He had stationed himself on the south side of the tower, and immediately beneath him lay the broad roof of the transept, stretching out to a distance of nearly two hundred feet. On the right, surrounded by a double row of cloisters, remarkable for the beauty of their architecture, stood the convocation, or chapter-house. The exquisite building was octagonal in form, and supported by large buttresses, ornamented on each gradation by crocketed pinnacles. Each side, moreover, had a tall pointed window, filled with stained glass, and was richly adorned with trefoils and cinquefoils. Further on, on the same side, was the small low church dedicated to Saint Gregory, overtopped by the south-western tower of the mightier parent fane.

It was not, however, the cathedral itself, but the magnificent view it commanded, that chiefly attracted the apprentice's attention. From the elevated point on which he stood, his eye ranged over a vast tract of country bounded by the Surrey hills, and at last settled

upon the river, which in some parts was obscured by a light haze, and in others tinged with the ruddy beams of the newly-risen sun. Its surface was spotted, even at this early hour, with craft, while innumerable vessels of all shapes and sizes were moored, to its banks. On the left, he noted the tall houses covering London Bridge; and on the right, traced the sweeping course of the stream as it flowed from Westminster. On this hand, on the opposite bank, lay the flat marshes of Lambeth; while nearer stood the old bull-baiting and bear-baiting establishments, the flags above which could be discerned above the tops of the surrounding habitations. A little to the left was the borough of Southwark, even then a large and populous district—the two most prominent features in the scene being Winchester House, and Saint Saviour's old and beautiful church.

Filled with wonder at what he saw, Leonard looked towards the east, and here an extraordinary prospect met his gaze. The whole of the city of London was spread out like a map before him, and presented a dense mass of ancient houses, with twisted chimneys, gables, and picturesque roofs—here and there overtopped by a hall, a college, an hospital, or some other lofty structure. This vast collection of buildings was girded in by grey and mouldering walls, approached by seven gates, and intersected by innumerable narrow streets. The spires and towers of the churches shot up into the clear morning air—for, except in a few quarters, no smoke yet issued from the chimneys. On this side, the view of the city was terminated by the fortifications and keep of the Tower. Little did the apprentice think, when he looked at the magnificent scene before him, and marvelled at the countless buildings he beheld, that, ere fifteen months had elapsed, the whole mass, together with the mighty fabric on which he stood, would be swept away by a tremendous conflagration. Unable to foresee this direful event, and lamenting only that so fair a city should be a prey to an exterminating pestilence, he turned towards the north, and suffered his gaze to wander over Finsbury-fields, and the hilly ground beyond them—over Smithfield and Clerkenwell, and the beautiful open country adjoining Gray's-inn-lane.

So smiling and beautiful did these districts appear, that he could scarcely fancy they were the chief haunts of the horrible distemper. But he could not blind himself to the fact that in Finsbury-fields, as well as in the open country to the north of Holborn, plague-pits had been digged and pest-houses erected; and this consideration threw such a gloom over the prospect, that, in order to dispel the effect, he changed the scene by looking towards the west. Here his view embraced all the proudest mansions of the capital, and tracing the Strand to Charing Cross, long since robbed of the beautiful structure from which it derived its name, and noticing its numerous noble habitations, his eye finally rested upon Whitehall: and he heaved a sigh as he thought that the palace of the sovereign was infected by as foul a moral taint as the hideous disease that ravaged the dwellings of his subjects.

At the time that Leonard Holt gazed upon the capital, its picturesque beauties were nearly at their close. In a little more than a year and a quarter afterwards, the greater part of the old city was consumed by fire; and though it was rebuilt, and in many respects improved, its original and picturesque character was entirely destroyed.

It seems scarcely possible to conceive a finer view than can be gained from the dome of the modern cathedral at sunrise on a May morning, when the prospect is not dimmed by the smoke of a hundred thousand chimneys—when the river is just beginning to stir with its numerous craft, or when they are sleeping on its glistening bosom—when every individual house, court, church, square, or theatre, can be discerned—when the eye can range over the whole city on each side, and calculate its vast extent. It seems scarcely possible, we say, to suppose at any previous time it could be more striking; and yet, at the period under consideration, it was incomparably more so. Then, every house was picturesque, and every street a collection of picturesque objects. Then, that which was objectionable in itself, and contributed to the insalubrity of the city, namely, the extreme narrowness of the streets, and overhanging stories of the houses, was the main source of their beauty. Then, the huge projecting signs with their fantastical iron-work—the conduits—the crosses (where crosses remained)—the maypoles—all were picturesque; and as superior to what can now be seen, as the attire of Charles the Second's age is to the ugly and disfiguring costume of our own day.

Satiated with this glorious prospect, Leonard began to recur to his own situation, and carefully scrutinizing every available point on the side of the Tower, he thought it possible to effect his descent by clambering down the gradations of one of the buttresses. Still, as this experiment would be attended with the utmost danger, while, even if he reached the roof, he would yet be far from his object, he resolved to defer it for a short time, in the hope that ere long some of the bell-ringers, or other persons connected with the cathedral, might come thither and set him free.

While thus communing with himself, he heard a door open below; and hurrying down the stairs at the sound, he beheld, to his great surprise and joy, the piper's daughter, Nizza Macascree.

"I have searched for you everywhere," she cried, "and began to think some ill had befallen you. I overheard Judith Malmayns say she had shut you up in a cell in the upper part of the tower. How did you escape thence?"

Leonard hastily explained.

"I told you I should never forget the service you rendered me in preserving the life of poor Bell," pursued Nizza, "and what I have done will prove I am not unmindful of my

promise I saw you search the cathedral last night with Judith, and noticed that she returned from the tower unaccompanied by you. At first I supposed you might have left the cathedral without my observing you, and I was further confirmed in the idea by what I subsequently heard."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Leonard. "What did you hear?"

"I followed Judith to the vaults of Saint Faith's," replied Nizza, "and heard her inform your companions that you had found the grocer's daughter, and had taken her away."

"And this false statement imposed upon them?" cried Leonard.

"It did," replied Nizza. "They were by this time more than half intoxicated by the brandy given them by Chowles, the coffin-maker, and they departed in high dudgeon with you."

"No wonder!" exclaimed Leonard.

"They had scarcely been gone many minutes," pursued Nizza, "when, having stationed myself behind one of the massive pillars in the north aisle of Saint Faith's—for I suspected something was wrong—I observed Judith and Chowles steal across the nave, and proceed towards the vestry. The former tapped at the door, and they were instantly admitted by Mr. Quatremain, the minor canon. Hastening to the door, which was left slightly ajar, I perceived two young gallants, whom I heard addressed as the Earl of Rochester and Sir George Etherege, and a young female, who I could not doubt was Amabel. The earl and his companion laughed heartily at the trick Judith had played you, and which the latter detailed to them; but Amabel took no part in their merriment, but, on the contrary, looked very grave, and even wept."

"Wept, did she?" cried Leonard, in a voice of much emotion. "Then, there is hope for her yet."

"You appear greatly interested in her," observed Nizza, pausing, in her narration. "Do you love her?"

"Can you ask it?" cried Leonard, passionately.

"I would advise you to think no more of her, and to fix your heart elsewhere," returned Nizza.

"You know not what it is to love," replied the apprentice, "or you would not offer such a counsel."

"Perhaps not," replied Nizza; "but I am sorry you have bestowed your heart upon one who so little appreciates the boon."

And, feeling she had said too much, she blushed deeply, and cast down her eyes.

Unconscious of her confusion, and entirely engrossed by the thought of his mistress, Leonard urged her to proceed.

"Tell me what has become of Amabel—where I shall find her?" he cried.

"You will find her soon enough," replied Nizza. "She has not left the cathedral. But hear me to an end. On learning you were made a prisoner, I ran to the door leading to the tower, but found that Judith had locked it, and removed the key. Not daring to give the alarm—for I had gathered from what was said that the three vergers were in the earl's pay—I determined to await a favourable opportunity to release you. Accordingly I returned to the vestry door, and again played the eaves-dropper. By this time, another person, who was addressed as Major Pillichody, and who, it appeared, had been employed in the abduction, had joined the party. He informed the earl that Mr. Bloundel was in the greatest distress at his daughter's disappearance, and advised him to lose no time in conveying her to some secure retreat. These tidings troubled Amabel exceedingly, and the earl endeavoured to pacify her by promising to espouse her at daybreak, and, as soon as the ceremony was over, to introduce her in the character of his countess to her parents."

"Villain!" cried Leonard; "but go on."

"I have little more to tell," replied Nizza, "except that she consented to the proposal, provided she was allowed to remain till six o'clock, the hour appointed for the marriage, with Judith."

"Bad as that alternative is, it is better than the other," observed Leonard. "But how did you procure the key of the winding staircase?"

"I fortunately observed where Judith had placed it," replied Nizza, "and when she departed to the crypt near the charnel, with Amabel, I possessed myself of it. For some time I was unable to use it, because the Earl of Rochester and Sir George Etherege kept pacing to and fro in front of the door, and their discourse convinced me that the marriage was meant to be a feigned one, for Sir George strove to dissuade his friend from the step he was about to take; but the other only laughed at his scruples. As soon as they retired, which is not more than half an hour ago, I unlocked the door, and hurried up the winding stairs. I searched every chamber, and began to think you were gone, or

that Judith's statement was false. But I resolved to continue my search until I was fully satisfied on this point, and accordingly ascended to the belfry. You are aware of the result."

"You have rendered me a most important service," replied Leonard; "and I hope hereafter to prove my gratitude. But let us now descend to the choir, where I will conceal myself till Amabel appears. This marriage must be prevented."

Before quitting the belfry, Leonard chanced to cast his eyes on a stout staff left there, either by one of the bell-ringers or some chance visitant, and seizing it as an unlooked-for prize, he ran down the steps, followed by the piper's daughter.

On opening the lowest door, he glanced towards the choir, and there before the high altar stood Quatremain in his surplice, with the earl and Amabel, attended by Etherege and Pillichody. The ceremony had just commenced. Not a moment was to be lost. Grasping his staff, the apprentice darted along the nave, and, rushing up to the pair, exclaimed in a loud voice, "Hold! I forbid this marriage. It must not take place!"

"Back, sirrah!" cried Etherege, drawing his sword, and opposing the approach of the apprentice. "You have no authority to interrupt it. Proceed, Mr. Quatremain."

"Forbear!" cried a voice of thunder near them—and all turning at the cry, they beheld Solomon Eagle, with his brazier on his head, issue from behind the stalls. "Forbear!" cried the enthusiast, placing himself between the earl and Amabel, both of whom recoiled at his approach. "Heaven's altar must not be profaned with these mockeries! And you, Thomas Quatremain, who have taken part in this unrighteous transaction, make clean your breast, and purge yourself quickly of your sins, for your hours are numbered. I read in your livid looks and red and burning eyeballs that you are smitten by the pestilence."

Old Saint Paul's Volume II by William Harrison Ainsworth

VII.

PAUL'S WALK.

It will now be necessary to ascertain what took place at the grocer's habitation subsequently to Amabel's abduction. Leonard Holt having departed, Pillichody was preparing to make good his retreat, when he was prevented by Blaize, who, hearing a noise in the yard, peeped cautiously out at the back-door, and inquired who was there?

"Are you Mr. Bloundel?" rejoined Pillichody, bethinking him of a plan to turn the tables upon the apprentice.

"No, I am his porter," replied the other.

"What, Blaize!" replied Pillichody. "Thunder and lightning! don't you remember Bernard Boutefeu, the watchman?"

"I don't remember any watchman of that name, and I cannot discern your features," rejoined Blaize. "But your voice sounds familiar to me. What are you doing there?"

"I have been trying to prevent Leonard Holt from carrying off your master's daughter, the fair Mistress Amabel," answered Pillichody. "But he has accomplished his villanous purpose in spite of me."

"The devil he has!" cried Blaize. "Here is a pretty piece of news for my master. But how did you discover him?"

"Chancing to pass along the entry on the other side of that wall about a quarter of an hour ago," returned Pillichody, "I perceived a rope-ladder fastened to it, and wishing to ascertain what was the matter, I mounted it, and had scarcely got over into the yard, when I saw two persons advancing. I concealed myself beneath the shadow of the wall, and they did not notice me; but I gathered from their discourse who they were and what was their design. I allowed Amabel to ascend, but just as the apprentice was following, I laid hold of the skirt of his doublet, and, pulling him back, desired him to come with me to his master. He answered by drawing his sword, and would have stabbed me, but I closed with him, and should have secured him if my foot had not slipped. While I was on the ground, he dealt me a severe blow, and ran after his mistress."

"Just like him," replied Blaize. "He took the same cowardly advantage of me last night."

"No punishment will be too severe for him," rejoined Pillichody, "and I hope your master will make a terrible example of him."

"How fortunate I was not gone to bed!" exclaimed Blaize, "I had just taken a couple of refuses, and was about to put on my nightcap, when, hearing a noise without, and being ever on the alert to defend my master's property, even at the hazard of my life, I stepped forth and found you."

"I will bear testimony to your vigilance and courage," returned Pillichody; "but you had better go and alarm your master, I will wait here."

"Instantly I-instantly!" cried Blaize, rushing upstairs.

On the way to Mr. Bloundel's chamber, he met Patience, and told her what he had heard. She was inclined to put a very different construction on the story; but as she bore the apprentice no particular good-will, she determined to keep her opinion to herself, and let affairs take their course. The grocer was soon aroused, and scarcely able to credit the porter's intelligence, and yet fearing something must be wrong, he hastily attired himself, and proceeded to Amabel's room. It was empty, and it was evident from the state in which everything was left, that she had never retired to rest. Confounded by the sight, Bloundel then hurried downstairs in search of the apprentice, but he was nowhere to be found. By this time, Mrs. Bloundel had joined him, and on hearing Blaize's story, utterly scouted it.

"It cannot be," she cried. "Leonard could have no motive for acting thus. He had our consent to the union, and the sole obstacle to it was Amabel herself. Is it likely he would run away with her?"

"I am sure I do not know," replied Patience, "but he was desperately in love, that's certain; and when people are in love, I am told they do very strange and unaccountable things. Perhaps he may have carried her off against her will."

"Very likely," rejoined Blaize. "I thought I heard a scream, and should have called out at the moment, but a rufus stuck in my throat and prevented me."

"Where is the person who says he intercepted them?" asked Bloundel.

"In the yard," answered Blaize.

"Bid him come hither," rejoined his master. "Stay, I will go to him myself."

With this, the whole party, including old Josyna and Stephen—the two boys and little Christiana not having been disturbed—proceeded to the yard, where they found Pillichody in his watchman's dress, who related his story more circumstantially than before.

"I don't believe a word of it," cried Mrs. Bloundel; "and I will stake my life it is one of the Earl of Rochester's tricks."

"Were I assured that such was the case," said the grocer, in a stern whisper to his wife, "I would stir no further in the matter. My threat to Amabel was not an idle one."

"I may be mistaken," returned Mrs. Bloundel, almost at her wit's end with anxiety. "Don't mind what I say. Judge for yourself. Oh dear! what will become of her?" she mentally ejaculated.

"Lanterns and links!" cried Pillichody. "Do you mean to impeach my veracity, good mistress? I am an old soldier, and as tenacious of my honour as your husband is of his credit."

"This blustering will not serve your turn, fellow," observed the grocer, seizing him by the collar. "I begin to suspect my wife is in the right, and will at all events detain you."

"Detain me! on what ground?" asked Pillichody.

"As an accomplice in my daughter's abduction," replied Bloundel. "Here, Blaize—Stephen, hold him while I call the watch. This is a most mysterious affair, but I will soon get at the bottom of it."

By the grocer's directions, Pillichody, who very quietly entered the house, and surrendered his halberd to Blaize, was taken to the kitchen. Bloundel then set forth, leaving Stephen on guard at the yard door, while his wife remained in the shop, awaiting his return.

On reaching the kitchen with the prisoner, Blaize besought his mother, who, as well as Patience, had accompanied him thither, to fetch a bottle of sack. While she went for the wine, and the porter was stalking to and fro before the door with the halberd on his shoulder, Patience whispered to Pillichody, "I know who you are. You came here last night with the Earl of Rochester in the disguise of a quack doctor."

"Hush!" cried Pillichody, placing his finger on his lips.

"I am not going to betray you," returned Patience, in the same tone.

"But you are sure to be found out, and had better beat a retreat before Mr. Bloundel returns."

"I won't lose a moment," replied Pillichody, starting to his feet.

"What's the matter?" cried Blaize, suddenly halting.

"I only got up to see whether the wine was coming," replied Pillichody.

"Yes, here it is," replied Blaize, as his mother reappeared; "and now you shall have a glass of such sack as you never yet tasted."

And pouring out a bumper, he offered it to Pillichody. The latter took the glass; but his hand shook so violently that he could not raise it to his lips.

"What ails you, friend?" inquired Blaize, uneasily.

"I don't know," replied Pillichody; "but I feel extremely unwell."

"He looks to me as if he had got the plague," observed Patience, to Blaize.

"The plague!" exclaimed the latter, letting fall the glass, which shivered to pieces on the stone floor. "And I have touched him. Where is the vinegar-bottle? I must sprinkle myself directly, and rub myself from head to foot with oil of hartshorn and spirits of sulphur. Mother! dear mother! you have taken away my medicine-chest. If you love me, go and fetch me a little conserve of Roman wormwood and mithridate. You will find them in two small jars."

"Oh yes, do," cried Patience; "or he may die with fright."

Moved by their joint entreaties, old Josyna again departed; and her back was no sooner turned, than Patience said in an undertone to Pillichody,— "Now is your time. You have not a moment to lose."

Instantly taking the hint, the other uttered a loud cry, and springing up, caught at Blaize, who instantly dropped the halberd, and fled into one corner of the room.

Pillichody then hurried upstairs, while Blaize shouted after him, "Don't touch him, Master Stephen. He has got the plague! he has got the plague!"

Alarmed by this outcry, Stephen suffered Pillichody to pass; and the latter, darting across the yard, mounted the rope-ladder, and quickly disappeared. A few minutes afterwards, Bloundel returned with the watch, and was greatly enraged when he found that the prisoner had got off. No longer doubting that he had been robbed of his daughter by the Earl of Rochester, he could not make up his mind to abandon her to her fate, and his conflicting feelings occasioned him a night of indescribable anxiety. The party of watch whom he had summoned searched the street for him, and endeavoured to trace out the fugitives,—but without success; and they returned before daybreak to report their failure.

About six o'clock, Mr. Bloundel, unable to restrain himself longer, sallied forth with Blaize in search of his daughter and Leonard. Uncertain where to bend his steps, he trusted to chance to direct him, resolved, if he were unsuccessful, to lay a petition for redress before the throne. Proceeding along Cheapside, he entered Paternoster-row, and traversed it till he came to Paul's Alley,—a narrow passage leading to the north-west corner of the cathedral. Prompted by an unaccountable impulse, he no sooner caught sight of the reverend structure, than he hastened, towards it, and knocked against the great northern door.

We shall, however, precede him, and return to the party at the altar. The awful warning of Solomon Eagle so alarmed Quatremain, that he let fall his prayer-book, and after gazing vacantly round for a few moments, staggered to one of the stalls, where, feeling a burning pain in his breast, he tore open his doublet, and found that the enthusiast had spoken the truth, and that he was really attacked by the pestilence. As to Amabel, on hearing the terrible denunciation, she uttered a loud cry, and would have fallen to the ground but for the timely assistance of the apprentice, who caught her with one arm, while with the other he defended himself against the earl and his companions.

But, in spite of his resistance, they would have soon compelled him to relinquish his charge, if Solomon Eagle, who had hitherto contented himself with gazing sternly on what was passing, had not interfered; and, rushing towards the combatants, seized Rochester and Etherege, and hurled them backwards with almost supernatural force. When they arose, and menaced him with their swords, he laughed loudly and contemptuously, crying, "Advance, if ye dare! and try your strength against one armed by Heaven, and ye will find how far it will avail."

At this juncture, Leonard Holt heard a musical voice behind him, and turning, beheld Nizza Macascree. She beckoned him to follow her; and, raising Amabel in his arms, he

ran towards the door leading to Saint Faith's, through which his conductress passed. All this was the work of a moment, and when Rochester and Etherege, who rushed after him, tried the door, they found it fastened withinside.

Just then, a loud knocking was heard at the northern entrance of the cathedral, and a verger answering the summons, Mr. Bloundel and Blaize were admitted. On beholding the newcomers, Rochester and his companions were filled with confusion. Equally astonished at the recounter, the grocer grasped his staff, and rushing up to the earl, demanded, in a voice that made the other, despite his natural audacity, quail—"Where is my child, my lord? What have you done with her?"

"I know nothing about her," replied Rochester, with affected carelessness.—"Yes, I am wrong," he added, as if recollecting himself; "I am told she has run away with your apprentice."

Pillichody, who had changed his attire since his escape from the grocer's dwelling, thought he might now venture to address him without fear of discovery, and, setting his arms a-kimbo, and assuming a swaggering demeanour, strutted forward and said, "Your daughter has just been wedded to Leonard Holt, Mr. Bloundel."

"It is false," cried Bloundel, "as false as the character you just personated, for I recognise you as the knave who recently appeared before me as a watchman."

"I pledge you my word as a nobleman," interposed Rochester, "that your daughter has just descended to Saint Faith's with your apprentice."

"I can corroborate his lordship's assertion," said Etherege.

"And I," added Pillichody. "By the holy apostle to whom this fane is dedicated! it is so."

"To convince you that we speak the truth, we will go with you and assist you to search," said Rochester.

Attaching little credit to what he heard, and yet unwilling to lose a chance of recovering his daughter, the grocer rushed to the door indicated by his informant, but found it fastened.

"You had better go to the main entrance," said one of the vergers; "I have the keys with me, and will admit you."

"I will keep guard here till you return," said another verger

Accompanied by Rochester and Etherege, Bloundel then proceeded to the chief door of the subterranean church. It was situated at the south of the cathedral, between two of the larger buttresses, and at the foot of a flight of stone steps. On reaching it, the verger produced his keys, but they were of no avail, for the door was barred withinside. After many fruitless attempts to obtain admission, they were fain to give up the attempt.

"Well, if we cannot get in, no one shall get out," observed the verger. "The only key that opens this door is in my possession, so we have them safe enough."

The party then returned to the cathedral, where they found Blaize, Pillichody, and the two other vergers keeping watch at the door near the choir. No one had come forth.

Rochester then walked apart with his companions, while Bloundel, feeling secure so long as he kept the earl in view, folded his arms upon his breast, and determined to await the result.

By this time, the doors being opened, a great crowd was soon collected within the sacred structure. Saint Paul's Churchyard, as is well known, was formerly the great mart for booksellers, who have not, even in later times, deserted the neighbourhood, but still congregate in Paternoster-row, Ave-Maria-lane, and the adjoining streets. At the period of this history they did not confine themselves to the precincts of the cathedral, but, as has been previously intimated, fixed their shops against the massive pillars of its nave. Besides booksellers, there were seamstresses, tobacco-merchants, vendors of fruit and provisions, and Jews—all of whom had stalls within the cathedral, and who were now making preparations for the business of the day. Shortly afterwards, numbers who came for recreation and amusement made their appearance, and before ten o'clock, Paul's Walk, as the nave was termed, was thronged, by apprentices, rufflers, porters, water-carriers, higglers, with baskets on their heads, or under their arms, fish-wives, quack-doctors, cutpurses, bonarobas, merchants, lawyers, and serving-men, who came to be hired, and who stationed themselves near an oaken block attached to one of the pillars, and which was denominated, from the use it was put to, the "serving-man's log." Some of the crowd were smoking, some laughing, others gathering round a ballad-singer, who was chanting one of Rochester's own licentious ditties; some were buying quack medicines and remedies for the plague, the virtues of which the vendor loudly extolled; while others were paying court to the dames, many of whom were masked. Everything seemed to be going forward within this sacred place, except devotion. Here, a man, mounted on the carved marble of a monument, bellowed forth the news of the Dutch war, while another, not far from him, on a bench, announced in lugubrious accents the number of those who had died on the previous day of the pestilence. There, at the very font, was a usurer paying over a sum of money to a gallant—it was Sir Paul Parravicin—

who was sealing a bond for thrice the amount of the loan. There, a party of choristers, attended by a troop of boys, were pursuing another gallant, who had ventured into the cathedral booted and spurred, and were demanding "spur-money" of him—an exaction which they claimed as part of their perquisites.

An admirable picture of this curious scene has been given by Bishop Earle, in his *Microcosmographia*, published in 1629. "Paul's Walk," he writes, "is the land's epitome, or you may call it the lesser isle of Great Britain. It is more than this—it is the whole world's map, which you may here discern in its perfectest motion, jostling and turning. It is a heap of stones and men, with a vast confusion of languages; and were the steeple not sanctified, nothing could be liker Babel. The noise in it is like that of bees, a strange humming, or buzzing, mixed of walking, tongues, and feet: it is a kind of still roar, or loud whisper. It is the great exchange of all discourse, and no business whatsoever, but is here stirring and afoot. It is the synod of all parts politic, jointed and laid together in most serious posture, and they are not half so busy at the Parliament. It is the market of young lecturers, whom you may cheapen here at all rates and sizes. It is the general mint of all famous lies, which are here, like the legends of Popery, first coined and stamped in the church. All inventions are emptied here, and not a few pockets. The best sign of the Temple in it is that it is the thieves' sanctuary, who rob more safely in a crowd than a wilderness, while every pillar is a bush to hide them. It is the other expense of the day, after plays and taverns; and men have still some oaths to swear here. The visitants are all men without exceptions; but the principal inhabitants are stale knights and captains out of service, men of long rapiers and short purses, who after all turn merchants here, and traffic for news. Some make it a preface to their dinner, and travel for an appetite; but thirstier men make it their ordinary, and board here very cheap. Of all such places it is least haunted by hobgoblins, for if a ghost would walk here, he could not."

Decker, moreover, terms Paul's Walk, or the "Mediterranean Isle," in his "Gull's Hornbook"—"the only gallery wherein the pictures of all your true fashionate and complimentary gulls are, and ought to be, hung up." After giving circumstantial directions for the manner of entering the walk, he proceeds thus: "Bend your course directly in the middle line that the whole body of the church may appear to be yours, where in view of all, you may publish your suit in what manner you affect most, either with the slide of your cloak from the one shoulder or the other." He then recommends the gull, after four or five turns in the nave, to betake himself to some of the semsters' shops the new tobacco office, or the booksellers' stalls, "where, if you cannot read, exercise your smoke, and inquire who has written against the divine weed." Such, or something like it, was Paul's Walk at the period of this history.

The grocer, who had not quitted his post, remained a silent and sorrowful spectator of the scene. Despite his anxiety, he could not help moralizing upon it, and it furnished

him with abundant food for reflection. As to Rochester and his companions, they mingled with the crowd—though the earl kept a wary eye on the door—chatted with the prettiest damsels—listened to the newsmongers, and broke their fast at the stall of a vendor of provisions, who supplied them with tolerable viands, and a bottle of excellent Rhenish. Blaize was soon drawn away by one of the quacks, and, in spite of his master's angry looks, he could not help purchasing one of the infallible antidotes offered for sale by the charlatan. Parravicin had no sooner finished his business with the usurer than he strolled along the nave, and was equally surprised and delighted at meeting with his friends, who briefly explained to him why they were there.

"And how do you expect the adventure to terminate?" asked Parravicin, laughing heartily at the recital.

"Heaven knows," replied the earl. "But what are you doing here?"

"I came partly to replenish my purse, for I have had a run of ill luck of late," replied the knight; "and partly to see a most beautiful creature, whom I accidentally discovered here yesterday."

"A new beauty!" cried Rochester. "Who is she?"

"Before I tell you, you must engage not to interfere with me," replied Parravicin. "I have marked her for my own."

"Agreed," replied Rochester. "Now, her name?"

"She is the daughter of a blind piper, who haunts the cathedral," replied Parravicin, "and her name is Nizza Macascree. Is it not charming? But you shall see her."

"We must not go too far from the door of Saint Faith's," rejoined Rochester. "Can you not contrive to bring her hither?"

"That is more easily said than done," replied Parravicin. "She is as coy as the grocer's daughter. However, I will try to oblige you."

With this, he quitted his companions, and returning shortly afterwards, said, "My mistress has likewise disappeared. I found the old piper seated at the entrance of Bishop Kempe's chapel, attended by his dog—but he missed his daughter when he awoke in the morning, and is in great trouble about her."

"Strange!" cried Etherege; "I begin to think the place is enchanted."

"It would seem so, indeed," replied Rochester.

While they were thus conversing, Pillichody, who was leaning against a column, with his eye fixed upon the door leading to Saint Faith's, observed it open, and the apprentice issue from it accompanied by two masked females. All three attempted to dart across the transept and gain the northern entrance, but they were intercepted. Mr. Bloundel caught hold of Leonard's arm, and Rochester seized her whom he judged by the garb to be Amabel, while Parravicin, recognising Nizza Macascree, as he thought, by her dress, detained her.

"What is the meaning of all this, Leonard?" demanded the grocer, angrily.

"You shall have an explanation instantly," replied the apprentice; "but think not of me—think only of your daughter."

"My father!—my father!" cried the damsel, who had been detained by Parravicin, taking off her mask, and rushing towards the grocer.

"Who then have I got?" cried Rochester.

"The piper's daughter, I'll be sworn," replied Etherege.

"You are right," replied Nizza, unmasking. "I changed dresses with Amabel, and hoped by so doing to accomplish her escape, but we have been baffled. However, as her father is here, it is of little consequence."

"Amabel," said the grocer, repulsing her, "before I receive you again, I must be assured that you have not been alone with the Earl of Rochester."

"She has not, sir," replied the apprentice. "Visit your displeasure on my head. I carried her off and would have wedded her."

"What motive had you for this strange conduct?" asked Bloundel, incredulously.

Before Leonard could answer, Pillichody stepped forward, and said to the grocer, "Mr. Bloundel, you are deceived—on the faith of a soldier you are."

"Peace, fool!" said Rochester, "I will not be outdone in generosity by an apprentice. Leonard Holt speaks the truth."

"If so," replied Bloundel, "he shall never enter my house again. Send for your indentures to-night," he continued sharply, to Leonard, "but never venture to approach me more."

"Father, you are mistaken," cried Amabel. "Leonard Holt is not to blame. I alone deserve your displeasure."

"Be silent!" whispered the apprentice; "you destroy yourself. I care not what happens to me, provided you escape the earl."

"Come home, mistress," cried the grocer, dragging her through the crowd which had gathered round them.

"Here is a pretty conclusion to the adventure!" cried Parravicin; "but where is the apprentice—and where is the pretty Nizza Macascree? 'Fore heaven," he added, as he looked around for them in vain, "I should not wonder if they have eloped together."

"Nor I," replied Rochester. "I admire the youth's spirit, and trust he may be more fortunate with his second mistress than with his first."

"It shall be my business to prevent that," rejoined Parravicin. "Help me to search for her."

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VIII.

THE AMULET.

As the grocer disappeared with his daughter, Nizza Macascree, who had anxiously watched the apprentice, observed him turn deadly pale, and stagger; and instantly springing to his side, she supported him to a neighbouring column, against which he leaned till he had in some degree recovered from the shock. He then accompanied her to Bishop Kempe's beautiful chapel in the northern aisle, where she expected to find her father; but it was empty.

"He will be back presently," said Nizza. "He is no doubt making the rounds of the cathedral. Bell will take care of him. Sit down on that bench while I procure you some refreshment. You appear much in need of it."

And without waiting for a reply, she ran off, and presently afterwards returned with a small loaf of bread and a bottle of beer.

"I cannot eat," said Leonard, faintly. But seeing that his kind provider looked greatly disappointed, he swallowed a few mouthfuls, and raised the bottle to his lips. As he did so, a sudden feeling of sickness seized him, and he set it down untasted.

"What ails you?" asked Nizza, noticing his altered looks with uneasiness.

"I know not," he replied. "I have never felt so ill before."

"I thought you were suffering from agitation," she rejoined, as a fearful foreboding crossed her.

"I shall be speedily released from further trouble," replied the apprentice. "I am sure I am attacked by the plague."

"Oh! say not so!" she rejoined. "You may be mistaken."

But though she tried to persuade herself she spoke the truth, her heart could not be deceived.

"I scarcely desire to live," replied the apprentice, in a melancholy tone, "for life has lost all charms for me. But do not remain here, or you may be infected by the distemper."

"I will never leave you," she hastily rejoined; "that is," she added, checking herself, "till I have placed you in charge of some one who will watch over you."

"No one will watch over me," returned Leonard. "My master has dismissed me from his service, and I have no other friend left. If you will tell one of the vergers what is the matter with me, he will summon the Examiner of Health, who will bring a litter to convey me to the pest-house."

"If you go thither your fate is sealed," replied Nizza.

"I have said I do not desire to live," returned the apprentice.

"Do not indulge in these gloomy thoughts, or you are certain to bring about a fatal result," said Nizza. "Would I knew how to aid you! But I still hope you are deceived as to the nature of your attack."

"I cannot be deceived," replied Leonard, whose countenance proclaimed the anguish he endured. "Doctor Hodges, I think, is interested about me," he continued, describing the physician's residence—"if you will inform him of my seizure, he may, perhaps, come to me."

"I will fly to him instantly," replied Nizza; and she was about to quit the chapel, when she was stopped by Parravicin and his companions.

"Let me pass," she said, trying to force her way through them.

"Not so fast, fair Nizza," rejoined Parravicin, forcing her back, "I must have a few words with you. Have I overrated her charms?" he added to Rochester. "Is she not surpassingly beautiful?"

"In good sooth she is," replied the earl, gazing at her with admiration.

"By the nut-brown skin of Cleopatra!" cried Pillichody, "she beats Mrs. Disbrowe, Sir Paul."

"I have never seen any one so lovely," said the knight, attempting to press her hand to his lips.

"Release me, sir," cried Nizza, struggling to free herself.

"Not till I have told you how much I love you," returned the knight, ardently.

"Love me!" she echoed, scornfully.

"Yes, love you," reiterated Parravicin. "It would be strange if I, who profess myself so great an admirer of beauty, did otherwise. I am passionately enamoured of you. If you will accompany me, fair Nizza, you shall change your humble garb for the richest attire that gold can purchase, shall dwell in a magnificent mansion, and have troops of servants at your command. In short, my whole fortune, together with myself, shall be placed at your disposal."

"Do not listen to him, Nizza," cried Leonard Holt, in a faint voice.

"Be assured I will not," she answered. "Your insulting proposal only heightens the disgust I at first conceived for you," she added to the knight: "I reject it with scorn, and command you to let me pass."

"Nay, if you put on these airs, sweetheart," replied Parravicin, insolently, "I must alter my tone likewise. I am not accustomed to play the humble suitor to persons of your condition."

"Perhaps not," replied Nizza; "neither am I accustomed to this unwarrantable usage. Let me go. My errand is one of life and death. Do not hinder me, or you will have a heavy crime on your soul—heavier, it may be, than any that now loads it."

"Where are you going?" asked Parravicin, struck by her earnest manner.

"To fetch assistance," she replied, "for one suddenly assailed by the pestilence."

"Ah!" exclaimed the knight, trembling, and relinquishing his grasp. "My path is ever crossed by that hideous spectre. Is it your father who is thus attacked?"

"No," she replied, pointing to Leonard, "it is that youth."

"The apprentice!" exclaimed Rochester. "I am sorry for him. Let us be gone," he added to his companions. "It may be dangerous to remain here longer."

With this they all departed except Parravicin.

"Come with us, Nizza," said the latter; "we will send assistance to the sufferer."

"I have already told you my determination," she rejoined; "I will not stir a footstep with you. And if you have any compassion in your nature, you will not detain me longer."

"I will not leave you here to certain destruction," said the knight.

"You shall come with me whether you will or not."

And as he spoke, he advanced towards her, while she retreated towards Leonard, who, rising with difficulty, placed himself between her and her persecutor.

"If you advance another footstep," cried the apprentice, "I will fling myself upon you, and the contact may be fatal."

Parravicin gazed, furiously at him, and half unsheathed his sword. But the next moment he returned it to the scabbard, and exclaiming, "Another time! another time!" darted after his companions.

He was scarcely gone, when Leonard reeled against the wall, and before Nizza could catch him, fell in a state of insensibility on the floor.

After vainly attempting to raise him, Nizza flew for assistance, and had just passed through the door of the chapel, when she met Judith Malmayns and Chowles. She instantly stopped them, and acquainting them with the apprentice's condition, implored them to take charge of him while she went in search of Doctor Hodges.

"Before you go," said Judith, "let me make sure that he is attacked by the plague. It may be some other disorder."

"I hope so, indeed," said Nizza, pausing; "but I fear the contrary."

So saying, she returned with them to the chapel. Raising the apprentice with the greatest ease, Judith tore open his doublet.

"Your suspicion is correct," she said, with a malignant smile. "Here is the fatal sign upon his breast."

"I will fetch Doctor Hodges instantly," cried Nizza.

"Do so," replied Judith; "we will convey him to the vaults in Saint Faith's, where poor Mr. Quatremain has just been taken. He will be better there than in the pest-house."

"Anything is better than that," said Nizza, shuddering.

As soon as she was gone, Chowles took off his long black cloak, and, throwing it over the apprentice, laid him at full length upon the bench, and, assisted by Judith, carried him towards the choir. As they proceeded, Chowles called out, "Make way for one sick of the plague!" and the crowd instantly divided, and gave them free passage. In this way they descended to Saint Faith's, and, shaping their course to the vault, deposited their burden on the very bed lately occupied by the unfortunate sexton.

"He has come here to die," observed Judith to her companion. "His attack is but a slight one, and he might with care recover. But I can bargain with the Earl of Rochester for his removal."

"Take heed how you make such a proposal to his lordship," returned Chowles. "From what I have seen, he is likely to, revolt at it."
"Every man is glad to get rid of a rival," rejoined Judith.

"Granted," replied Chowles; "but no man will pay for the riddance when the plague will accomplish it for him for nothing."

"With due attention, I would answer for that youth's recovery," said Judith. "It is not an incurable case, like Mr. Quatremain's. And so Doctor Hodges, when he comes, will pronounce it."

Shortly after this, Nizza Macaseree appeared with a countenance fraught with anxiety, and informed them that Doctor Hodges was from home, and would not probably return till late at night.

"That's unfortunate," said Judith. "Luckily, however, there are other doctors in London, and some who understand the treatment of the plague far better than he does—Sibbald, the apothecary of Clerkenwell, for instance."

"Do you think Sibbald would attend him?" asked Nizza, eagerly.

"To be sure he would," replied Mrs. Malmayns, "if he were paid for it. But you seem greatly interested about this youth. I have been young, and know what effect good looks and a manly deportment have upon our sex. He has won your heart! Ha! ha! You need not seek to disguise it. Your blushes answer for you."

"A truce to this," cried Nizza, whose cheeks glowed with shame and anger.

"You can answer a plain question, I suppose," returned Judith. "Is his life dear to you?"

"Dearer than my own?" replied Nizza.

"I thought as much," returned Judith. "What will you give me to save him?"

"I have nothing," rejoined Nizza, with a troubled look—"nothing but thanks to give you."

"Think again," said Judith. "Girls like you, if they have no money, have generally some trinket—some valuable in their possession."

"That is not my case," said Nizza, bursting into tears. "I never received a present in my life, and never desired one till now."

"But your father must have some money?" said Judith, inquisitively.

"I know not," replied Nizza, "but I will ask him. What sum will content you?"

"Bring all you can," returned Judith, "and I will do my best."

Nizza then departed, while Judith, with the assistance of Chowles, covered Leonard with blankets, and proceeded to light a fire. Long before this, the sick youth was restored to animation. But he was quite light-headed and unconscious of his situation, and rambled about Amabel and her father. After administering such remedies as she thought fit, and as were at hand, Judith sat down with the coffin-maker beside a small table, and entered into conversation with him.

"Well," said Chowles, in an indifferent tone, as he poured out a glass of brandy, "is it to be kill or cure?"

"I have not decided," replied Judith, pledging him.

"I still do not see what gain there would be in shortening his career," observed Chowles.

"If there would be no gain, there would be gratification," replied Judith. "He has offended me."

"If that is the case, I have nothing further to say," returned Chowles.

"But you promised the piper's daughter to save him."

"We shall see what she offers," rejoined Judith; "all will depend upon that."

"It is extraordinary," observed Chowles, after a pause, "that while all around us are sick or dying of the pestilence, we should escape contagion."

"We are not afraid of it," replied Judith. "Besides, we are part of the plague ourselves. But I have been attacked, and am, therefore, safe."

"True," replied Chowles; "I had forgotten that. Well, if I fall ill, you Sha'n't nurse me."

"You won't be able to help yourself then," returned Judith.

"Eh!" exclaimed Chowles, shifting uneasily on his seat.

"Don't be afraid," returned Judith, laughing at his alarm. "I'll take every care of you. We are necessary to each other."

"So we are," replied Chowles; "so we are; and if nothing else could, that consideration would make us true to each other."

"Of course," assented Judith. "Let us reap as rich a harvest as we can, and when the scourge is over, we can enjoy ourselves upon the spoils."

"Exactly so," replied Chowles. "My business is daily-hourly on the increase. My men are incessantly employed, and my only fear is that an order will be issued to bury the dead without coffins."

"Not unlikely," replied Mrs. Malmayns. "But there are plenty of ways of getting money in a season like this. If one fails, we must resort to another. I shall make all I can, and in the shortest manner."

"Right!" cried Chowles, with, an atrocious laugh. "Right! ha! ha!"

"I have found out a means of propagating the distemper," pursued Judith, in a low tone, and with a mysterious air, "of inoculating whomsoever I please with the plague-venom. I have tried the experiment on Mr. Quatremain and that youth, and you see how well it has answered in both instances."

"I do," replied Chowles, looking askance at her. "But why destroy the poor minor canon?"

"Because I want to get hold of the treasure discovered by the help of the Mosaical rods in Saint Faith's, which by right belonged to my husband, and which is now in Mr. Quatremain's possession," replied Judith.

"I understand," nodded Chowles.

While they were thus conversing, Nizza Macascree again returned, and informed them that she could not find her father. "He has left the cathedral," she said, "and will not, probably, return till nightfall."

"I am sorry for it, on your account," observed Judith, coldly.

"Why, you will not have the cruelty to neglect the poor young man till then—you will take proper precautions?" exclaimed Nizza.

"Why should I exert myself for one about whose recovery I am indifferent?" said Judith.

"Why?" exclaimed Nizza. "But it is in vain to argue with you. I must appeal to your avarice, since you are deaf to the pleadings of humanity. I have just bethought me that I have an old gold coin, which was given me years ago by my father. He told me it had been my mother's, and charged me not to part with it. I never should have done so, except in an emergency like the present."

As she spoke, she drew from her bosom a broad gold piece. A hole was bored through it, and it was suspended from her neck by a chain of twisted hair.

"Let me look at it," said Judith taking the coin. "Who gave you this?" she asked, in an altered tone.

"My father?" replied Nizza; "I have just told you so. It was my mother's."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Judith!

"Have you ever seen it before?" inquired Nizza, astonished at the change in the nurse's manner.

"I have," replied Judith, "and in very different hands."

"You surprise me," cried Nizza. "Explain yourself, I beseech you."

"Not now—not now," cried Judith, hastily returning the coin. "And this is to be mine in case I cure the youth?"

"I have said so," replied Nizza.

"Then make yourself easy," rejoined Judith; "he shall be well again in less than two days."

With this, she set a pan on the fire, and began to prepare a poultice, the materials for which she took from a small oaken chest in one corner of the vault. Nizza looked on anxiously, and while they were thus employed, a knock was heard at the door, and Chowles opening it, found the piper and one of the vergers.

"Ah! is it you, father?" cried Nizza, rushing to him.

"I am glad I have found you," returned the piper, "for I began to fear some misfortune must have befallen you. Missing you in the morning, I traversed the cathedral in search of you with Bell, well knowing, if you were in the crowd, she would speedily discover you."

His daughter then hastily recounted what had happened. When the piper heard that she had promised the piece of gold to the plague-nurse, a cloud came over his open countenance.

"You must never part with it," he said—"never. It is an amulet, and if you lose it, or give it away, your good luck will go with it."

"Judith Malmayns says she has seen it before," rejoined Nizza.

"No such thing," cried the piper hastily, "she knows nothing about it.

But come with me. You must not stay here longer."

"But, father—dear father!—I want a small sum to pay the nurse for attending this poor young man," cried Nizza.

"I have no money," replied the piper; "and if I had, I should not throw it away in so silly a manner. Come along; I shall begin think you are in love with the youth."

"Then you will not be far wide of the mark," observed Judith, coarsely.

The piper uttered an angry exclamation, and taking his daughter's hand, dragged her out of the vault.

"You will not get your fee," laughed Chowles, as they were left alone.

"So it appears," replied Judith, taking the pan from the fire; "there is no use in wasting a poultice."

Shortly after this, the door of the vault again opened, and Parravicin looked in. He held a handkerchief sprinkled with vinegar to his face, and had evidently, from the manner in which he spoke, some antidote against the plague in his mouth.

"Nizza Macascree has been here, has she not?" he asked.

"She has just left with her father," replied Judith.

Parravicin beckoned her to follow him, and led the way to the north aisle of Saint Faith's.

"Is the apprentice likely to recover?" he asked.

"Humph!" exclaimed Judith; "that depends upon circumstances. Nizza Macascree offered me a large reward to cure him."

"Is he any connexion of hers?" asked the knight, sharply.

"None whatever," returned Judith, with a significant smile. "But he may possibly be so."

"I thought as much," muttered the knight.

"He never shall recover," said Judith, halting, and speaking in a low tone, "if you make it worth my while."

"You read my wishes," replied Parravicin, in a sombre tone. "Take this purse, and free me from him."

"He will never more cross your path," replied Judith, eagerly grasping the reward.

"Enough!" exclaimed Parravicin. "What has passed between us must be secret."

"As the grave which shall soon close over the victim," she rejoined.

Parravicin shuddered, and hurried away, while Judith returned at a slow pace, and chinking the purse as she went to the vault.

She had scarcely passed through the door, when Nizza Macascree appeared from behind one of the massive pillars. "This dreadful crime must be prevented," she cried—"but how? If I run to give the alarm, it may be executed, and no one will believe me. I will try to prevent it myself."

Crossing the channel, she was about to enter the vault, when Chowles stepped forth. She shrank backwards, and allowed him to pass, and then trying the door, found it unfastened.

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IX.

HOW LEONARD WAS CURED OF THE PLAGUE.

Nizza Macascree found Judith leaning over her intended victim, and examining the plague-spot on his breast. The nurse was so occupied by her task that she did not hear the door open, and it was not until the piper's daughter was close beside her, that she was aware of her presence. Hastily drawing the blankets over the apprentice, she then turned, and regarded Nizza with a half-fearful, half-menacing look.

"What brings you here again?" she inquired, sharply.

"Ask your own heart, and it will tell you," rejoined Nizza, boldly. "I am come to preserve the life of this poor youth."

"If you think you can nurse him better than I can, you can take my place and welcome," returned Judith, affecting not to understand her; "I have plenty of other business to attend to, and should be glad to be released from the trouble."

"Can she already have effected her fell purpose?" thought Nizza, gazing at the apprentice, whose perturbed features proclaimed that his slumber procured him no rest from suffering. "No—no—she has not had time. I accept your offer," she added, aloud.

"But what will your father say to this arrangement?" asked Judith.

"When he knows my motive, he will not blame me," answered Nizza. "Here I take my place," she continued, seating herself, "and will not quit it till he is out of danger."

"Your love for this youth borders upon insanity," cried Judith, angrily.

"You shall not destroy yourself thus."

"Neither shall you destroy him," retorted Nizza. "It is to prevent the commission of the crime you meditate, and for which you have been paid, that I am determined to remain with him."

As she said this, a singular and frightful change took place in the nurse's appearance. A slight expression of alarm was at first visible, but it was instantly succeeded by a look so savage and vindictive, that Nizza almost repented having provoked the ire of so

unscrupulous a person. But summoning up all her resolution, she returned Judith's glance with one as stern and steady, if not so malignant as her own. A deep silence prevailed for a few minutes, during which each fancied she could read the other's thoughts. In Nizza's opinion, the nurse was revolving some desperate expedient, and she kept on her guard, lest an attack should be made upon her life. And some such design did, in reality, cross Judith; but abandoning it as soon as formed, she resolved to have recourse to more secret, but not less certain measures.

"Well," she said, breaking silence, "since you are determined to have your own way, and catch the plague, and most likely perish from it, I shall not try to hinder you. Do what you please, and see what will come of it."

And she made as if about to depart; but finding Nizza did not attempt to stop her, she halted.

"I cannot leave you thus," she continued; "if you will remain, take this ointment," producing a small jar, "and rub the plague-spot with it. It is a sovereign remedy, and will certainly effect a cure."

"I will not touch it," returned Nizza.

"His death, then, be upon your head," rejoined Judith, quitting the vault, and closing the door after her.

Greatly relieved by her departure, Nizza began to consider what she should do, and whether it would be possible to remove the apprentice to some safer place. "While occupied with these reflections, the object of her solicitude heaved a deep sigh, and opening his eyes, fixed them upon her. It was evident, however, that he did not know her, but as far as could be gathered from his ravings, mistook her for Amabel. By degrees he grew calmer, and the throbbing anguish of the tumour in some measure subsiding, his faculties returned to him.

"Where am I?" he exclaimed, pressing his hand forcibly to his brow, "and what is the matter with me?"

"You are in a vault, near Saint Faith's," replied Nizza, "and—I will not deceive you—the disorder you are labouring under is the plague."

"The plague!" echoed Leonard, with a look of horror. "Ah! now I recollect. I was attacked immediately after Amabel's departure with her father. Heaven be praised! she is safe.

That is some consolation amid all this misery. Could my master behold me now, he would pity me, and so perhaps would his daughter."

"Heed her not," rejoined Nizza, in a slightly reproachful tone, "she does not deserve consideration. To return to yourself. You are not safe here. Judith Malmayns has been hired to take away your life. Are you able to move hence?"

"I hope so," replied Leonard, raising himself on his arm.

"Wrap a blanket round you, then, and follow me," said Nizza, taking up the lamp and hastening to the door. "Ah!" she exclaimed, with a cry of anguish—"it is locked."

"This building is destined to be my prison, and that treacherous woman my gaoler," groaned Leonard, sinking backwards.

"Do not despair," cried Nizza; "I will accomplish your deliverance."

So saying, she tried, by knocking against the door and by loud outcries, to give the alarm. But no answer was returned, and she soon became convinced that Judith had fastened the door of the charnel, which, it will be remembered, lay between the vault and the body of Saint Faith's. Hence, no sound could reach the outer structure. Disturbed by what had just occurred. Leonard's senses again wandered; but, exerting all her powers to tranquillize him, Nizza at last succeeded so well that he sunk into a slumber.

Almost regarding his situation as hopeless, she took up the lamp, and searching the vault, found the pan containing the half-made poultice. The fire smouldered on the hearth, and replenishing it from a scanty supply in one corner, she heated the poultice and applied it to the tumour. This done, she continued her search. But though she found several phials, each bearing the name of some remedy for the pestilence, her distrust of Judith would not allow her to use any of them. Resuming her seat by the couch of the sufferer, and worn out with fatigue and anxiety, she presently dropped asleep.

She was awakened after awhile by a slight noise near her, and beheld Judith bending over the apprentice, with a pot of ointment in her hand, which she was about to apply to the part affected. The poultice had already been removed. Uttering a loud cry, Nizza started to her feet, and snatching the ointment from the nurse, threw it away. As soon as the latter recovered from her surprise, she seized her assailant, and forced her into the seat she had just quitted.

"Stir not till I give you permission," she cried, fiercely; "I wish to cure this young man, if you will let me."

"You intend to murder him," replied Nizza; "but while I live you shall never accomplish your atrocious purpose. Help! help!" And she uttered a prolonged piercing scream.

"Peace! or I will strangle you," cried Judith, compressing Nizza's slender throat with a powerful gripe.

And she would, in all probability, have executed her terrible threat, if a secret door in the wall had not suddenly opened and admitted Solomon Eagle. A torch supplied the place of his brazier, and he held it aloft, and threw its ruddy light upon the scene. On seeing him, Judith relinquished her grasp, and glared at him with a mixture of defiance and apprehension; while Nizza, half dead with terror, instantly rushed towards him, and throwing herself at his feet, besought him to save her.

"No harm shall befall you," replied Solomon Eagle, extending his arm over her. "Tell me what has happened."

Nizza hastily explained the motive of Judith's attack upon her life. The plague-nurse endeavoured to defend herself, and, in her turn, charged her accuser with a like attempt. But Solomon Eagle interrupted her.

"Be silent, false woman!" he cried, "and think not to delude me with these idle fabrications. I fully believe that you would have taken the life of this poor youth, and, did I not regard you as one of the necessary agents of Heaven's vengeance, I would instantly deliver you up to justice. But the measure of your iniquities is not yet filled up. Your former crimes are not unknown to me. Neither is the last dark deed, which you imagined concealed from every human eye, hidden from me."

"I know not what you mean," returned Judith, trembling, in spite of herself.

"I will tell you, then," rejoined Solomon Eagle, catching her hand, and dragging her into the furthest corner of the vault. "Give ear to me," he continued, in a low voice, "and doubt, if you can, that I have witnessed what I relate. I saw you enter a small chamber behind the vestry, in which Thomas Quatremain, who once filled the place of minor canon in this cathedral, was laid. No one was there beside yourself and the dying man. Your first business was to search his vestments, and take away his keys."

"Ha!" exclaimed Judith, starting.

"While securing his keys," pursued Solomon Eagle, "the owner awakened, and uttered a low, but angry remonstrance. Better he had been silent. Dipping a napkin in an ewer of water that stood beside him, you held the wet cloth over his face, and did not remove it till life was extinct. All this I saw."

"But you will not reveal it," said Judith, tremblingly.

"I will not," replied Solomon Eagle, "for the reasons I have just stated; namely, that I look upon you as one of the scourges appointed by Heaven."

"And so I am," rejoined Judith, with impious exultation; "it is my mission to destroy and pillage, and I will fulfil it."

"Take heed you do not exceed it," replied Solomon Eagle. "Lift a finger against either of these young persons, and I will reveal all. Yes," he continued, menacingly, "I will disclose such dreadful things against you, that you will assuredly be adjudged to a gibbet higher than the highest tower of this proud fane."

"I defy you, wretch!" retorted Judith. "You can prove nothing against me."

"Defy me?—ha!" cried Solomon Eagle, with a terrible laugh. "First," he added, dashing her backwards against the wall—"first, to prove my power. Next," he continued, drawing from her pockets a bunch of keys, "to show that I speak the truth. These were taken from the vest of the murdered man. No one, as yet, but ourselves, knows that he is dead."

"And who shall say which of the two is the murderer?" cried Judith.

"Villain! I charge you with the deed."

"You are, indeed, well fitted for your appointed task," returned Solomon Eagle, gazing at her with astonishment, "for sometimes Heaven, for its own wise purpose, will allow the children of hell to execute its vengeance upon earth. But think not you will always thus escape. No, you may pursue your evil course for a while—you, and your companion in crime; but a day of retribution will arrive for both—a day when ye shall be devoured, living, by flames of fire—when all your sins shall arise before your eyes, and ye shall have no time for repentance—and when ye shall pass from one fierce fire to another yet fiercer, and wholly unquenchable!"

As he concluded, he again dashed her against the wall with such violence that she fell senseless upon the ground.

"And now," he said, turning to Nizza Macascree, who looked on in alarm and surprise, "what can I do for you?"

"Bear this youth to a place of safety," was her answer.

Solomon Eagle answered by lifting up the pallet upon which Leonard was laid, with as much ease as if it had been an infant's cradle, and calling on Nizza to bring the torch, passed with his burden through the secret door. Directing her to close it after them, he took his way alone a narrow stone passage, until he came to a chink in the wall commanding a small chamber, and desired her to look through it. She obeyed, and beheld, stretched upon a couch, the corpse of a man.

"It is Mr. Quatremain, the minor canon," she said, retiring.

"It is," returned Solomon Eagle, "and it will be supposed that he died of the plague. But his end was accelerated by Judith Malmayns."

Without allowing her time for reply, he pursued his course, traversing another long, narrow passage.

"Where are we?" asked Nizza, as they arrived at the foot of a spiral stone staircase.

"Beneath the central tower of the cathedral," replied Solomon Eagle. "I will take you to a cell known only to myself, where this youth will be in perfect safety."

Ascending the staircase, they passed through an arched door, and entered the great northern ambulatory. Nizza gazed down for a moment into the nave, but all was buried in darkness, and no sound reached her to give her an idea that any one was below. Proceeding towards the west, Solomon Eagle arrived at a small recess in the wall opposite one of the broad-arched openings looking into the nave, and entering it, pressed against a spring at the further extremity, and a stone door flying open, discovered a secret cell, on the floor of which his brazier was burning. Depositing his burden on the floor, he said to Nizza, "He is now safe. Go in search of proper assistance, and I will watch by him till you return."

Nizza did not require a second exhortation, but quitting the cell, and noticing its situation, swiftly descended the winding staircase, and hurrying along the northern aisle, proceeded to a small chamber beneath the tower at its western extremity, which she knew was occupied by one of the vergers. Speedily arousing him, she told him her errand, and implored him to remain on the watch till she returned with Doctor Hodges. The verger promised compliance; and, opening a wicket in the great doorway, allowed her to go forth. A few seconds brought her to the doctor's dwelling, and though it was an hour after midnight, her summons was promptly answered by the old porter, who

conveyed her message to his master. Doctor Hodges had just retired to rest; but, on learning in whose behalf his services were required, he sprang out of bed, and hastily slipped on his clothes.

"I would not, for half I am worth, that that poor youth should perish," he cried. "I take a great interest in him—a very great interest. He must not be neglected. How comes he at Saint Paul's, I wonder? But I can obtain information on that point as I go thither. No time must be lost."

Ruminating thus, he swallowed a glass of sack, and providing himself with a case of instruments, and such medicines as he thought he might require, he descended to Nizza. On the way to the cathedral, she acquainted him with what had befallen Leonard during the last four-and-twenty hours, and the only circumstance that she kept back was Judith's attempt on his life. This she intended to reveal at a more fitting opportunity. The doctor expressed somewhat emphatically his disapproval of the conduct of Mr. Bloundel, but promised to set all to rights without loss of time.

"The only difficulty I foresee," he observed, "is that the poor youth is attacked by the pestilence; and though I may succeed in curing him, his master will probably have shut up his house before I can accomplish my object, in which case, all chance of his union with Amabel will be at an end."

"So much the better," rejoined Nizza, sharply; "she does not deserve him."

"There I agree with you," returned Hodges. "But could you point out any one who does?" he added, with a slight but significant laugh.

No answer was returned; and as they had just reached the portico of the cathedral, they entered the sacred structure in silence.

As they ascended the winding stairs, loud outcries resounded along the ambulatory, and echoed by the vaulted roof of the nave, convinced them that the sufferer was again in a state of frenzy, produced by fever and the anguish of his sore; and on reaching the cell they found him struggling violently with Solomon Eagle, who held him down by main force.

"He is in a fearfully excited state, truly," observed Hodges, as he drew near, "and must not be left for a moment, or he will do himself a mischief. I must give him a draught to allay the fever, and compose his nerves—for in this state I dare not have recourse to the lancet."

With this he dressed the tumour; and pouring the contents of a large phial which he had brought with him in a cup, he held it to the burning lips of the apprentice, who eagerly quaffed it. It was soon apparent that the dose produced a salutary effect, and a second was administered. Still the sufferer, though calmer, continued to ramble as before—complained that his veins were filled with molten lead—entreated them to plunge him in a stream, so that he might cool his intolerable thirst, and appeared to be in great agony. Doctor Hodges watched by him till daybreak, at which time he sank into a slumber; and Solomon Eagle, who had never till then relinquished his hold of him, now ventured to resign his post. The doctor was then about to depart; but at the urgent solicitation of Nizza, who had stationed herself at the door of the cell, he agreed to remain a little longer.

Two hours after this, the doors of the cathedral were opened, and a large crowd soon assembled within the nave, as on the preceding day. The tumult of voices reached the cell and awakened the sleeper. Before he could be prevented he started from his bed, and dashing aside the feeble opposition offered by Nizza and the doctor, ran along the ambulatory, uttering a loud and fearful cry. Finding the door of the winding staircase open, he darted through it, and in a few seconds reappeared in the aisle. Hearing the cries, several persons rushed to meet him; but on beholding his haggard looks and strange appearance—he was merely wrapped in a blanket,—they instantly recoiled. Mean-time, Doctor Hodges, who had run to one of the arched openings looking on the nave, called out to them to secure the fugitive. But all fled at his approach; and when he reached the door of the southern transept, the verger, instead of attempting to stop him, retreated with a cry of alarm. As he passed through the outlet, one man bolder than the rest caught hold of him, and endeavoured to detain him. But, leaving the blanket in his hands, and without other covering than his shirt, the apprentice dashed across the churchyard—next shaped his course down Saint Bennet's-hill—then crossed Thames-street,—and finally speeding along another narrow thoroughfare, reached Paul's Wharf. Gazing for a moment at the current sweeping past him—it was high-tide,—he plunged head foremost into it from the high embankment, and on rising to the surface, being a strong and expert swimmer, struck out for the opposite shore. Those who beheld him were filled with amazement; but such was the alarm occasioned by his appearance, that none ventured to interfere with him. He had not crossed more than a fourth part of the stream when Doctor Hodges arrived at the wharf; but neither promises of reward nor threats could induce any of the watermen to follow him. The humane physician would have sprung into a boat, but feeling he should be wholly unable to manage it, he most reluctantly abandoned his purpose. Scarcely doubting what the result of this rash attempt would be, and yet unable to tear himself away, he lingered on the wharf till he saw Leonard reach the opposite bank, where an attempt was made by a party of persons to seize him. But instead of quietly surrendering himself, the apprentice instantly leapt into the river again, and began to swim back towards the point whence he had started.

Amazed at what he saw, the doctor ordered his servant, who by this time had joined the group, to bring a blanket, and descending to the edge of the river, awaited the swimmer's arrival. In less than ten minutes he had reached the shore, and clambering on the bank, fell from exhaustion.

"This is a violent effort of nature, which has accomplished more than science or skill could do," said Hodges, as he gazed on the body, and saw that the pestilential tumour had wholly disappeared—"he is completely cured of the plague."

And throwing the blanket over him, he ordered him to be conveyed to his own house.

Old Saint Paul's Volume II by William Harrison Ainsworth

X.

THE PEST-HOUSE IN FINSBURY FIELDS.

Not a word passed between the grocer and his daughter, as he took her home from Saint Paul's. Amabel, in fact, was so overpowered by conflicting emotions that she could not speak; while her father, who could not help reproaching himself for the harshness he had displayed towards Leonard Holt, felt no disposition to break silence. They found Mrs. Bloundel at the shop-door, drowned in tears, and almost in a state of distraction. On seeing them, she rushed towards her daughter, and straining her to her bosom, gave free vent to the impulses of her affection. Allowing the first transports of joy to subside, Mr. Bloundel begged, her to retire to her own room with Amabel, and not to leave it till they had both regained their composure, when he wished to have some serious conversation with them.

His request complied with, the grocer then retraced his steps to the cathedral with the intention of seeking an explanation from Leonard, and, if he saw occasion to do so, of revoking his severe mandate. But long before he reached the southern transept, the apprentice had disappeared, nor could he learn what had become of him. While anxiously pursuing his search among the crowd, and addressing inquiries to all whom he thought likely to afford him information, he perceived a man pushing his way towards him. As this person drew near, he recognised Pillichody, and would have got out of his way had it been possible.

"You are looking for your apprentice, I understand, Mr. Bloundel," said the bully, raising his hat—"if you desire, it, I will lead you to him."

Unwilling as he was to be obliged to one whom he knew to be leagued with the Earl of Rochester, the grocer's anxiety overcame his scruples, and, signifying his acquiescence, Pillichody shouldered his way through the crowd, and did not stop till they reached the northern aisle, where they were comparatively alone.

"Your apprentice is a fortunate spark, Mr. Bloundel," he said. "No sooner does he lose one mistress than he finds another. Your daughter is already forgotten, and he is at this moment enjoying a tender tête-à-tête in Bishop Kempe's chapel with Nizza Macascree, the blind piper's daughter."

"It is false, sir," replied the grocer, incredulously.

"Unbelieving dog!" cried Pillichody, in a furious tone, and clapping his hand upon his sword, "it is fortunate for you that the disparity of our stations prevents me from compelling you to yield me satisfaction for the insult you have offered me. But I caution you to keep better guard upon your tongue for the future, especially when addressing one who has earned his laurels under King Charles the Martyr."

"I have no especial reverence for the monarch you served under," replied Bloundel; "but he would have blushed to own such a follower."

"You may thank my generosity that I do not crop your ears, base Roundhead," rejoined Pillichody; "but I will convince you that I speak the truth, and if you have any shame in your composition, it will be summoned to your cheeks."

So saying, he proceeded to Bishop Kempe's chapel, the door of which was slightly ajar, and desired the grocer to look through the chink. This occurred at the precise time that the apprentice was seized with sudden faintness, and was leaning for support upon Nizza Macascree's shoulder.

"You see how lovingly they are seated together," observed Pillichody, with a smile of triumph. "Bowers of Paphos! I would I were as near the rich widow of Watling-street. Will you speak with him?"

"No," replied Bloundel, turning away; "I have done with him for ever. I have been greatly deceived."

"True," chuckled Pillichody, as soon as the grocer was out of hearing; "but not by your apprentice, Mr. Bloundel. I will go and inform Parravicin and Rochester that I have discovered the girl. The knight must mind what he is about, or Leonard Holt will prove too much for him. Either I am greatly out, or the apprentice is already master of Nizza's heart."

To return to Amabel. As soon as she was alone with her mother, she threw herself on her knees before her, and, imploring her forgiveness, hastily related all that had occurred.

"But for Leonard Holt," she said, "I should have been duped into a false marriage with the earl, and my peace of mind would have been for ever destroyed. As it is, I shall never be easy till he is restored to my father's favour. To have done wrong myself is reprehensible enough; but that another should suffer for my fault is utterly inexcusable."

"I lament that your father should be deceived," rejoined Mrs. Bloundel, "and I lament still more that Leonard Holt should be so unjustly treated. Nevertheless, we must act with the utmost caution. I know my husband too well to doubt for a moment that he will hesitate to fulfil his threat. And now, my dear child," she continued, "do not the repeated proofs you have received of this wicked nobleman's perfidy, and of Leonard's devotion—do they not, I say, open your eyes to the truth, and show you which of the two really loves you, and merits your regard?"

"I will hide nothing from you, mother," replied Amabel. "In spite of his perfidy, in spite of my conviction of his unworthiness, I still love the Earl of Rochester. Nor can I compel myself to feel any regard, stronger than that of friendship, for Leonard Holt."

"You distress me, sadly, child," cried Mrs. Bloundel. "What will become of you! I wish my husband would shut up his house. That might put an end to the difficulty. I am not half so much afraid of the plague as I am of the Earl of Rochester. But compose yourself, as your father desired, that when he sends for us we may be ready to meet him with cheerfulness."

Mr. Bloundel, however, did not send for them. He remained in the shop all day, except at meal-times, when he said little, and appeared to be labouring under a great weight of anxiety. As Amabel took leave of him for the night, he dismissed her with coldness; and though he bestowed his customary blessing upon her, the look that accompanied it was not such as it used to be.

On the following day things continued in the same state. The grocer was cold and inscrutable, and his wife, fearing he was meditating some severe course against Amabel, and aware of his inflexible nature, if a resolution was once formed, shook off her habitual awe, and thus addressed him:

"I fear you have not forgiven our daughter. Be not too hasty in your judgment. However culpable she may appear, she has been as much deceived as yourself."

"It may be so," replied Bloundel. "Still she has acted with such indiscretion that I can never place confidence in her again, and without confidence affection is as nought. Can I say to him who may seek her in marriage, and whom I may approve as a husband,—'Take her! she has never deceived me, and will never deceive you?' No. She has deceived me, and will, therefore, deceive others. I do not know the precise truth of the story of her abduction (if such it was) by Leonard Holt, neither do I wish to know it, because I might be compelled to act with greater severity than I desire towards her. But I know enough to satisfy me she has been excessively imprudent, and has placed herself voluntarily in situations of the utmost jeopardy."

"Not voluntarily," returned Mrs. Bloundel. "She has been lured into difficulties by others."

"No more!" interrupted the grocer, sternly. "If you wish to serve her, keep guard upon your tongue. If you have any preparations to make, they must not be delayed. I shall shut up my house to-morrow."

"Whether Leonard returns or not?" asked Mrs. Bloundel.

"I shall wait for no one," returned her husband, peremptorily.

They then separated, and Mrs. Bloundel hastened to her daughter to acquaint her with the result of the interview.

In the afternoon of the same day, the grocer, who began to feel extremely uneasy about Leonard, again repaired to Saint Paul's to see whether he could obtain any tidings of him, and learnt, to his great dismay, from one of the vergers, that a young man, answering to the description of the apprentice, had been attacked by the pestilence, and having been taken to the vaults of Saint Faith's, had made his escape from his attendants, and, it was supposed, had perished. Horror-stricken by this intelligence, he descended to the subterranean church, where he met Judith Malmayns and Chowles, who confirmed the verger's statement.

"The poor young man, I am informed," said Chowles, "threw himself into the Thames, and was picked up by a boat, and afterwards conveyed, in a dying state, to the pest-house in Finsbury Fields, where you will probably find him, if he is still alive."

Mr. Bloundel heard no more. Quitting the cathedral, he hastened to Finsbury Fields, and sought out the building to which he had been directed. It was a solitary farm-house, of considerable size, surrounded by an extensive garden, and had only been recently converted to its present melancholy use. Near it was a barn, also fitted up with beds for the sick. On approaching the pest-house, Mr. Bloundel was greatly struck with the contrast presented by its exterior to the misery he knew to be reigning within. Its situation was charming,—in the midst, as has just been stated, of a large and, until recently, well-cultivated garden, and seen under the influence of a bright and genial May day, the whole place looked the picture of healthfulness and comfort. But a closer view speedily dispelled the illusion, and showed that it was the abode of disease and death. Horrid sounds saluted the ears; ghastly figures met the eyes; and the fragrance of the flowers was overpowered by the tainted and noisome atmosphere issuing from the open doors and windows. The grocer had scarcely entered the gate when he was arrested by

an appalling shriek, followed by a succession of cries so horrifying that he felt half disposed to fly. But mustering up his resolution, and breathing at a phial of vinegar, he advanced towards the principal door, which stood wide open, and called to one of the assistants. The man, however, was too busy to attend to him, and while waiting his leisure, he saw no fewer than three corpses carried out to an outbuilding in the yard, where they were left till they could be taken away at night for interment.

Sickened by the sight, and blaming himself for entering near this contagious spot, Mr. Bloundel was about to depart, when a young surgeon stepped out to him, and, in reply to his inquiries after Leonard, said: "Twelve persons were brought in here last night, and five this morning, but I do not remember any of their names. You can go through the rooms and search for your apprentice, if you think proper."

Mr. Bloundel hesitated, but his humanity overcame his apprehension, and murmuring a prayer that he might be preserved from infection, he followed his conductor into the house. Prepared as he was for a dreadful spectacle, the reality far exceeded his anticipations. Along both sides of a large room, occupying nearly the whole of the ground-floor, were rows of pallets, on which were laid the sick, many of whom were tied down to their couches. Almost all seemed in a hopeless state, and the cadaverous hue of their countenances proclaimed that death was not far off. Though the doors and windows were open, and the room was filled with vapours and exhalations, arising from pans of coal and plates of hot iron, on which drugs were burning, nothing could remove the putrid, and pestilential smell that pervaded the chamber. The thick vapour settled on the panes of the windows, and on the roof, and fell to the ground in heavy drops. Marching quickly past each bed, the grocer noted the features of its unfortunate occupant; but though there were many young men, Leonard was not among the number. His conductor then led him to an upper room, where he found the surgeons dressing the sores of their patients, most of whom uttered loud shrieks while under their hands. Here an incident occurred which deeply affected the grocer. A poor young woman, who had been brought to the pest-house with her child on the previous evening, had just expired, and the infant, unable to obtain its customary nourishment, uttered the most piteous cries. It was instantly removed by a nurse and proper food given it; but Mr. Bloundel was informed that the plague-tokens had already appeared, and that it would not probably live over the night. "I have no doubt," said the young surgeon, "it will be buried with its mother." And so it happened.

The grocer turned away to hide his emotion, and endeavoured through his blinded gaze to discover Leonard, but, as will be anticipated, without success. Stunned by the cries and groans that pierced his ears, and almost stifled by the pestilential effluvia, he rushed out of the house, and gladly accepted a glass of sack offered him by his conductor, which removed the dreadful nausea that affected him.

"I now remember that the two last persons brought here were taken to the barn," observed the chirurgeon; "I will go with you thither, if you think proper."

The grocer assented, and the chirurgeon crossed the yard, and opened the door of the barn, on the floor of which upwards of twenty beds were laid. Passing between them, Mr. Bloundel narrowly scrutinized every countenance; but, to his great relief, recognised no one. One couch alone remained to be examined. The poor sufferer within it had drawn the coverings over his face, and when they were removed he was found quite dead! He was a young man; and the agony he had endured in the last struggle was shown by his collapsed frame and distorted features. It was not, however, Leonard; and, so far satisfied, though greatly shocked, Mr. Bloundel hurried out.

"Thank Heaven he is not here!" he exclaimed to his conductor.

"You have not seen the dead bodies in the outhouse," returned the other; "it is possible his may be among them."

"I trust not," rejoined the grocer, shuddering; "but as I have gone thus far, I will not leave my errand unaccomplished. Suffer me to look at them."

The chirurgeon then led the way to a spacious outbuilding, once used for cattle, in the midst of which stood a large frame supporting six bodies, covered only with a sheet. Mr. Bloundel could not overcome his repugnance to enter this shed; but the chirurgeon, who appeared habituated to such scenes, and to regard them lightly, threw off the sheet, and raised the corpses, one by one, that he might the better view them. One peculiarity Mr. Bloundel noticed; namely, that the limbs of these unfortunate victims of the pestilence did not stiffen, as would have been the case if they had died of any other disorder; while the blotches that appeared on the livid flesh made them objects almost too horrible to look upon. In many cases the features were frightfully distorted—the tongues of the poor wretches swollen and protruding—the hands clenched, and the toes bent towards the soles of the feet. Everything denoted the dreadful pangs that must have attended dissolution.

Greatly relieved to find that the whole of this ghastly group were strangers to him, Mr. Bloundel thanked the chirurgeon, and departed. Convinced that he had been deceived by the coffin-maker, he now began to hope that the whole story was false; but he determined not to rest till he had thoroughly investigated the matter. Before doing so, however, he thought it advisable to return home, and accordingly shaped his course toward Cripplegate, and, passing through the postern, stopped at an apothecary's shop, and got his apparel fumigated and sprinkled with spirits of hartshorn and sulphur.

On reaching Wood-street, he noticed, with some uneasiness, a number of persons gathered together before his dwelling. His fears were speedily relieved by finding that the assemblage was collected by a preacher, who was pronouncing an exhortation to them in tones almost as loud and emphatic as those of Solomon Eagle. The preacher's appearance was very remarkable, and attracted the attention of the grocer, who joined the crowd to listen to him. As far as could be judged, he was a middle-aged man, with black hair floating over his shoulders, earnest features, and a grey eye of extraordinary brilliancy. His figure was slight and erect, and his gestures as impassioned as his looks. He spoke with great rapidity; and his eloquence, combined with his fervent manner and expression, completely entranced his audience. He was habited in a cassock and bands, and had taken off his cap, which was held by an attendant, who stood near the stool on which he was mounted. The latter differed materially from his master. His closely-cropped hair, demure looks, sugar-loaf hat, and suit of rusty sable, seemed to proclaim him a Puritan; but his twinkling eye—for he had but one, and wore a black patch over the orifice—his inflamed cheeks, and mulberry nose contradicted the idea.

As soon as the preacher distinguished Mr. Bloundel, he addressed his discourse to him; and, alluding to his religious habits and general excellence of character, held him up as an example to others. The grocer would fain have retreated; but the preacher besought him to stay, and was proceeding in the same strain, when a sudden interruption took place. A slight disturbance occurring amid the crowd, the attendant attempted to check it, and in doing so received a sound buffet on the ears. In endeavouring to return the blow, he struck another party, who instantly retaliated, and a general affray commenced—some taking one side, some the other. In the midst of the confusion three persons forced their way towards the preacher, knocked him from his stool, and, assailing him with the most opprobrious epithets, dealt him several seemingly severe blows, and would have further maltreated him, if Mr. Bloundel had not interposed, and, pushing aside his assailants, gave him his hand, and led him into his dwelling, the door of which he closed. Shortly afterwards, the crowd dispersing, the preacher's companion entered the shop in search of his master.

"I hope you have sustained no injury during this tumult, reverend and dear sir?" he asked, with great apparent solicitude.

"I am not much hurt," replied the preacher; "but I have received a blow on the head, which has stunned me. The faintness will go off presently. You were the cause of this disturbance, Bambolio."

"I, Doctor Maplebury?" replied Bambolio. "I endeavoured to stop it. But your reverence looks extremely ill. I am sure, sir," he added to Mr. Bloundel, "after the high character

my master gave you in his discourse, and which I am persuaded you deserve, you will extend your hospitality towards him."

"Readily," replied the grocer. "Here, Blaize, assist the reverend gentleman within, and bid your mistress come down stairs immediately."

Doctor Maplebury was then conveyed between the porter and Bambolio into the inner room, where he sank into a chair in a complete state of exhaustion. The next moment Mrs. Bloundel made her appearance with Amabel. The latter no sooner beheld the preacher, than she started and trembled so violently, that she could scarcely support herself; but her mother, who only saw a fainting man, flew to his assistance, and called to Patience to bring restoratives. These applied, Doctor Maplebury was soon able to rouse himself sufficiently to gaze round the room, and fix his eyes on Amabel.

"So our old friends are here again," said Patience in a low tone to Blaize, as they left the room together.

"Old friends! What do you mean?" rejoined the porter.

"Why, the Earl of Rochester and Major Pillichody," replied Patience. "I knew them at a glance, and so did Mistress Amabel. But if I hadn't discovered them, the major would soon have let me into the secret by the way in which he squeezed my hand."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Blaize, angrily. "I'll go and acquaint my master with the trick directly."

"Do so," replied Patience, "and the house will be shut up to-morrow. Our only chance of averting that calamity is in the earl."

Old Saint Paul's Volume II by William Harrison Ainsworth

XI

HOW THE GROCER SHUT UP HIS HOUSE

Placed in a warm bed, and carefully tended by the humane physician, Leonard Holt slept tranquilly for some hours, and when he awoke, though so weak as scarcely to be able to lift an arm, he was free from all ailment. Feeling ravenously hungry, he made known his wants; and, provisions being set before him, he was allowed to eat and drink in moderation. Greatly revived by the meal, he arose and attired himself in habiliments provided for him by Hodges, who, finding him fully equal to conversation, questioned him as to all that had occurred prior to his seizure.

"You have acted nobly," observed the doctor, at the close of his recital; "and if Amabel had a spark of generosity in her composition, she would worthily requite you. But I do not expect it. How different is her conduct from that of the piper's pretty daughter. The latter really loves you; and I would advise you as a friend to turn your thoughts to her. She will make you happy: whereas the indulgence of your present hopeless passion—for hopeless it is—can only lead to wretchedness."

"Would I could follow your advice!" replied Leonard; "but, alas! I cannot. Amabel does not love the Earl of Rochester more blindly, more constantly, than I love her; and I could as soon change my nature as transfer my affection to another."

"I am truly sorry for it," rejoined Hodges, in a tone of deep sympathy.

"And you still desire to return to your master?"

"Unquestionably," replied Leonard. "If I am banished the house, I shall wander round it night and day like a ghost."

"I will accompany you there this evening," rejoined Hodges, "and I trust I shall be able to arrange matters without compromising Amabel. I wish I could forward your suit more efficiently; but I see no chance of it, and, to deal plainly with you, I do not think a marriage with her would be for your happiness. The brilliant qualities of your noble rival at present so dazzle her eyes, that your own solid worth is completely overlooked. It will be well if her father can preserve her from ruin."

"The earl shall die by my hand rather than he shall succeed in his infamous purpose," cried Leonard, fiercely.

"No more of this!" exclaimed Hodges. "If you would have me take an interest in you, you will never give utterance to such a sentiment again. Amabel has another guardian, more powerful even than her father—the plague. Ere long the earl, who has a sufficient value for his own safety, will fly the city."

"I hope the pestilence will number him among its victims," observed Leonard, in a sombre tone.

At this juncture the old porter entered the room, and informed his master that the piper's daughter was below, and had called to inquire after the apprentice.

Hodges desired she might be shown upstairs, and the next moment Nizza was ushered into the room. On beholding the improved appearance of Leonard, she could not repress an exclamation of delight, while a deep blush suffused her cheeks.

"You are surprised to find him quite well," observed Hodges, with a smile. "Nay, you may approach him with safety. There is no fear of contagion now."

"Having satisfied myself on that point, I will take my leave," rejoined Nizza, in some confusion.

"Not till you have allowed me to return my thanks, I trust," said Leonard, advancing towards her, and taking her hand. "I owe my life to you."

"Then pay the debt by devoting it to her," rejoined Hodges. "Excuse me for a few minutes. I have business to attend to, but will be back again directly."

Left alone together, the young couple felt so much embarrassment that for some minutes neither could utter a word. At length Nizza, who had suffered her hand to remain in that of Leonard, gently withdrew it.

"Circumstances have given me a claim to your confidence," she faltered, "and you will not misconstrue my motive, when I ask you whether you still retain the same affection as formerly for Amabel?"

"Unfortunately for myself, I do," replied Leonard.

"And unfortunately for me too," sighed Nizza. "Doctor Hodges says he can restore you to your master's favour. You will therefore return home, and we shall meet no more."

"In these precarious times, those who part, though even for a few days, can feel no certainty of meeting again," rejoined Leonard. "But I hope we shall be more fortunate."

"You mistake me," replied Nizza. "Henceforth I shall sedulously avoid you. Till I saw you, I was happy, and indifferent to all else, my affections being centred in my father and in my dog. Now I am restless and miserable. My former pursuits are abandoned, and I think only of you. Despise me if you will after this frank avowal. But believe that I would not have made it if I had not resolved to see you no more."

"Despise you!" echoed Leonard. "On no! I shall ever feel the deepest gratitude towards you; but perhaps it is better we should meet no more."

"And yet you throw yourself in the way of Amabel," cried Nizza. "You have not resolution to fly from the danger which you counsel me to shun."

"It is too true," replied Leonard; "but she is beset by temptations from which I hope to preserve her."

"That excuse will not avail me," returned Nizza, bitterly. "You cannot live without her. But I have said enough—more than enough," she added, correcting herself. "I must now bid you farewell—for ever. May you be happy with Amabel, and may she love you as I love you!"

As she said this she would have rushed out of the room, if she had not been stopped by Doctor Hodges.

"Whither so fast?" he inquired.

"Oh! let me go—let me go, I implore of you!" she cried, bursting into an agony of tears.

"Not till you have composed yourself," rejoined the doctor. "What is the matter? But I need not ask. I wonder Leonard can be insensible to charms like yours, coupled with such devotion. Everything seems to be at cross purposes, and it requires some one more skilled in the affairs of the heart than an old bachelor like myself to set them right. Sit down. I have a few questions of importance to ask you before you depart."

And partly by entreaty, partly by compulsion, he made her take a chair; and as soon as she was sufficiently composed to answer him, questioned her as to what she knew relating to Judith Malmayns and Chowles.

"Mr. Quatremain, the minor canon, has died of the plague in one of the vaults of Saint Faith's," he observed; "and I more than suspect, from the appearance of the body, has not met with fair play."

"Your suspicion is well founded, sir," replied Nizza. "Solomon Eagle told me that the unfortunate man's end was hastened by the plague-nurse. Nor is this her sole crime. She was hired to make away with Leonard Holt in the same manner, and would have accomplished her purpose but for the intervention of Solomon Eagle."

"Neither she nor her partner in guilt, the coffin-maker, shall escape justice this time," replied Hodges. "I will instantly cause her to be arrested, and I trust she will expiate her offences at Tyburn. But to change the subject. I am sincerely interested about you, Nizza, and I wish I could make Leonard as sensible of your merits as I am myself. I still hope a change will take place in his feelings."

"My heart tells me the contrary," replied Nizza. "There is no hope for either of us. Farewell, Leonard!" and she rushed out of the room.

Soon after this Hodges quitted the apprentice, and going before a magistrate, detailed all that had come to his knowledge concerning the criminal practices of Judith Malmayns and Chowles. In the course of the day the accused parties were arrested, and, after a long examination, conveyed to Newgate. Solomon Eagle could not be found, neither could Sir Paul Parravicin. It appeared that Mr. Quatremain's residence had been entered on that very morning, and the box of treasure discovered in Saint Faith's abstracted. But though the strongest suspicion of the robbery attached to Chowles and Judith, it could not be brought home to them.

We shall now proceed to Wood-street, and ascertain what took place there. Refreshments were placed before the supposed Doctor Maplebury by the grocer, while his attendant was sent to the kitchen, and directions given to Blaize to take every care of him; old Josyna was occupied about her own concerns; and Pillichody, perceiving from the porter's manner that his disguise was detected, laid aside concealment altogether, and endeavoured to win the other over to his patron's interests.

"If this marriage takes place," he said, "I am authorized by my noble friend to state that he will appoint you his steward with a large salary, and that will be a very different situation from the one you hold at present. A nobleman's steward! Think of that. You will have a retinue of servants under your control, and will live quite as well as his lordship."

"I have some scruples," hesitated Blaize.

"Scruples! pshaw!" cried Pillichody. "You can have no hesitation in benefiting yourself. If you remain here, the house will be shut up, and you will be kept a close prisoner for

months in the very heart of an infected city, and I dare say will be buried in yonder cellar; whereas, if you go with the Earl of Rochester, you will dwell in a magnificent country mansion—a palace, I ought to call it—enjoy every luxury, and remain there till the plague is over."

"That last reason decides me," replied Blaize. "But I suppose his lordship will provide himself with a medicine chest?"

"He has already got one as large as this table," said Pillichody, "and you shall have the key of it."

"Enough!" exclaimed Blaise. "I am yours."

"Pray, what am I to be?" asked Patience, who had listened to the foregoing conversation with a smile at Blaize's credulity.

"You, sweetheart!" exclaimed Pillichody. "I will take care of you. You shall be my housekeeper."

"Hold!" cried Blaize. "I cannot admit that. Patience and I are engaged."

"Since you are promoted to such an important situation, you can make a better match," observed Patience. "I release you from the engagement."

"I don't choose to be released," returned Blaize; "I will marry you on the same day that the earl weds Amabel."

"That will be to-night, or to-morrow at the latest," said Pillichody. "Consent, sweetheart," he added, in a whisper to Patience; "if we can once get you and your pretty mistress out of the house, we will leave this simpleton fool in the lurch."

"No, I will never consent to such a thing," returned Patience, in the same tone.

"What's that you are saying?" inquired Blaize, suspiciously.

"Major Pillichody says he will marry me, if you won't," returned Patience.

"I have just told you I will," rejoined Blaize. "But he must not continue his attentions. I feel I shall be very jealous."

"I am glad to hear it," returned Patience, bursting into a loud laugh, "for that proves you love me."

"Well," observed Pillichody, "I won't interfere with a friend; and as there is no knowing what may occur, it will be as well to prepare accordingly."

So saying, he fell to work upon the provisions loading the board, and ate and drank as if determined to lay in a stock for the next two days.

Meantime the earl made rapid progress in the good opinion both of Mr. Bloundel and his wife. Adapting his discourse precisely to their views, and exerting his matchless conversational powers to their full extent, he so charmed them that they thought they could listen to him for ever. While thus engaged, he contrived ever and anon to steal a glance at Amabel, and on these occasions, his eyes were quite as eloquent and intelligible as his tongue.

Among other topics interesting to the grocer, the persecution to which his daughter had been recently subjected was brought forward. Mr. Bloundel could not reprobate the earl's conduct more strongly than his guest did; and he assailed himself with such virulence that, in spite of her uneasiness, Amabel could not repress a smile. In short, he so accommodated himself to the grocer's opinion, and so won upon his regard, that the latter offered him an asylum in his house during the continuance of the pestilence. This was eagerly accepted, and the earl, hazarding a look at Amabel at the moment, perceived her change colour and become greatly agitated. Mrs. Bloundel also noticed her confusion, but attributing it to any other than the right cause, begged her, in a low tone, to control herself.

At length, the opportunity for which the earl had been secretly sighing occurred. Mr. Bloundel called his wife out of the room for a moment, and as their eldest son, Stephen, was in the shop, and the two other children upstairs, Amabel was left alone with her lover. The door was no sooner closed than he sprang towards her and threw himself at her feet.

"Shall I avail myself of your father's offer, sweetheart?" he cried. "Shall I remain here with you—the happiest of prisoners—or will you once more accompany me? This time, our marriage shall not be interrupted."

"Perhaps not, my lord," she replied, gravely; "but it will be a mock ceremonial, like the last. Do not attempt to deceive me. I am fully aware of your intentions, and after the awful fate of the wretched instrument of your purposed criminality, you will not readily get another person to tempt in like manner the vengeance of Heaven. I have had a

severe struggle with myself. But at length I have triumphed over my irresolution. I will not disguise from you that I love you still,—and must ever, I fear, continue to love you. But I will not be yours on the terms you propose. Neither will I leave this house with you, nor suffer you to remain in it, in any other than your proper character. On my father's return I will disclose all to him. If your designs are honourable, I am sure he will no longer oppose my union with you. If not, we part for ever."

"Be prudent, sweet girl, I entreat of you," cried the earl imploringly. "Your indiscretion will ruin all. There are a thousand reasons why your father should not be consulted on the matter."

"There are none that weigh with me," she interrupted, decidedly. "I have been bewildered—beside myself,—but, thank Heaven, I have recovered before it is too late."

"You are beside yourself at this moment," cried Rochester, unable to control his anger and mortification, "and will bitterly repent your folly. Neither your supplications nor my rank will have any weight with your father, prejudiced as he is against me. Fly with me, and I swear to make you mine, without a moment's loss of time. Will not my plighted word content you?"

"No, my lord, you have broken it already," returned Amabel. "My father shall know the truth."

A dark shade passed over Rochester's countenance, and a singular and most forbidding expression, which Amabel had once before noticed, took possession of it. His love for her seemed changed to hate, and she tremblingly averted her gaze. At this juncture, the door opened, and the grocer and his wife entered the room. The former started, on seeing Amabel and the supposed preacher in such close propinquity, and a painful suspicion of the truth crossed his mind. He was not, however, kept long in suspense. Throwing off his wig, and letting his own fair ringlets fall over his shoulders, the earl tore open his cassock, and disclosed his ordinary rich attire. At the same time, his face underwent an equally striking change,—each feature resuming its original expression; and the grocer, though he witnessed the whole transformation, could scarcely believe that the same individual he had recently beheld stood before him.

"You now know who I am, Mr. Bloundel, and what brought me hither," said Rochester, with a haughty salutation.

"I do, my lord," replied the grocer, "and I give you full credit for your daring and ingenuity. After the manner in which I have been imposed upon myself, I can make allowance for others." He then turned to Amabel, and said, in a severe tone, "You are no longer my daughter."

"Father!" she cried, rushing towards him and throwing herself at his feet, "do not cast me off for ever. I am not now to blame. It is owing to my determination to disclose all to you that the earl has thus revealed himself. I might have deceived you further—might have fled with him."

"Forgive her! oh, forgive her!" cried Mrs. Bloundel—"or, if any ill happens to her, you will be answerable for it."

"Is this the truth, my lord?" asked the grocer.

Rochester bowed stiffly in acquiescence.

"Then you are again my child," said Bloundel, raising her, and pressing her to his bosom. "What are your intentions towards her?" he continued, addressing the earl.

"They may be readily surmised," replied Rochester, with a scornful laugh.

"Will you wed her, if I agree to the union," asked Bloundel, trembling with concentrated rage.

Amabel looked at her lover as if her life hung on his answer.

Rochester affected not to hear the question, but, as it was repeated still more peremptorily, he repeated carelessly,—"I will consider of it."

"Deceived! deceived!" cried Amabel, falling on her mother's neck, and bursting into tears.

"This outrage shall not pass unpunished," cried Bloundel. And before the earl could draw his sword or offer any resistance, he threw himself upon him, and hurling him to the ground, set his foot upon his bosom.

"Do not kill him," shrieked Amabel, terrified by the stern expression of her father's countenance.

"What are you about to do?" gasped Rochester, struggling ineffectually to get free.

"Bid Stephen bring a cord," cried the grocer.

"You are not going to hang him?" inquired Mrs. Bloundel.

"Do as I bid you," rejoined her husband, "and lose no time."

As she was about to leave the room, the door opened, and Doctor Hodges entered, followed by Leonard and Stephen.

"Mercy on us! what's the matter?" cried the former, in astonishment.

"You are just arrived in time to prevent mischief," replied Mrs. Bloundel. "Pray interfere between them. My husband will attend to you."

"Arise, my lord," said Mr. Bloundel, removing his foot from the prostrate nobleman; "you are sufficiently punished by being found in this disgraceful condition. Remember that your life has been at my disposal."

Thus liberated, Rochester sprang to his feet, and regarding the group with a menacing and disdainful look, walked up to Amabel, and saying to her, "You shall yet be mine," strode out of the room. He then marched along the passage, and called to Pillichody, who instantly answered the summons. Accompanied by Hodges, the grocer followed them to the shop, where the bully not departing so quickly as he desired, and refusing to be more expeditious, he kicked him into the street. This done, and the door fastened, he tarried only till he had received all needful explanations from the friendly physician, and then returning to the inner room, warmly greeted Leonard, and congratulated him on his extraordinary recovery from the plague.

Happiness was thus once more restored to every member of the grocer's family, except Amabel, who still continued downcast and dejected, and entreated permission to retire to her own room. A cheerful evening was then passed by the others, and the doctor did not offer to take his departure till the clock struck eleven.

"It is the last night I shall spend here for some months," he said; "perhaps the last I shall ever spend here, and I have stayed longer than I intended, but I did not like to abridge my enjoyment." After shaking hands cordially with the whole party, he added in an under tone, as he took leave of Leonard, "Do not forget Nizza Macascree."

On the following day the grocer nailed up the shutters, and locked and barred the doors of his house.

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