

OLD SAINT PAUL'S  
VOLUME IV  
BY  
WILLIAM HARRISON  
AINSWORTH

# **Old Saint Paul's Volume IV by William Harrison Ainsworth**

**SEPTEMBER, 1665.**

## **I.**

### **THE PLAGUE AT ITS HEIGHT.**

Amabel's departure for Berkshire caused no change in her father's mode of life. Everything proceeded as before within his quiet dwelling; and, except that the family were diminished in number, all appeared the same. It is true they wanted the interest, and indeed the occupation, afforded them by the gentle invalid, but in other respects, no difference was observable. Devotional exercises, meals, the various duties of the house, and cheerful discourse, filled up the day, which never proved wearisome. The result proved the correctness of Mr. Bloundel's judgment. While the scourge continued weekly to extend its ravages throughout the city, it never crossed his threshold; and, except suffering in a slight degree from scorbutic affections, occasioned by the salt meats to which they were now confined, and for which the lemon and lime-juice, provided against such a contingency, proved an efficacious remedy, all the family enjoyed perfect health. For some weeks after her separation from her daughter, Mrs. Bloundel continued in a desponding state, but after that time she became more reconciled to the deprivation, and partially recovered her spirits. Mr. Bloundel did not dare to indulge a hope that Amabel would ever return; but though he suffered much in secret, he never allowed his grief to manifest itself. The circumstance that he had not received any intelligence of her did not weigh much with him, because the difficulty of communication became greater and greater, as each week the scourge increased in violence, and he was inclined to take no news as good news. It was not so in the present case, but of this he was happily ignorant.

In this way, a month passed on. And now every other consideration was merged in the alarm occasioned by the daily increasing fury of the pestilence. Throughout July the excessive heat of the weather underwent no abatement, but in place of the clear atmosphere that had prevailed during the preceding month, unwholesome blights filled the air, and, confining the pestilential effluvia, spread the contagion far and wide with extraordinary rapidity. Not only was the city suffocated with heat, but filled with noisome smells, arising from the carcasses with which the close alleys and other out-of-the-way places were crowded, and which were so far decomposed as not to be capable of removal. The aspect of the river was as much changed as that of the city. Numbers of bodies were thrown into it, and, floating up with the tide, were left to taint the air on its

banks, while strange, ill-omened fowl, attracted thither by their instinct, preyed upon them. Below the bridge, all captains of ships moored in the Pool, or off Wapping, held as little communication as possible with those on shore, and only received fresh provisions with the greatest precaution. As the plague increased, most of these removed lower down the river, and many of them put out entirely to sea. Above the bridge, most of the wherries and other smaller craft had disappeared, their owners having taken them up the river, and moored them against its banks at different spots, where they lived in them under tilts. Many hundreds of persons remained upon the river in this way during the whole continuance of the visitation.

August had now arrived, but the distemper knew no cessation. On the contrary, it manifestly increased in violence and malignity. The deaths rose a thousand in each week, and in the last week in this fatal month amounted to upwards of sixty thousand!

But, terrible as this was, the pestilence had not yet reached its height. Hopes were entertained that when the weather became cooler, its fury would abate; but these anticipations were fearfully disappointed. The bills of mortality rose the first week in September to seven thousand, and though they slightly decreased during the second week—awakening a momentary hope—on the third they advanced to twelve thousand! In less than ten days, upwards of two thousand persons perished in the parish of Aldgate alone; while Whitechapel suffered equally severely. Out of the hundred parishes in and about the city, one only, that of Saint John the Evangelist in Watling-street, remained uninfected, and this merely because there was scarcely a soul left within it, the greater part of the inhabitants having quitted their houses, and fled into the country.

The deepest despair now seized upon all the survivors. Scarcely a family but had lost half of its number—many, more than half—while those who were left felt assured that their turn would speedily arrive. Even the reckless were appalled, and abandoned their evil courses. Not only were the dead lying in the passages and alleys, but even in the main thoroughfares, and none would remove them. The awful prediction of Solomon Eagle that "grass would grow in the streets, and that the living should not be able to bury the dead," had come to pass. London had become one vast lazaret-house, and seemed in a fair way of becoming a mighty sepulchre.

During all this time, Saint Paul's continued to be used as a pest-house, but it was not so crowded as heretofore, because, as not one in fifty of the infected recovered when placed under medical care, it was not thought worth while to remove them from their own abodes. The number of attendants, too, had diminished. Some had died, but the greater part had abandoned their offices from a fear of sharing the fate of their patients. In consequence of these changes, Judith Malmayns had been advanced to the post of chief nurse at the cathedral. Both she and Chowles had been attacked by the plague, and both

had recovered. Judith attended the coffin-maker, and it was mainly owing to her that he got through the attack. She never left him for a moment, and would never suffer any one to approach him—a necessary precaution, as he was so much alarmed by his situation that he would infallibly have made some awkward revelations. When Judith, in her turn, was seized, Chowles exhibited no such consideration for her, and scarcely affected to conceal his disappointment at her recovery. This want of feeling on his part greatly incensed her against him, and though he contrived in some degree to appease her, it was long before she entirely forgave him. Far from being amended by her sufferings, she seemed to have grown more obdurate, and instantly commenced a fresh career of crime. It was not, however, necessary now to hasten the end of the sick. The distemper had acquired such force and malignity that it did its work quickly enough—often too quickly—and all she sought was to obtain possession of the poor patients' attire, or any valuables they might possess worth appropriating. To turn to the brighter side of the picture, it must not be omitted that when the pestilence was at its height, and no offers could induce the timorous to venture forth, or render assistance to the sufferers, Sir John Lawrence the Lord Mayor, the Duke of Albermarle, the Earl of Craven, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, devoted themselves to the care of the infected, and supplied them with every necessary they required. Among the physicians, no one deserves more honourable mention than Doctor Hodges, who was unremitting in his attentions to the sufferers.

To return to the grocer. While the plague was thus raging around him, and while every house in Wood-street except one or two, from which the inmates had fled, was attacked by the pestilence, he and his family had remained untouched. About the middle of August, he experienced a great alarm. His second son, Hubert, fell sick, and he removed him to one of the upper rooms which he had set aside as an hospital, and attended upon him himself. In a few days, however, his fears were removed and he found, to his great satisfaction, that the youth had not been attacked by the plague, but was only suffering from a slight fever, which quickly yielded to the remedies applied. About the same time, too, he lost his porter, Dallison. The poor fellow did not make his appearance as usual for two days, and intelligence of his fate was brought on the following day by his wife, who came to state that her husband was dead, and had been thrown into the plague-pit at Aldgate. The same night, however, she brought another man, named Allestry, who took the place of the late porter, and acquainted his employer with the deplorable state of the city.

Two days afterwards, Allestry himself died, and Mr. Bloundel had no one to replace him. He thus lost all means of ascertaining what was going forward; but the deathlike stillness around him, broken only by the hoarse tolling of a bell, by a wild shriek or other appalling cry, proclaimed too surely the terrible state of things. Sometimes, too, a passenger would go by, and would tell him the dreadful height to which the bills of

mortality had risen, assuring him that ere another month had expired, not a soul would be left alive in London.

One night, as Solomon Eagle, who had likewise been miraculously preserved, pursued his course through the streets, he paused before Mr. Roundel's house, and looking up at the window, at which the latter had chanced to be stationed, cried in a loud voice, "Be of good cheer. You have served God faithfully, and there shall no evil befall you, neither shall the plague come nigh your dwelling." And raising his arms, as if invoking a blessing upon the habitation, he departed.

It was now the second week in September, and as yet Mr. Bloundel had received no tidings of his daughter. At any other season he would have been seriously uneasy, but now, as has been already stated, all private grief was swallowed up in the horror of the general calamity. Satisfied that she was in a healthful situation, and that her chance of preservation from the pestilence was better than that of any other member of his family, he turned his thoughts entirely to them. Redoubling his precautions, he tried by every means to keep up the failing spirits of his household, and but rarely ventured to open his shutter, and look forth on the external world.

On the tenth of September, which was afterwards accounted the most fatal day of this fatal month, a young man of a very dejected appearance, and wearing the traces of severe suffering in his countenance, entered the west end of London, and took his way slowly towards the city. He had passed Saint Giles's without seeing a single living creature, or the sign of one in any of the houses. The broad thoroughfare was completely grown over with grass, and the habitations had the most melancholy and deserted air imaginable. Some doors and windows were wide open, discovering rooms with goods and furniture scattered about, having been left in this state by their inmates; but most part of them were closely fastened up.

As he proceeded along Holborn, the ravages of the scourge were yet more apparent. Every house, on either side of the way, had a red cross, with the fatal inscription above it, upon the door. Here and there, a watchman might be seen, looking more like a phantom than a living thing. Formerly, the dead were conveyed away at night, but now the carts went about in the daytime. On reaching Saint Andrew's, Holborn, several persons were seen wheeling hand-barrows filled with corpses, scarcely covered with clothing, and revealing the blue and white stripes of the pestilence, towards a cart which was standing near the church gates. The driver of the vehicle, a tall, cadaverous-looking man, was ringing his bell, and jesting with another person, whom the young man recognised, with a shudder, as Chowles. The coffin-maker also recognised him at the same moment, and called to him, but the other paid no attention to the summons and passed on.

Crossing Holborn Bridge, he toiled faintly up the opposite hill, for he was evidently suffering from extreme debility, and on gaining the summit was obliged to support himself against a wall for a few minutes, before he could proceed. The same frightful evidences of the ravages of the pestilence were observable here, as elsewhere. The houses were all marked with the fatal cross, and shut up. Another dead-cart was heard rumbling along, accompanied by the harsh cries of the driver, and the doleful ringing of the bell. The next moment the loathly vehicle was seen coming along the Old Bailey. It paused before a house, from which four bodies were brought, and then passed on towards Smithfield. Watching its progress with fearful curiosity, the young man noted how often it paused to increase its load. His thoughts, coloured by the scene, were of the saddest and dreariest complexion. All around wore the aspect of death. The few figures in sight seemed staggering towards the grave, and the houses appeared to be plague-stricken like the inhabitants. The heat was intolerably oppressive, and the air tainted with noisome exhalations. Ever and anon, a window would be opened, and a ghastly face thrust from it, while a piercing shriek, or lamentable cry, was uttered. No business seemed going on—there were no passengers—no vehicles in the streets. The mighty city was completely laid prostrate.

After a short rest, the young man shaped his course towards Saint Paul's, and on reaching its western precincts, gazed for some time at the reverend structure, as if its contemplation called up many and painful recollections. Tears started to his eyes, and he was about to turn away, when he perceived the figure of Solomon Eagle stationed near the cross at the western extremity of the roof. The enthusiast caught sight of him at the same moment, and motioned him to come nearer. "What has happened?" he demanded, as the other approached the steps of the portico.

The young man shook his head mournfully. "It is a sad tale," he said, "and cannot be told now."

"I can conjecture what it is," replied Solomon Eagle. "But come to the small door near the northern entrance of the cathedral at midnight. I will meet you there."

"I will not fail," replied the young man.

"One of the terrible judgments which I predicted would befall this devoted city has come to pass," cried Solomon Eagle. "Another yet remains—the judgment by fire—and if its surviving inhabitants repent not, of which there is as yet no sign, it will assuredly follow."

"Heaven avert it!" groaned the other, turning away.

Proceeding along Cheapside, he entered Wood-street, and took his way towards the grocer's dwelling. When at a little distance from it, he paused, and some minutes elapsed before he could muster strength to go forward. Here, as elsewhere, there were abundant indications of the havoc occasioned by the fell disease. Not far from the grocer's shop, and in the middle of the street, lay the body of a man, with the face turned upwards, while crouching in an angle of the wall sat a young woman watching it. As the young man drew nearer, he recognised in the dead man the principal of the Brotherhood of Saint Michael, and in the poor mourner one of his profligate female associates. "What has become of your unhappy companions?" he demanded of the woman.

"The last of them lies there," she rejoined mournfully. "All the rest died long ago. My lover was true to his vow; and instead of deploring their fate, lived with me and three other women in mirth and revelry till yesterday, when the three women died, and he fell sick. He did not, however, give in, but continued carousing until an hour before his death."

Too much shocked to make any reply, the young man proceeded towards the hutch. Beneath a doorway, at a little distance from it, sat a watchman with a halberd on his shoulder, guarding the house; but it was evident he would be of little further use. His face was covered with his hands, and his groans proclaimed that he himself was attacked by the pestilence. Entering the hutch, the young man pulled the cord of the bell, and the summons was soon after answered by the grocer, who appeared at the window. "What, Leonard Holt!" he exclaimed, in surprise, on seeing the young man—"is it you?—what ails you?—you look frightfully ill."

"I have been attacked a second time by the plague," replied the apprentice, "and am only just recovered from it."

"What of my child?" cried the grocer eagerly—"what of her?"

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed the apprentice.

"Do not keep me in suspense," rejoined the grocer. "Is she dead?"

"No, not dead," replied the apprentice, "but—"

"But what?" ejaculated the grocer. "In Heaven's name, speak!"

"These letters will tell you all," replied the apprentice, producing a packet. "I had prepared them to send to you in case of my death. I am not equal to further explanation now."

With trembling eagerness the grocer lowered the rope, and Leonard having tied the packet to it, it was instantly drawn up. Notwithstanding his anxiety to ascertain the fate of Amabel, Mr. Bloundel would not touch the packet until he had guarded against the possibility of being infected by it. Seizing it with a pair of tongs, he plunged it into a pan containing a strong solution of vinegar and sulphur, which he had always in readiness in the chamber, and when thoroughly saturated, laid it in the sun to dry. On first opening the shutter to answer Leonard's summons, he had flashed off a pistol, and he now thought to expel the external air by setting fire to a ball composed of quick brimstone, saltpetre, and yellow amber, which being placed on an iron plate, speedily filled the room with a thick vapour, and prevented the entrance of any obnoxious particles. These precautions taken, he again addressed himself, while the packet was drying, to Leonard, whom he found gazing anxiously at the window, and informed him that all his family had hitherto escaped contagion.

"A special providence must have watched over you, sir," replied the apprentice, "and I believe yours is the only family in the whole city that has been so spared. I have reason to be grateful for my own extraordinary preservation, and yet I would rather it had pleased Heaven to take me away than leave me to my present misery."

"You keep me in a frightful state of suspense, Leonard," rejoined the grocer, regarding the packet wistfully, "for I dare not open your letters till they are thoroughly fumigated. You assure me my child is living. Has she been attacked by the plague?"

"Would she had!" groaned Leonard.

"Is she still at Ashdown?" pursued the grocer. "Ah! you shake your head. I see!—I must be beside myself not to have thought of it before. She is in the power of the Earl of Rochester."

"She is," cried Leonard, catching at the angle of the shed for support.

"And I am here!" exclaimed Mr. Bloundel, forgetting his caution, and thrusting himself far out of the window, as if with the intention of letting himself down by the rope—"I am here, when I ought to be near her!"

"Calm yourself, I beseech you, sir," cried Leonard; "a moment's rashness will undo all you have done."



"True!" replied the grocer, checking himself. "I must think of others as well as of her. But where is she? Hide nothing from me."

"I have reason to believe she is in London," replied the apprentice. "I traced her hither, and should not have desisted from my search if I had not been checked by the plague, which attacked me on the night of my arrival. I was taken to the pesthouse near Westbourne Green, where I have been for the last three weeks."

"If she was brought to London, as you state," rejoined the grocer, "I cannot doubt but she has fallen a victim to the scourge."

"It may be," replied Leonard, moodily, "and I would almost hope it is so. When you peruse my letters, you will learn that she was carried off by the earl from the residence of a lady at Kingston Lisle, whither she had been removed for safety; and after being taken from place to place, was at last conveyed to an old hall in the neighbourhood of Oxford, where she was concealed for nearly a month."

"Answer me, Leonard," cried the grocer, "and do not attempt to deceive me. Has she preserved her honour?"

"Up to the time of quitting Oxford she had preserved it," replied the apprentice. "She herself assured me she had resisted all the earl's importunities, and would die rather than yield to him. But I will tell you how I obtained an interview with her. After a long search, I discovered the place of her concealment, the old hall I have just mentioned, and climbed in the night, and at the hazard of my life, to the window of the chamber where she was confined. I saw and spoke with her; and having arranged a plan by which I hoped to accomplish her deliverance on the following night, descended. Whether our brief conference was overheard, and communicated to the earl, I know not; but it would seem so, for he secretly departed with her the next morning, taking the road, as I subsequently learnt, to London. I instantly started in pursuit, and had reached Paddington, when I fell ill, as I have related."

"What you tell me in some measure eases my mind," replied Mr. Bloundel, after a pause; "for I feel that my daughter, if alive, will be able to resist her persecutor. What has become of your companions?"

"Nizza Macascree has met with the same fate as Amabel," replied Leonard. "She was unfortunate enough to attract the king's attention, when he visited Ashdown Lodge in company of the Earl of Rochester, and was conveyed to Oxford, where the court is now held, and must speedily have fallen a victim to her royal lover if she had not

disappeared, having been carried off, it was supposed, by Sir Paul Parravicin. But the villain was frustrated in his infamous design. The king's suspicion falling upon him, he was instantly arrested; and though he denied all knowledge of Nizza's retreat, and was afterwards liberated, his movements were so strictly watched, that he had no opportunity of visiting her."

"You do not mention Blaize," said Mr. Bloundel. "No ill, I trust, has befallen him?"

"I grieve to say he has been attacked by the distemper he so much dreaded," replied Leonard. "He accompanied me to London, but quitted me when I fell sick, and took refuge with a farmer named Wingfield, residing near Kensal Green. I accidentally met Wingfield this morning, and he informed me that Blaize was taken ill the day before yesterday, and removed to the pest-house in Finsbury Fields. I will go thither presently, and see what has become of him. Is Doctor Hodges still among the living?"

"I trust so," replied Mr. Bloundel, "though I have not seen him for the last ten days."

He then disappeared for a few minutes, and on his return lowered a small basket containing a flask of canary, a loaf which he himself had baked, and a piece of cold boiled beef. The apprentice thankfully received the provisions, and retiring to the hutch, began to discuss them, fortifying himself with a copious draught of canary. Having concluded his repast, he issued forth, and acquainting Mr. Bloundel, who had at length ventured to commence reading the contents of the packet by the aid of powerful glasses, that he was about to proceed to Dr. Hodges's residence, to inquire after him, set off in that direction.

Arrived in Great Knightrider-street, he was greatly shocked at finding the door of the doctor's habitation fastened, nor could he make any one hear, though he knocked loudly and repeatedly against it. The shutters of the lower windows were closed, and the place looked completely deserted. All the adjoining houses were shut up, and not a living being could be discerned in the street from whom information could be obtained relative to the physician. Here, as elsewhere, the pavement was overgrown with grass, and the very houses had a strange and melancholy look, as if sharing in the general desolation. On looking down a narrow street leading to the river, Leonard perceived a flock of poultry scratching among the staves in search of food, and instinctively calling them, they flew towards him, as if delighted at the unwonted sound of a human voice. These, and a half-starved cat, were the only things living that he could perceive. At the further end of the street he caught sight of the river, speeding in its course towards the bridge, and scarcely knowing whither he was going, sauntered to its edge. The tide had just turned, and the stream was sparkling in the sunshine, but no craft could be discovered upon its bosom; and except a few barges moored to its sides, all vestiges of

the numberless vessels with which it was once crowded were gone. Its quays were completely deserted. Boxes and bales of goods lay untouched on the wharves; the cheering cries with which the workmen formerly animated their labour were hushed. There was no sound of creaking cords, no rattle of heavy chains—none of the busy hum ordinarily attending the discharge of freight from a vessel, or the packing of goods and stores on board. All traffic was at an end; and this scene, usually one of the liveliest possible, was now forlorn and desolate. On the opposite shore of the river it appeared to be the same—indeed, the borough of Southwark was now suffering the utmost rigour of the scourge, and except for the rows of houses on its banks, and the noble bridge by which it was spanned, the Thames appeared as undisturbed as it must have been before the great city was built upon its banks.

The apprentice viewed this scene with a singular kind of interest. He had become so accustomed to melancholy sights, that his feelings had lost their acuteness, and the contemplation of the deserted buildings and neglected wharves around him harmonized with his own gloomy thoughts. Pursuing his walk along the side of the river, he was checked by a horrible smell, and looking downward, he perceived a carcass in the last stage of decomposition lying in the mud. It had been washed ashore by the tide, and a large bird of prey was contending for the possession of it with a legion of water-rats. Sickened by the sight, he turned up a narrow thoroughfare near Baynard's Castle, and crossing Thames-street, was about to ascend Addle-hill, when he perceived a man wheeling a hand-barrow, containing a couple of corpses, in the direction of the river, with the intention, doubtless, of throwing them into it, as the readiest means of disposing of them. Both bodies were stripped of their clothing, and the blue tint of the nails, as well as the blotches with which they were covered, left no doubt as to the disease of which they had died. Averting his gaze from the spectacle, Leonard turned off on the right along Carter-lane, and threading a short passage, approached the southern boundary of the cathedral; and proceeding towards the great door opposite him, passed through it. The mighty lazaret was less crowded than he expected to find it, but its terrible condition far exceeded his worst conceptions. Not more than half the pallets were occupied; but as the sick were in a great measure left to themselves, the utmost disorder prevailed. A troop of lazars, with sheets folded around them, glided, like phantoms, along Paul's Walk, and mimicked in a ghastly manner the air and deportment of the gallants who had formerly thronged the place. No attempt being made to maintain silence, the noise was perfectly stunning; some of the sick were shrieking—some laughing in a wild unearthly manner—some praying—some uttering loud execrations—others groaning and lamenting. The holy building seemed to have become the abode of evil and tormented spirits. Many dead were lying in the beds—the few attendants who were present not caring to remove them; and Leonard had little doubt, that before another sun went down the whole of the ghastly assemblage before him would share their fate. If the habitations he had recently gazed upon had appeared

plague-stricken, the sacred structure in which he was now standing seemed yet more horribly contaminated. Ill-kept and ill-ventilated, the air was loaded with noxious effluvia, while the various abominations that met the eye at every turn would have been sufficient to produce the distemper in any one who had come in contact with them. They were, however, utterly disregarded by the miserable sufferers and their attendants. The magnificent painted windows were dimmed by a thick clammy steam, which could scarcely be washed off—while the carved oak screens, the sculptured tombs, the pillars, the walls, and the flagged floors were covered with impurities.

Satisfied with a brief survey of this frightful scene, Leonard turned to depart, and was passing the entrance to Saint Faith's, which stood open, when he caught sight of Judith standing at the foot of the broad stone steps, and holding a lamp in her hand. She was conversing with a tall richly-dressed man, whose features he fancied he had seen before, though he could not at the moment call them to mind. After a brief conversation, they moved off into the depths of the vault, and he lost sight of them. All at once it occurred to Leonard that Judith's companion was the unfortunate stranger whose child he had interred, and who had been so strangely affected at the sight of Nizza Macascree. Determined to ascertain the point, he hurried down the steps and plunged into the vault. It was buried in profound darkness, and he had not proceeded far when he stumbled over something lying in his path, and found from the groan that followed that it was a plague-patient. Before he could regain his feet, the unfortunate sufferer whom he had thus disturbed implored him, in piteous accents, which, with a shudder, he recognised as those of Blaize, to remove him. Leonard immediately gave the poor porter to understand that he was near him, and would render him every aid in his power.

"Your assistance comes too late, Leonard," groaned Blaize—"it's all over with me now, but I don't like to breathe my last in this dismal vault, without medicine or food, both of which I am denied by that infernal hag Mother Malmayns, who calls herself a nurse, but who is in reality a robber and murderess. Oh! the frightful scenes I have witnessed since I have been brought here! I told you I should not escape the plague. I shall die of it—I am sure I shall."

"I thought you were at the pest-house in Finsbury Fields," said Leonard.

"I was taken there," replied Blaize; "but the place was full, and they would not admit me, so I was sent to Saint Paul's, where there was plenty of room. Yesterday I did pretty well, for I was in the great ward above, and one of the attendants obeyed my directions implicitly, and I am certain if they had been fully carried out, I should have got well. I will tell you what I did. As soon as I was placed on a pallet, and covered with blankets, I ordered a drink to be prepared of the inner bark of an ash-tree, green walnuts, scabious vervain, and saffron, boiled in two quarts of the strongest vinegar. Of this mixture I

drank plentifully, and it soon produced a plentiful perspiration. I next had a hen—a live one, of course—stripped of the feathers, and brought to me. Its bill was held to the large blotch under my arm, and kept there till the fowl died from the noxious matter it drew forth. I next repeated the experiment with a pigeon, and derived the greatest benefit from it. The tumour had nearly subsided, and if I had been properly treated afterwards, I should now be in a fair way of recovery. But instead of nice strengthening chicken-broth, flavoured with succory and marigolds; or water-gruel, mixed with rosemary and winter-savory; or a panado, seasoned with verjuice or wood-sorrel; instead of swallowing large draughts of warm beer; or water boiled with carduus seeds; or a posset drink, made with sorrel, bugloss, and borage;—instead of these remedies, or any other, I was carried to this horrible place when I was asleep, and strapped to my pallet, as you perceive. Unloose me, if you can do nothing else."

"That I will readily do," replied Leonard; "but I must first procure a light." With this, he groped his way among the close ranks of ponderous pillars, but though he proceeded with the utmost caution, he could not avoid coming in contact with the beds of some of the other patients, and disturbing them. At length he descried a glimmer of light issuing from a door which he knew to be that of the vestry, and which was standing slightly ajar. Opening it, he perceived a lamp burning on the table, and without stopping to look around him, seized it, and hurried back to the porter. Poor Blaize presented a lamentable, and yet grotesque appearance. His plump person was greatly reduced in bulk, and his round cheeks had become hollow and cadaverous. He was strapped, as he had stated, to the pallet, which in its turn was fastened to the adjoining pillar. A blanket was tightly swathed around him, and a large cloth was bound round his head in lieu of a nightcap. Leonard instantly set about releasing him, and had just unfastened the straps when he heard footsteps approaching, and looking up, perceived the stranger and Judith Malmayns advancing towards him.

## **Old Saint Paul's Volume IV by William Harrison Ainsworth**

### **II.**

#### **THE SECOND PLAGUE-PIT.**

Judith, being a little in advance of her companion, took Leonard in the first instance for a surgeon's assistant, and called to him, in a harsh and menacing voice, to let her charge alone. On drawing near, however, she perceived her mistake, and recognising the apprentice, halted with a disconcerted look. By this time, the stranger had come up, and remarking her embarrassment, inquired the cause of it.

"Look there," cried Judith, pointing towards the apprentice. "Yonder stands the very man you seek."

"What! Leonard Holt," cried the other, in astonishment.

"Ay, Leonard Holt," rejoined Judith. "You can now put any questions to him you think proper."

The stranger did not require the suggestion to be repeated, but instantly hastened to the apprentice. "Do you remember me?" he asked.

Leonard answered in the affirmative. "I owe you a large debt of obligation," continued the stranger, "and you shall not find me slow in paying it. But let it pass for the moment. Do you know aught of Nizza Macascree? I know she was taken to Oxford by the king, and subsequently disappeared."

"Then you know as much as I do of her, sir," rejoined Leonard.

"I was right, you see, Mr. Thirlby," interposed Judith, with a malicious grin. "I told you this youth would be utterly ignorant of her retreat."

"My firm conviction is, that she is in the power of Sir Paul Parravicin," observed Leonard. "But it is impossible to say where she is concealed."

"Then my last hope of finding her has fallen to the ground," replied Thirlby, with a look of great distress. "Ever since my recovery from the plague, I have been in search of her. I traced her from Ashdown Park to Oxford, but she was gone before my arrival at the

latter place; and though I made every possible inquiry after her, and kept strict and secret watch upon the villain whom I suspected, as you do, of carrying her off, I could gain no clue to her retreat. Having ascertained, however, that you were seen in the neighbourhood of Oxford about the time of her disappearance, I had persuaded myself you must have aided her escape. But now," he added, with a groan, "I find I was mistaken."

"You were so," replied Leonard, mournfully; "I was in search of my master's daughter, Amabel, who was carried off at the same time by the Earl of Rochester, and my anxiety about her made me neglectful of Nizza."

"I am not ignorant of your devoted attachment to her," remarked the stranger.

"You will never find Amabel again," observed Judith, bitterly.

"What mean you woman?" asked Leonard.

"I mean what I say," rejoined Judith. "I repeat, you will never see her again."

"You would not speak thus positively without some motive," returned Leonard, seizing her arm. "Where is she? What has happened to her?"

"That you shall never learn from me," returned Judith, with a triumphant glance.

"Speak, or I will force you to do so," cried Leonard, furiously.

"Force me!" cried Judith, laughing derisively; "you know not whom you threaten."

"But I do," interposed Thirlby. "This young man shall have an answer to this question," he continued, addressing her in an authoritative tone. "Do you know anything of the girl?"

"No," replied Judith; "I was merely jesting with him."

"Shame on you, to trifle with his feelings thus," rejoined Thirlby.

"Step with me this way, young man, I wish to speak with you."

"Do not leave me here, Leonard," cried Blaize, "or I shall die before you come back."

"I have no intention of leaving you," rejoined Leonard. "Are you aware whether Doctor Hodges is still alive, sir?" he added to Thirlby. "I have just been to his residence in Great Knight-rider-street, and found it shut up."

"He has removed to Watling-street," replied the other; "but I have not seen him since my return to London. If you wish it, I will go to his house at once, and send him to look after your poor friend."

Leonard was about to return thanks for the offer, when the design was frustrated by Blaize himself, who was so terrified by Judith's looks, that he could pay no attention to what was going forward; and fearing, notwithstanding Leonard's assurance to the contrary, that he should be left behind, he started to his feet, and wrapping the blanket about him, ran up the steps leading to the cathedral. Leonard and Thirlby followed, and seeing him dart into the southern aisle, would have pursued him along it, but were afraid of coming in contact with the many sick persons by whom it was thronged. They contented themselves, therefore, with watching his course, and were not a little surprised and alarmed to find the whole troop of lazars set off after him, making the sacred walls ring with their cries. Frightened by the clamour, Blaize redoubled his speed, and, with this ghastly train at his heels, crossed the lower part of the mid-aisle, and darting through the pillars, took refuge within Bishop Kempe's Chapel, the door of which stood open, and which he instantly closed after him. Judith, who had followed the party from the subterranean church, laughed heartily at the chase of the poor porter, and uttered an exclamation of regret at its sudden conclusion. Leonard, however, being apprehensive of mischief from the crowd of sick persons collected before the door, some of whom were knocking against it and trying to force it open, addressed himself to a couple of the attendants, and prevailed on them to accompany him to the chapel. The assemblage was speedily dispersed, and Blaize hearing Leonard's voice, instantly opened the door and admitted him; and, as soon as his fears were allayed, he was placed on a pallet within the chapel, and wrapped up in blankets, while such remedies as were deemed proper were administered to him. Committing him to the care of the attendants, and promising to reward them well for their trouble, Leonard told Blaize he should go and bring Doctor Hodges to him. Accordingly, he departed, and finding Thirlby waiting for him at the south door, they went forth together.

"I am almost afraid of leaving the poor fellow," said Leonard, hesitating as he was about to descend the steps. "Judith Malmayns is so cunning and unscrupulous, that she may find some means of doing him an injury."

"Have no fear," replied Thirlby; "she has promised me not to molest him further."

"You appear to have a strange influence over her, then," observed Leonard. "May I ask how you have attained it?"

"No matter," replied the other. "It must suffice that I am willing to exercise it in your behalf."



"And you are not disposed to tell me the nature of the interest you feel in Nizza Macascree?" pursued Leonard.

"Not as yet," replied Thirlby, with a look and tone calculated to put a stop to further inquiries.

Passing through Saint Austin's Gate, they approached Watling-street, at the corner of which stood the house where Doctor Hodges had taken up his temporary abode, that he might visit the sick in the cathedral with greater convenience, and be more readily summoned whenever his attendance might be required. Thirlby's knock at the door was answered, to Leonard's great satisfaction, by the old porter, who was equally delighted to see him.

It did not escape Leonard that the porter treated the stranger with great respect, and he inferred from this that he was a person of some consideration, as indeed his deportment bespoke him. The old man informed them that his master had been summoned on a case of urgency early in the morning, and had not yet returned, neither was he aware whither he was gone. He promised, however, to acquaint him with Blaize's condition immediately on his return—"and I need not assure you," he added to Leonard, "that he will instantly go to him." Thirlby then inquired of the porter whether Mike Macascree, the blind piper, was still at Dame Lucas's cottage, in Finsbury Fields, and was answered in the affirmative by the old man, who added, however, in a voice of much emotion, that the good dame herself was no more.

"She died about a fortnight ago of the plague," he said, "and is buried where she desired to be, beneath an old apple-tree in her garden."

"Alas!" exclaimed Leonard, brushing away a tear, "her own foreboding is too truly realised."

"I am about to visit the old piper," observed Thirlby to the apprentice.

"Will you go with me?"

The other readily acquiesced, only stipulating that they should call in Wood-street on the way, that he might inquire whether his master wanted him. Thirlby agreeing to this, and the old porter repeating his assurance that Leonard might make himself quite easy as to Blaize, for he would send his master to him the instant he returned, they set out. On reaching Wood-street the apprentice gave the customary signal, and the grocer answering it, he informed him of his unexpected meeting with Blaize, and of the state in which he had left him. Mr. Bloundel was much distressed by the intelligence, and telling Leonard that he should not require him again that night, besought him to observe the utmost caution. This the apprentice promised, and joining Thirlby, who had walked

forward to a little distance, they struck into a narrow street on the right, and proceeding along Aldermanbury, soon arrived at the first postern in the city walls beyond Cripplegate.

Hitherto, Thirlby had maintained a profound silence, and appeared lost in melancholy reflection. Except now and then casting a commiserating glance at the wretched objects they encountered on the road, he kept his eyes steadily fixed upon the ground, and walked at a brisk pace, as if desirous of getting out of the city as quickly as possible. Notwithstanding his weakness, Leonard managed to keep up with him, and his curiosity being greatly aroused by what had just occurred, he began to study his appearance and features attentively. Thirlby was full six feet in height, and possessed a powerful and well-proportioned figure, and would have been considered extremely handsome but for a certain sinister expression about the eyes, which were large and dark, but lighted by a fierce and peculiar fire. His complexion was dark, and his countenance still bore the impress of the dreadful disease from which he had recently recovered. A gloomy shade sat about his brow, and it seemed to Leonard as if he had been led by his passions into the commission of crimes of which he had afterwards bitterly repented. His deportment was proud and commanding, and though he exhibited no haughtiness towards the apprentice, but, on the contrary, treated him with great familiarity, it was plain he did so merely from a sense of gratitude. His age was under forty, and his habiliments were rich, though of a sombre colour.

Passing through the postern, which stood wide open, the watchman having disappeared, they entered a narrow lane, skirted by a few detached houses, all of which were shut up, and marked by the fatal cross. As they passed one of these habitations, they were arrested by loud and continued shrieks of the most heart-rending nature, and questioning a watchman who stood at an adjoining door, as to the cause of them, he said they proceeded from a poor lady who had just lost the last of her family by the plague.

"Her husband and all her children, except one daughter, died last week," said the man, "and though she seemed deeply afflicted, yet she bore her loss with resignation. Yesterday, her daughter was taken ill, and she died about two hours ago, since when the poor mother has done nothing but shriek in the way you hear. Poor soul! she will die of grief, as many have done before her at this awful time."

"Something must be done to pacify her," returned Thirlby, in a voice of much emotion,— "she must be removed from her child."

"Where can she be removed to?" rejoined the watchman. "Who will receive her?"

"At all events, we can remove the object that occasions her affliction," rejoined Thirlby. "My heart bleeds for her. I never heard shrieks so dreadful."

"The dead-cart will pass by in an hour," said the watchman; "and then the body can be taken away."

"An hour will be too late," rejoined Thirlby. "If she continues in this frantic state, she will be dead before that time. You have a hand-barrow there. Take the body to the plague-pit at once, and I will reward you for your trouble."

"We shall find some difficulty in getting into the house," said the watchman, who evidently felt some repugnance to the task.

"Not so," replied Thirlby. And pushing forcibly against the door, he burst it open, and, directed by the cries, entered a room on the right. The watchman's statement proved correct. Stretched upon a bed in one corner lay the body of a beautiful girl, while the poor mother was bending over it in a state bordering on distraction. On seeing Thirlby, she fled to the further end of the room, but did not desist from her cries. In fact, she was unable to do so, being under the dominion of the wildest hysterical passion. In vain Thirlby endeavoured to make her comprehend by signs the nature of his errand. Waving him off, she continued shrieking more loudly than ever. Half-stunned by the cries, and greatly agitated by the sight of the child, whose appearance reminded him of his own daughter, Thirlby motioned the watchman, who had followed him into the room, to bring away the body, and rushed forth. His injunctions were obeyed. The remains of the unfortunate girl were wrapped in a sheet, and deposited in the hand-barrow. The miserable mother followed the watchman to the door, but did not attempt to interfere with him, and having seen the body of her child disposed of in the manner above described, turned back. The next moment, a heavy sound proclaimed that she had fallen to the ground, and her shrieks were hushed. Thirlby and Leonard exchanged sad and significant looks, but neither of them went back to see what had happened to her. The watchman shook his head, and setting the barrow in motion, proceeded along a narrow footpath across the fields. Remarking that he did not take the direct road to the plague-pit, Leonard called to him, and pointed out the corner in which it lay.

"I know where the old plague-pit is, as well as you," replied the watchman, "but it has been filled these three weeks. The new pit lies in this direction." So saying, he pursued his course, and they presently entered a field, in the middle of which lay the plague-pit, as was evident from the immense mound of clay thrown out of the excavation.

"That pit is neither so deep nor so wide as the old one," said the watchman, "and if the plague goes on at this rate, they will soon have to dig another—that is, if any one should be left alive to undertake the job."

And chuckling as if he had said a good thing, he impelled his barrow forward more quickly. A few seconds brought them near the horrible chasm. It was more than half full, and in all respects resembled the other pit, except that it was somewhat smaller. There was the same heaving and putrefying mass,—the same ghastly objects of every kind,—the grey-headed old man, the dark-haired maiden, the tender infant,—all huddled together. Wheeling the barrow to the edge of the pit, the watchman cast his load into it; and without even tarrying to throw a handful of soil over it, turned back, and rejoined Thirlby, who had halted at some distance from the excavation. While the latter was searching for his purse to reward the watchman, they heard wild shrieks in the adjoining field, and the next moment perceived the wretched mother running towards them. Guessing her purpose from his former experience, Leonard called to the others to stop her, and stretching out his arms, placed himself in her path. But all their efforts were in vain. She darted past them, and though Leonard caught hold of her, she broke from him, and leaving a fragment of her dress in his grasp, flung herself into the chasm.

Well knowing that all help was vain, Thirlby placed a few pieces of money in the watchman's hand, and hurried away. He was followed by Leonard, who was equally eager to quit the spot. It so chanced that the path they had taken led them near the site of the old plague-pit, and Leonard pointed it out to his companion. The latter stopped for a moment, and then, without saying a word, ran quickly towards it. On reaching the spot, they found that the pit was completely filled up. The vast cake of clay with which it was covered had swollen and cracked in an extraordinary manner, and emitted such a horrible effluvium that they both instantly retreated.

"And that is the grave of my poor child," cried Thirlby, halting, and bursting into a passionate flood of tears. "It would have been a fitting resting-place for a guilty wretch like me; but for her it is horrible."

Allowing time for the violence of his grief to subside, Leonard addressed a few words of consolation to him, and then tried to turn the current of his thoughts by introducing a different subject. With this view, he proceeded to detail the piper's mysterious conduct as to the packet, and concluded by mentioning the piece of gold which Nizza wore as an amulet, and which she fancied must have some connection with her early history.

"I have heard of the packet and amulet from Doctor Hodges," said Thirlby, "and should have visited the piper on my recovery from the plague, but I was all impatience to

behold Nizza, and could not brook an instant's delay. But you know his cottage. We cannot be far from it."

"Yonder it is," replied Leonard, pointing to the little habitation, which lay at a field's distance from them—"and we are certain to meet with him, for I hear the notes of his pipe."

Nor was he deceived, for as they crossed the field, and approached the cottage, the sounds of a melancholy air played on the pipe became each instant more distinct. Before entering the gate, they paused for a moment to listen to the music, and Leonard could not help contrasting the present neglected appearance of the garden with the neatness it exhibited when he last saw it. It was overgrown with weeds, while the drooping flowers seemed to bemoan the loss of their mistress. Leonard's gaze involuntarily wandered in search of the old apple-tree, and he presently discovered it. It was loaded with fruit, and the rounded sod beneath it proclaimed the grave of the ill-fated Dame Lucas.

Satisfied with this survey, Leonard opened the gate, but had no sooner set foot in the garden than the loud barking of a dog was heard, and Bell rushed forth. Leonard instantly called to her, and on hearing his voice, the little animal instantly changed her angry tones to a gladsome whine, and, skipping towards him, fawned at his feet. While he stooped to caress her, the piper, who had been alarmed by the barking, appeared at the door, and called out to know who was there? At the sight of him, Thirlby, who was close behind Leonard, uttered a cry of surprise, and exclaiming, "It is he!" rushed towards him.

The cry of recognition uttered by the stranger caused the piper to start as if he had received a sudden and violent shock. The ruddy tint instantly deserted his cheek, and was succeeded by a deadly paleness; his limbs trembled, and he bent forward with a countenance of the utmost anxiety, as if awaiting a confirmation of his fears. When within a couple of yards of him, Thirlby paused, and having narrowly scrutinized his features, as if to satisfy himself he was not mistaken, again exclaimed, though in a lower and deeper tone than before, "It is he!" and seizing his arm, pushed him into the house, banging the door to after him in such a manner as to leave no doubt in the apprentice's mind that his presence was not desired. Accordingly, though extremely anxious to hear what passed between them, certain their conversation must relate to Nizza Macascree, Leonard did not attempt to follow, but, accompanied by Bell, who continued to gambol round him, directed his steps towards the grave of Dame Lucas. Here he endeavoured to beguile the time in meditation, but in spite of his efforts to turn his thoughts into a different channel, they perpetually recurred to what he supposed to be taking place inside the house. The extraordinary effect produced by Nizza Macascree on Thirlby—the resemblance he had discovered between her and some person dear to him—the anxiety

he appeared to feel for her, as evinced by his recent search for her—the mysterious connection which clearly subsisted between him and the piper—all these circumstances convinced Leonard that Thirlby was, or imagined himself, connected by ties of the closest relationship with the supposed piper's daughter.

Leonard had never been able to discern the slightest resemblance either in manner or feature, or in those indescribably slight personal peculiarities that constitute a family likeness, between Nizza and her reputed father—neither could he now recall any particular resemblance between her and Thirlby; still he could not help thinking her beauty and high-bred looks savoured more of the latter than the former. He came, therefore, to the conclusion that she must be the offspring of some early and unfortunate attachment on the part of Thirlby, whose remorse might naturally be the consequence of his culpable conduct at that time. His sole perplexity was the piper's connection with the affair; but he got over this difficulty by supposing that Nizza's mother, whoever she was, must have committed her to Macascree's care when an infant, probably with strict injunctions, which circumstances might render necessary, to conceal her even from her father. Such was Leonard's solution of the mystery; and feeling convinced that he had made himself master of the stranger's secret, he resolved to give him to understand as much as soon as he beheld him again.

More than half an hour having elapsed, and Thirlby not coming forth, Leonard began to think sufficient time had been allowed him for private conference with the piper, and he therefore walked towards the door, and coughing to announce his approach, raised the latch and entered the house. He found the pair seated close together, and conversing in a low and earnest tone. The piper had completely recovered from his alarm, and seemed perfectly at ease with his companion, while all traces of anger had disappeared from the countenance of the other. Before them on the table lay several letters, taken from a packet, the cover of which Leonard recognised as the one that had been formerly intrusted to him. Amidst them was the miniature of a lady—at least, it appeared so to Leonard, in the hasty glance he caught of it; but he could not be quite sure; for on seeing him, Thirlby closed the case, and placing his hand on the piper's mouth, to check his further speech, arose.

"Forgive my rudeness," he said to the apprentice; "but I have been so deeply interested in what I have just heard, that I quite forgot you were waiting without. I shall remain here some hours longer, but will not detain you, especially as I am unable to admit you to our conference. I will meet you at Doctor Hodges's in the evening, and shall have much to say to you."

"I can anticipate some part of your communication," replied Leonard.  
"You will tell me you have a daughter still living."

"You are inquisitive, young man," rejoined Thirlby, sternly.

"You do me wrong, sir," replied Leonard. "I have no curiosity as regards yourself; and if I had, would never lower myself in my own estimation to gratify it. Feeling a strong interest in Nizza Macascree, I am naturally anxious to know whether my suspicion that a near relationship subsists between yourself and her is correct."

"I cannot enter into further explanation now," returned Thirlby. "Meet me at Doctor Hodges's this evening, and you shall know more. And now farewell. I am in the midst of a deeply-interesting conversation, which your presence interrupts. Do not think me rude—do not think me ungrateful. My anxiety must plead my excuse."

"None is necessary, sir," replied Leonard. "I will no longer place any restraint upon you."

So saying, and taking care not to let Bell out, he passed through the door, and closed it after him. Having walked to some distance across the fields, musing on what had just occurred, and scarcely conscious whither he was going, he threw himself down on the grass, and fell asleep. He awoke after some time much refreshed, and finding he was considerably nearer Bishopsgate than any other entrance into the city, determined to make for it. A few minutes brought him to a row of houses without the walls, none of which appeared to have escaped infection, and passing them, he entered the city gate. As he proceeded along the once-crowded but now utterly-deserted thoroughfare that opened upon him, he could scarcely believe he was in a spot which had once been the busiest of the busy haunts of men—so silent, so desolate did it appear! On reaching Cornhill, he found it equally deserted. The Exchange was closed, and as Leonard looked at its barred gates, a saddening train of reflection passed through his mind. His head declined upon his breast, and he continued lost in a mournful reverie until he was roused by a hand laid upon his shoulder, and starting—for such a salutation at this season was alarming—he looked round, and beheld Solomon Eagle.

"You are looking upon that structure," said the enthusiast, "and are thinking how much it is changed. Men who possess boundless riches imagine their power above that of their Maker, and suppose they may neglect and defy him. But they are mistaken. Where are now the wealthy merchants who used to haunt those courts and chambers?—why do they not come here as of old?—why do they not buy and sell, and send their messengers and ships to the farthest parts of the world? Because the Lord hath smitten them and driven them forth—'From the least of them even to the greatest of them,' as the prophet Jeremiah saith, 'every one has been given to covetousness.' The balances of deceit have been in their hands. They have cozened their neighbours, and greedily gained from them, and will find it true what the prophet Ezekiel hath written, that 'the Lord will pour out his indignation upon them, and consume them with the fire of his wrath.' Yea, I tell

you, unless they turn from their evil ways—unless they cast aside the golden idol they now worship, and set up the Holy One of Israel in its stead, a fire will be sent to consume them, and that pile which they have erected as a temple to their god shall be burnt to the ground."

Leonard's heart was too full to make any answer, and the enthusiast, after a brief pause, again addressed him. "Have you seen Doctor Hodges pass this way? I am in search of him."

"On what account?" asked Leonard anxiously. "His advice, I trust, is not needed on behalf of any one in whom I am interested."

"No matter," replied Solomon Eagle, in a sombre tone; "have you seen him?"

"I have not," rejoined the apprentice; "but he is probably at Saint Paul's."

"I have just left the cathedral, and was told he had proceeded to some house near Cornhill," rejoined the enthusiast.

"If you have been there, you can perhaps tell me how my master's porter, Blaize Shotterel, is getting on," said Leonard.

"I can," replied the enthusiast. "I heard one of the surgeons say that Doctor Hodges had pronounced him in a fair way of recovery. But I must either find the doctor or go elsewhere. Farewell!"

"I will go with you in search of him," said Leonard.

"No, no; you must not—shall not," cried Solomon Eagle.

"Wherefore not?" asked the apprentice.

"Do not question me, but leave me," rejoined the enthusiast.

"Do you know aught of Amabel—of her retreat?" persisted Leonard, who had a strange misgiving that the enthusiast's errand in some way referred to her.

"I do," replied Solomon Eagle, gloomily; "but I again advise you not to press me further."

"Answer me one question at least," cried Leonard. "Is she with the Earl of Rochester?"



"She is," replied Solomon Eagle; "but I shall allay your fears in that respect when I tell you she is sick of the plague."

Leonard heard nothing more, for, uttering a wild shriek, he fell to the ground insensible. He was aroused to consciousness by a sudden sense of strangulation, and opening his eyes, beheld two dark figures bending over him, one of whom was kneeling on his chest. A glance showed him that this person was Chowles; and instantly comprehending what was the matter, and aware that the coffin-maker was stripping him previously to throwing him into the dead-cart, which was standing hard by, he cried aloud, and struggled desperately to set himself free. Little opposition was offered; for, on hearing the cry, Chowles quitted his hold, and retreating to a short distance, exclaimed, with a look of surprise, "Why, the fellow is not dead, after all!"

"I am neither dead, nor likely to die, as you shall find to your cost, rascal, if you do not restore me the clothes you have robbed me of," cried Leonard, furiously. And chancing to perceive a fork, dropped by Chowles in his hasty retreat, he snatched it up, and, brandishing it over his head, advanced towards him. Thus threatened, Chowles tossed him a rich suit of livery.

"These are not mine," said the apprentice, gazing at the habiliments.

"They are better than your own," replied Chowles, "and therefore you ought to be glad of the exchange. But give me them back again. I have no intention of making you a present."

"This is the livery of the Earl of Rochester," cried Leonard.

"To be sure it is," replied Chowles, with a ghastly smile. "One of his servants is just dead."

"Where is the profligate noble?" cried Leonard, eagerly.

"There is the person who owned these clothes," replied Chowles, pointing to the dead-cart. "You had better ask him."

"Where is the Earl of Rochester, I say, villain?" cried Leonard, menacingly.

"How should I know?" rejoined Chowles. "Here are your clothes," he added, pushing them towards him.

"I will have an answer," cried Leonard.

"Not from me," replied Chowles. And hastily snatching up the livery, he put the cart in motion, and proceeded on his road. Leonard would have followed him, but the state of his attire did not permit him to do so. Having dressed himself, he hastened to the cathedral, where he soon found the attendant who had charge of Blaize.

"Doctor Hodges has been with him," said the man, in reply to his inquiries after the porter, "and has good hopes of him. But the patient is not entirely satisfied with the treatment he has received, and wishes to try some remedies of his own. Were his request granted, all would soon be over with him."

"That I am sure of," replied Leonard. "But let us go to him."

"You must not heed his complaints," returned the attendant. "I assure you he is doing as well as possible; but he is so dreadfully frightened at a trifling operation which Doctor Hodges finds it necessary to perform upon him, that we have been obliged to fasten him to the bed."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Leonard, suspiciously. "Has Judith Malmayns had no hand in this arrangement?"

"Judith Malmayns has been absent during the whole of the afternoon," said the man, "and another nurse has taken her place in Saint Faith's. She has never been near Blaize since I have had charge of him."

By this time they had reached the pallet in which the porter was laid. His eyes and a small portion of his snub-nose were alone visible, his head being still enveloped by the linen cloth, while his mouth was covered by blankets. He looked so anxiously at the apprentice, that the latter removed the covering from his mouth, and enabled him to speak.

"I am glad to find you are getting on so well," said Leonard, in a cheerful tone. "Doctor Hodges has been with you, I understand?"

"He has," groaned Blaize; "but he has done me no good—none whatever. I could doctor myself much better, if I might be allowed; for I know every remedy that has been prescribed for the plague; but he would adopt none that I mentioned to him. I wanted him to place a hot loaf, fresh from the oven, to the tumour, to draw it; but he would not consent. Then I asked for a cataplasm, composed of radish-roots, mustard-seed, onions and garlic roasted, mithridate, salt, and soot from a chimney where wood only has been burnt. This he liked no better than the first. Next, I begged for an ale posset with

pimpernel soaked in it, assuring him that by frequently drinking such a mixture, Secretary Naunton drew the infection from his very heart. But the doctor would have none of it, and seemed to doubt the fact."

"What did he do?" inquired Leonard.

"He applied oil of St. John's wort to the tumour," replied Blaize, with a dismal groan, and said, "if the scar did not fall off, he must cauterize it. Oh! I shall never be able to bear the pain of the operation."

"Recollect your life is at stake," rejoined Leonard. "You must either submit to it or die."

"I know I must," replied Blaize, with a prolonged groan; "but it is a terrible alternative."

"You will not find the operation so painful as you imagine," rejoined Leonard; "and you know I speak from personal experience."

"You give me great comfort," said Blaize. "And so you really think I shall get better?"

"I have no doubt of it, if you keep up your spirits," replied Leonard.

"The worst is evidently over. Behave like a man."

"I will try to do so," rejoined Blaize. "I have been told that if a circle is drawn with a blue sapphire round a plague-blotch, it will fall off. Couldn't we just try the experiment?"

"It will not do to rely upon it," observed the attendant, with a smile. "You will find a small knob of red-hot iron, which we call the 'button,' much more efficacious."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" exclaimed Blaize, "I already feel that dreadful button burning into my flesh."

"On the contrary, you won't feel it at all," replied the attendant. "The iron only touches the point of the tumour, in which there is no sensibility."

"In that case, I don't care how soon the operation is performed," replied Blaize.

"Doctor Hodges will choose his own time for it," said the attendant. "In the mean time, here is a cup of barley-broth for you. You will find it do you good."

While the man applied the cup to the poor porter's lips—for he would not unloose the straps, for fear of mischief—Leonard, who was sickened by the terrible scene around him, took his departure, and quitted the cathedral by the great western entrance. Seating himself on one of the great blocks of stone left there by the workmen employed

in repairing the cathedral, but who had long since abandoned their task, he thought over all that had recently occurred. Raising his eyes at length, he looked toward the cathedral. The oblique rays of the sun had quitted the columns of the portico, which looked cold and grey, while the roof and towers were glittering in light. In ten minutes more, only the summit of the central tower caught the last reflection of the declining orb. Leonard watched the rosy gleam till it disappeared, and then steadfastly regarded the reverend pile as its hue changed from grey to black, until at length each pinnacle and buttress, each battlement and tower, was lost in one vast indistinct mass. Night had fallen upon the city—a night destined to be more fatal than any that had preceded it; and yet it was so calm, so beautiful, so clear, that it was scarcely possible to imagine that it was unhealthy. The destroying angel was, however, fearfully at work. Hundreds were falling beneath his touch; and as Leonard wondered how many miserable wretches were at that moment released from suffering, it crossed him like an icy chill, that among the number might be Amabel. So forcibly was he impressed by this idea, that he fell on his knees and prayed aloud.

He was aroused by hearing the ringing of a bell, which announced the approach of the dead-cart, and presently afterwards the gloomy vehicle approached from Ludgate-hill, and moved slowly towards the portico of the cathedral, where it halted. A great number of the dead were placed within it, and the driver, ringing his bell, proceeded in the direction of Cheapside. A very heavy dew had fallen; for as Leonard put his hand to his clothes, they felt damp, and his long hair was filled with moisture. Reproaching himself with having needlessly exposed himself to risk, he was about to walk away, when he heard footsteps at a little distance, and looking in the direction of the sound, perceived the tall figure of Thirlby. Calling to him, the other, who appeared to be in haste, halted for a moment, and telling the apprentice he was going to Doctor Hodges's, desired him to accompany him thither, and went on.

## **Old Saint Paul's Volume IV by William Harrison Ainsworth**

### **III.**

#### **THE HOUSE IN NICHOLAS-LANE.**

On reaching Watling-street, Leonard and his companion found Doctor Hodges was from home. This did not much surprise the apprentice, after the information he had received from Solomon Eagle, but Thirlby was greatly disappointed, and eagerly questioned the porter as to the probable time of his master's return. The man replied that it was quite uncertain, adding, "He has been in since you were last here, and has seen Blaize. He had not been gone to the cathedral many minutes when a gentleman arrived, desiring his instant attendance upon a young woman who was sick of the plague."

"Did you hear her name?" asked Leonard and Thirlby, in a breath.

"No," replied the porter, "neither did I obtain any information respecting her from the gentleman, who appeared in great distress. But I observed that my master, on his return, looked much surprised at seeing him, and treated him with a sort of cold respect."

"Was the gentleman young or old?" demanded Leonard, hastily.

"As far as I noticed," replied the porter, "for he kept his face covered with a handkerchief, I should say he was young—very young."

"You are sure it was not Lord Rochester?" pursued Leonard.

"How should I be sure of it," rejoined the porter, "since I have never seen his lordship that I am aware of? But I will tell you all that happened, and you can judge for yourselves. My master, as I have just said, on seeing the stranger, looked surprised and angry, and bowing gravely, conducted him to his study, taking care to close the door after him. I did not, of course, hear what passed, but the interview was brief enough, and the gentleman, issuing forth, said, as he quitted the room, 'You will not fail to come?' To which my master replied, 'Certainly not, on the terms I have mentioned.' With this, the gentleman hurried out of the house. Shortly afterwards the doctor came out, and said to me, 'I am going to attend a young woman who is sick of the plague, and may be absent for some time. If Mr. Thirlby or Leonard Holt should call, detain them till my return.'"

"My heart tells me that the young woman he is gone to visit is no other than Amabel," said Leonard Holt, sorrowfully.

"I suspect it is Nizza Macascree," cried Thirlby. "Which way did your master take?"

"I did not observe," replied the porter, "but he told me he should cross London Bridge."

"I will go into Southwark in quest of him," said Thirlby. "Every moment is of consequence now."

"You had better stay where you are," replied the old porter. "It is the surest way to meet with him."

Thirlby, however, was too full of anxiety to listen to reason, and his impatience producing a corresponding effect upon Leonard, though from a different motive, they set forth together. "If I fail to find him, you may expect me back ere long," were Thirlby's last words to the porter. Hurrying along Watling-street, and taking the first turning on the right, he descended to Thames-street, and made the best of his way towards the bridge. Leonard followed him closely, and they pursued their rapid course in silence. By the time they reached the north gate of the bridge, Leonard found his strength failing him, and halting at one of the openings between the tall houses overlooking the river, where there was a wooden bench for the accommodation of passengers, he sank upon it, and begged Thirlby to go on, saying he would return to Watling-street as soon as he recovered from his exhaustion. Thirlby did not attempt to dissuade him from his purpose, but instantly disappeared.

The night, it has before been remarked, was singularly beautiful. It was almost as light as day, for the full harvest moon (alas! there was no harvest for it to smile upon!) having just risen, revealed every object with perfect distinctness. The bench on which Leonard was seated lay on the right side of the bridge, and commanded a magnificent reach of the river, that flowed beneath like a sheet of molten silver. The apprentice gazed along its banks, and noticed the tall spectral-looking houses on the right, until his eye finally settled on the massive fabric of Saint Paul's, the roof and towers of which rose high above the lesser structures. His meditations were suddenly interrupted by the opening of a window in the house near him, while a loud splash in the water told that a body had been thrown into it. He turned away with a shudder, and at the same moment perceived a watchman, with a halberd upon his shoulder, advancing slowly towards him from the Southwark side of the bridge. Pausing as he drew near the apprentice, the watchman compassionately inquired whether he was sick, and being answered in the negative, was about to pass on, when Leonard, fancying he recognised his voice, stopped him.

"We have met somewhere before, friend," he said, "though where, or under what circumstances, I cannot at this moment call to mind."

"Not unlikely," returned the other, roughly, "but the chances are against our meeting again."

Leonard heaved a sigh at this remark. "I now recollect where I met you, friend," he remarked. "It was at Saint Paul's, when I was in search of my master's daughter, who had been carried off by the Earl of Rochester. But you were then in the garb of a smith."

"I recollect the circumstance, too, now you remind me of it," replied the other. "Your name is Leonard Holt as surely as mine is Robert Rainbird. I recollect, also, that you offended me about a dog belonging to the piper's pretty daughter, Nizza Macascree, which I was about to destroy in obedience to the Lord Mayor's commands. However, I bear no malice, and if I did, this is not a time to rip up old quarrels."

"You are right, friend," returned Leonard. "The few of us left ought to be in charity with each other."

"Truly, ought we," rejoined Rainbird. "For my own part, I have seen so much misery within the last few weeks, that my disposition is wholly changed. I was obliged to abandon my old occupation of a smith, because my master died of the plague, and there was no one else to employ me. I have therefore served as a watchman, and in twenty days have stood at the doors of more than twenty houses. It would freeze your blood were I to relate the scenes I have witnessed."

"It might have done formerly," replied Leonard; "but my feelings are as much changed as your own. I have had the plague twice myself."

"Then, indeed, you can speak," replied Rainbird. "Thank God, I have hitherto escaped it! Ah! these are terrible times—terrible times! The worst that ever London knew. Although I have been hitherto miraculously preserved myself, I am firmly persuaded no one will escape."

"I am almost inclined to agree with you," replied Leonard.

"For the last week the distemper has raged fearfully—fearfully, indeed," said Rainbird; "but yesterday and to-day have far exceeded all that have gone before. The distempered have died quicker than cattle of the murrain. I visited upwards of a hundred houses in the Borough this morning, and only found ten persons alive; and out of those ten, not one, I will venture to say, is alive now. It will, in truth, be a mercy if they are gone. There

were distracted mothers raving over their children,—a young husband lamenting his wife,—two little children weeping over their dead parents, with none to attend them, none to feed them,—an old man mourning over his son cut off in his prime. In short, misery and distress in their worst form,—the streets ringing with shrieks and groans, and the numbers of dead so great that it was impossible to carry them off. You remember Solomon Eagle's prophecy?"

"Perfectly," replied Leonard; "and I lament to see its fulfilment."

"The streets shall be covered with grass, and the living shall not be able to bury their dead,'—so it ran," said Rainbird. "And it has come to pass. Not a carriage of any description, save the dead-cart, is to be seen in the broadest streets of London, which are now as green as the fields without her walls, and as silent as the grave itself. Terrible times, as I said before—terrible times! The dead are rotting in heaps in the courts, in the alleys, in the very houses, and no one to remove them. What will be the end of it all? What will become of this great city?"

"It is not difficult to foresee what will become of it," replied Leonard, "unless it pleases the Lord to stay his vengeful arm. And something whispers in my ear that we are now at the worst. The scourge cannot exceed its present violence without working our ruin; and deeply as we have sinned, little as we repent, I cannot bring myself to believe that God will sweep his people entirely from the face of the earth."

"I dare not hope otherwise," rejoined Rainbird, "though I would fain do so. I discern no symptoms of abatement of the distemper, but, on the contrary, an evident increase of malignity, and such is the opinion of all I have spoken with on the subject. Chowles told me he buried two hundred more yesterday than he had ever done before, and yet he did not carry a third of the dead to the plague-pit. He is a strange fellow that Chowles. But for his passion for his horrible calling there is no necessity for him to follow it, for he is now one of the richest men in London."

"He must have amassed his riches by robbery, then," remarked Leonard.

"True," returned Rainbird. "He helps himself without scruple to the clothes, goods, and other property, of all who die of the pestilence; and after ransacking their houses, conveys his plunder in the dead-cart to his own dwelling."

"In Saint Paul's?" asked Leonard.



"No—a large house in Nicholas-lane, once belonging to a wealthy merchant, who perished, with his family, of the plague," replied Rainbird. "He has filled it from cellar to garret with the spoil he has obtained."

"And how has he preserved it?" inquired the apprentice.

"The plague has preserved it for him," replied Rainbird. "The few authorities who now act have, perhaps, no knowledge of his proceedings; or if they have, have not cared to interfere, awaiting a more favourable season, if it should ever arrive, to dispossess him of his hoard, and punish him for his delinquencies; while, in the mean time, they are glad, on any terms, to avail themselves of his services as a burier. Other people do not care to meddle with him, and the most daring robber would be afraid to touch infected money or clothes."

"If you are going towards Nicholas-lane," said Leonard, as if struck with a sudden idea, "and will point out to me the house in question, you will do me a favour."

Rainbird nodded assent, and they walked on together towards Fish-street-hill. Ascending it, and turning off on the right, they entered Great Eastcheap, but had not proceeded far when they were obliged to turn back, the street being literally choked up with a pile of carcasses deposited there by the burier's assistants. Shaping their course along Gracechurch-street, they turned off into Lombard-street, and as Leonard gazed at the goldsmiths' houses on either side, which were all shut up, with the fatal red cross on the doors, he could not help remarking to his companion, "The plague has not spared any of these on account of their riches."

"True," replied the other; "and of the thousands who used formerly to throng this street not one is left. Wo to London!—wo!—wo!"

Leonard echoed the sentiment, and fell into a melancholy train of reflection. It has been more than once remarked that the particular day now under consideration was the one in which the plague exercised its fiercest dominion over the city; and though at first its decline was as imperceptible as the gradual diminution of the day after the longest has passed, yet still the alteration began. On that day, as if death had known that his power was to be speedily arrested, he sharpened his fellest arrows, and discharged them with unerring aim. To pursue the course of the destroyer from house to house—to show with what unrelenting fury he assailed his victims—to describe their sufferings—to number the dead left within their beds, thrown into the streets, or conveyed to the plague-pits—would be to present a narrative as painful as revolting. On this terrible night it was as hot as if it had been the middle of June. No air was stirring, and the silence was so profound, that a slight noise was audible at a great distance. Hushed in the seemingly

placid repose lay the great city, while hundreds of its inhabitants were groaning in agony, or breathing their last sigh.

On reaching the upper end of Nicholas-lane, Rainbird stood still for a moment, and pointed out a large house on the right, just below the old church dedicated to the saint from which the thoroughfare took its name. They were about to proceed towards it, when the smith again paused, and called Leonard's attention to two figures quickly advancing from the lower end of the street. As the apprentice and his companion stood in the shade, they could not be seen, while the two persons, being in the moonlight, were fully revealed. One of them, it was easy to perceive, was Chowles. He stopped before the door of his dwelling and unfastened it, and while he was thus occupied, the other person turned his face so as to catch the full radiance of the moon, disclosing the features of Sir Paul Parravicin. Before Leonard recovered from the surprise into which he was thrown by this unexpected discovery, they had entered the house.

He then hurried forward, but, to his great disappointment, found the door locked. Anxious to get into the house without alarming those who had preceded him, he glanced at the windows; but the shutters were closed and strongly barred. While hesitating what to do, Rainbird came up, and guessing his wishes, told him there was a door at the back of the house by which he might probably gain admittance. Accordingly they hastened down a passage skirting the churchyard, which brought them to a narrow alley lying between Nicholas-lane and Abchurch-lane. Tracking it for about twenty yards, Rainbird paused before a small yard-door, and trying the latch, found it yielded to his touch.

Crossing the yard, they came to another door. It was locked, and though they could have easily burst it open, they preferred having recourse to an adjoining window, the shutter of which, being carelessly fastened, was removed without noise or difficulty. In another moment they gained a small dark room on the ground-floor, whence they issued into a passage, where, to their great joy, they found a lighted lantern placed on a chair. Leonard hastily possessed himself of it, and was about to enter a room on the left when his companion arrested him.

"Before we proceed further," he said in a low voice, "I must know what you are about to do?"

"My purpose will be explained in a word," replied the apprentice in the same tone. "I suspect that Nizza Macascree is confined here by Sir Paul Parravicin and Chowles, and if it turns out I am right in my conjecture, I propose to liberate her. Will you help me?"

"Humph!" exclaimed Rainbird, "I don't much fancy the job. However, since I am here, I'll not go back. I am curious to see the coffin-maker's hoards. Look at yon heap of

clothes. There are velvet doublets and silken hose enow to furnish wardrobes for a dozen court gallants. And yet, rich as the stuffs are, I would not put the best of them on for all the wealth of London."

"Nor I," replied Leonard. "I shall make free, however, with a sword," he added, selecting one from the heap. "I may need a weapon."

"I require nothing more than my halberd," observed the smith; "and I would advise you to throw away that velvet scabbard; it is a certain harbour for infection."

Leonard did not neglect the caution, and pushing open the door, they entered a large room which resembled an upholsterer's shop, being literally crammed with chairs, tables, cabinets, moveable cupboards, bedsteads, curtains, and hangings, all of the richest description.

"What I heard is true," observed Rainbird, gazing around in astonishment. "Chowles must have carried off everything he could lay hands upon. What can he do with all that furniture?"

"What the miser does with his store," replied Leonard: "feast his eyes with it, but never use it."

They then proceeded to the next room. It was crowded with books, looking-glasses, and pictures; many of them originally of great value, but greatly damaged by the careless manner in which they were piled one upon another. A third apartment was filled with flasks of wine, with casks probably containing spirits, and boxes, the contents of which they did not pause to examine. A fourth contained male and female habiliments, spread out like the dresses in a theatrical wardrobe. Most of these garments were of the gayest and costliest description, and of the latest fashion, and Leonard sighed as he looked upon them, and thought of the fate of those they had so lately adorned.

"There is contagion enough in those clothes to infect a whole city," said Rainbird, who regarded them with different feelings. "I have half a mind to set fire to them."

"It were a good deed to do so," returned Leonard; "but it must not be done now. Let us go upstairs. These are the only rooms below."

Accordingly, they ascended the staircase, and entered chamber after chamber, all of which were as full of spoil as those they had just visited; but they could find no one, nor was there any symptom that the house was tenanted. They next stood still within the

gallery, and listened intently for some sound to reveal those they sought, but all was still and silent as the grave.

"We cannot be mistaken," observed Leonard. "It is clear this house is the receptacle for Chowles's plunder. Besides, we should not have found the lantern burning if they had gone forth again. No, no; they must be hidden somewhere, and I will not quit the place till I find them." Their search, however, was fruitless. They mounted to the garrets, opened every door, and glanced into every corner. Still, no one was to be seen.

"I begin to think Nizza cannot be here," said the apprentice; "but I am resolved not to depart without questioning Chowles on the subject."

"You must find him first," rejoined Rainbird. "If he is anywhere, he must be in the cellar, for we have been into every room in this part of the house. For my own part, I think you had better abandon the search altogether. No good will come of it."

Leonard, however, was not to be dissuaded, and they went downstairs. A short flight of stone steps brought them to a spacious kitchen, but it was quite empty, and seemed to have been long disused. They then peeped into the scullery adjoining, and were about to retrace their steps, when Rainbird plucked Leonard's sleeve to call attention to a gleam of light issuing from a door which stood partly ajar, in a long narrow passage leading apparently to the cellars.

"They are there," he said, in a whisper.

"So I see," replied Leonard, in the same tone. And raising his finger to his lips in token of silence, he stole forward on the points of his feet and cautiously opened the door.

At the further end of the cellar—for such it was—knelt Chowles, examining with greedy eyes the contents of a large chest, which, from the hasty glance that Leonard caught of it, appeared to be filled with gold and silver plate. A link stuck against the wall threw a strong light over the scene, and showed that the coffin-maker was alone. As Leonard advanced, the sound of his footsteps caught Chowles's ear, and uttering a cry of surprise and alarm, he let fall the lid of the chest, and sprang to his feet.

"What do you want?" he cried, looking uneasily round, as if in search of some weapon. "Are you come to rob me?"

"No," replied Leonard; "neither are we come to reclaim the plunder you have taken from others. We are come in search of Nizza Macascree."

"Then you have come on a fool's errand," replied Chowles, regaining his courage, "for she is not here. I know nothing of her."

"That is false," replied Leonard. "You have just conducted Sir Paul Parravicin to her."

This assertion on the part of the apprentice, which he thought himself justified under the circumstances in making, produced a strong effect on Chowles. He appeared startled and confounded. "What right have you to play the spy upon me thus?" he faltered.

"The right that every honest man possesses to check the designs of the wicked," replied Leonard. "You admit she is here. Lead me to her hiding-place without more ado."

"If you know where it is," rejoined Chowles, who now perceived the trick that had been practised upon him, "you will not want me to conduct you to it. Neither Nizza nor Sir Paul Parravicin are here."

"That is false, prevaricating scoundrel," cried Leonard. "My companion and I saw you enter the house with your profligate employer. And as we gained admittance a few minutes after you, it is certain no one can have left it. Lead me to Nizza's retreat instantly, or I will cut your throat." And seizing Chowles by the collar, he held the point of his sword to his breast.

"Use no violence," cried Chowles, struggling to free himself, "and I will take you wherever you please. This way—this way." And he motioned as if he would take them upstairs.

"Do not think to mislead me, villain," cried Leonard, tightening his grasp. "We have searched every room in the upper part of the house, and though we have discovered the whole of your ill-gotten hoards, we have found nothing else. No one is there."

"Well, then," rejoined Chowles, "since the truth must out, Sir Paul is in the next house. But it is his own abode. I have nothing to do with it, nothing whatever. He is accountable for his own actions, and you will be accountable to him if you intrude upon his privacy. Release me, and I swear to conduct you to him. But you will take the consequences of your rashness upon yourself. I only go upon compulsion."

"I am ready to take any consequences," replied Leonard, resolutely.

"Come along, then," said Chowles, pointing down the passage.

"You mean us no mischief?" cried Leonard, suspiciously. "If you do, the attempt will cost you your life."

Chowles made no answer, but moved along the passage as quickly as Leonard, who kept fast hold of him and walked by his side, would permit. Presently they reached a door, which neither the apprentice nor Rainbird had observed before, and which admitted them into an extensive vault, with a short staircase at the further end, communicating with a passage that Leonard did not require to be informed was in another house.

Here Chowles paused. "I think it right to warn you are running into a danger from which were long you will be glad to draw back, young man," he said, to the apprentice. "As a friend, I advise you to proceed no further in the matter."

"Waste no more time in talking," cried Leonard, fiercely, and forcing him forward as he spoke, "where is Nizza? Lead me to her without an instant's delay."

"A wilful man must have his way," returned Chowles, hurrying up the main staircase. "It is not my fault if any harm befalls you."

They had just gained the landing when a door on the right was suddenly thrown open, and Sir Paul Parravicin stood before them. He looked surprised and startled at the sight of the apprentice, and angrily demanded his business. "I am come for Nizza Macascree," replied Leonard, "whom you and Chowles have detained against her will."

Parravicin glanced sternly and inquiringly at the coffin-maker.

"I have protested to him that she is not here, Sir Paul," said the latter, "but he will not believe me, and has compelled me, by threats of taking my life, to bring him and his companion to you."

"Then take them back again," rejoined Parravicin, turning haughtily upon his heel.

"That answer will not suffice, Sir Paul," cried Leonard—"I will not depart without her."

"How!" exclaimed the knight, drawing his sword. "Do you dare to intrude upon my presence? Begone! or I will punish your presumption." And he prepared to attack the apprentice.

"Advance a footstep," rejoined Leonard, who had never relinquished his grasp of Chowles, "and I pass my sword through this man's body. Speak, villain," he continued, in a tone so formidable that the coffin-maker shook with apprehension—"is she here or

not?" Chowles gazed from him to the knight, whose deportment was equally menacing and appeared bewildered with terror.

"It is needless," said Leonard, "your looks answer for you. She is."

"Yes, yes, I confess she is," replied Chowles.

"You hear what he says, Sir Paul," remarked Leonard.

"His fears would make him assert anything," rejoined Parravicin, disdainfully. "If you do not depart instantly, I will drive you forth."

"Sir Paul Parravicin," rejoined Leonard, in an authoritative tone, "I command you in the king's name, to deliver up this girl."

Parravicin laughed scornfully. "The king has no authority here," he said.

"Pardon me, Sir Paul," rejoined Chowles, who began to be seriously alarmed at his own situation, and eagerly grasped at the opportunity that offered of extricating himself from it—"pardon me. If it is the king's pleasure she should be removed, it materially alters the case, and I can be no party to her detention."

"Both you and your employer will incur his majesty's severest displeasure, by detaining her after this notice," remarked Leonard.

"Before I listen to the young man's request, let him declare that it is his intention to deliver her up to the king," rejoined Parravicin, coldly.

"It is my intention to deliver her up to one who has the best right to take charge of her," returned Leonard.

"You mean her father," sneered Parravicin.

"Ay, but not the person you supposed to be her father," replied Leonard.

"An important discovery has been made respecting her parentage."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Parravicin, with a look of surprise. "Who has the honour to be her father?"

"A gentleman named Thirlby," replied Leonard.

"What!" cried Parravicin, starting, and turning pale. "Did you say

Thirlby?"

The apprentice reiterated his assertion. Parravicin uttered a deep groan, and pressed his hand forcibly against his brow for some moments, during which the apprentice watched him narrowly. He then controlled himself by a powerful effort, and returned his sword to its scabbard.

"Come into this room, young man," he said to the apprentice, "and let your companion remain outside with Chowles. Fear nothing. I intend you no injury."

"I do not distrust you," replied Leonard, "and if I did, should have no apprehension." And motioning Rainbird to remain where he was, he entered the room with the knight, who instantly closed the door.

Parravicin's first proceeding was to question him as to his reasons for supposing Nizza to be Thirlby's daughter, and clearly perceiving the deep interest his interrogator took in the matter, and the favourable change that, from some unknown cause, had been wrought in his sentiments, the apprentice did not think fit to hide anything from him. Parravicin's agitation increased as he listened to the recital; and at last, overcome by emotion, he sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands. Recovering himself in a short time, he arose, and began to pace the chamber to and fro.

"What I have told you seems to have disturbed you, Sir Paul," remarked Leonard. "May I ask the cause of your agitation?"

"No, man, you may not," replied Parravicin, angrily. And then suddenly checking himself, he added, with forced calmness, "And so you parted with Mr. Thirlby on London Bridge, and you think he will return to Doctor Hodges's residence in Watling-street."

"I am sure of it," replied Leonard.

"I must see him without delay," rejoined Parravicin.

"I will take you to him," remarked Leonard; "but first I must see Nizza."

Parravicin walked to a table, on which stood a small silver bell, and ringing it, the summons was immediately answered by an old woman. He was about to deliver a message to her, when the disturbed expression of her countenance struck him, and he hastily inquired the cause of it.

"You must not see the young lady to-night, Sir Paul," said the old woman.



"Why not?" demanded the knight, hastily. "Why not?"

"Because—but you frighten me so that I dare not speak," was the answer.

"I will frighten you still more if you keep me in this state of suspense," rejoined Parravicin, furiously. "Is she ill?"

"I fear she has got the plague," returned the old woman. "Now you can see her if you think proper."

"I will see her," said Leonard. "I have no fear of infection."

The old woman looked hard at Parravicin, as if awaiting his orders. "Yes, yes, you can take him to her room," said the knight, who seemed completely overpowered by the intelligence, "if he chooses to go thither. But why do you suppose it is the plague?"

"One cannot well be deceived in a seizure of that kind," replied the old woman, shaking her head.

"I thought the disorder never attacked the same person twice," said Parravicin.

"I myself am an instance to the contrary," replied Leonard.

"And, as you have twice recovered, there may be a chance for Nizza," said Parravicin. "This old woman will take you to her. I will hasten to Doctor Hodges's residence, and if I should fail in meeting him, will not rest till I procure assistance elsewhere. Do not leave her till I return."

Leonard readily gave a promise to the desired effect, and accompanying him to the door, told Rainbird what had happened. The latter agreed to wait below to render any assistance that might be required, and went downstairs with Parravicin and Chowles. The two latter instantly quitted the house together, and hastened to Watling-street.

With a beating heart, Leonard then followed the old woman to Nizza's chamber. They had to pass through a small anteroom, the door of which was carefully locked. The suite of apartments occupied by the captive girl were exquisitely and luxuriously furnished, and formed a striking contrast to the rest of the house. The air was loaded with perfumes; choice pictures adorned the walls; and the tables were covered with books and china ornaments. The windows, however, were strictly barred, and every precaution appeared to be taken to prevent an attempt at escape. Leonard cast an anxious look round as he entered the anteroom, and its luxurious air filled him with anxiety. His

conductress, however, did not allow him time for reflection, but led him into another room, still more richly furnished than the first, and lighted by a large coloured lamp, that shed a warm glow around it. An old dwarfed African, in a fantastic dress, and with a large scimeter stuck in his girdle, stepped forward on their approach, and shook his head significantly.

"He is dumb," said the old woman, "but his gestures are easy to be understood. He means that Nizza is worse."

Leonard heaved a deep sigh. Passing into a third room, they perceived the poor girl stretched on a couch placed in a recess at one side. She heard their footsteps, and without raising her head, or looking towards them, said, in a weak but determined voice—"Tell your master I will see him no more. The plague has again attacked me, and I am glad of it, for it will deliver me from him. It will be useless to offer me any remedies, for I will not take them."

"It is not Sir Paul Parravicin," replied the old woman. "I have brought a stranger, with whose name I am unacquainted, to see you."

"Then you have done very wrong," replied Nizza. "I will see no one."

"Not even me, Nizza?" asked Leonard, advancing. The poor girl started at the sound of his voice, and raising herself on one arm, looked wildly towards him. As soon as she was satisfied that her fancy did not deceive her, she uttered a cry of delight, and falling backwards on the couch, became insensible.

Leonard and the old woman instantly flew to the poor girl's assistance, and restoratives being applied, she speedily opened her eyes and fixed them tenderly and inquiringly on the apprentice. Before replying to her mute interrogatories, Leonard requested the old woman to leave them—an order very reluctantly obeyed—and as soon as they were left alone, proceeded to explain, as briefly as he could, the manner in which he had discovered her place of captivity. Nizza listened to his recital with the greatest interest, and though evidently suffering acute pain, uttered no complaint, but endeavoured to assume an appearance of composure and tranquillity.

"I must now tell you all that has befallen me since we last met," she said, as he concluded. "I will not dwell upon the persecution I endured from the king, whose passion increased in proportion to my resistance—I will not dwell upon the arts, the infamous arts, used to induce me to comply with his wishes—neither will I dwell upon the desperate measure I had determined to resort to, if driven to the last strait—nor

would I mention the subject at all, except to assure you I escaped contamination where few escaped it."

"You need not give me any such assurance," remarked Leonard.

"While I was thus almost driven to despair," pursued Nizza, "a young female who attended me, and affected to deplore my situation, offered to help me to escape. I eagerly embraced the offer; and one night, having purloined, as she stated, the key of the chamber in which I was lodged, she conducted me by a back staircase into the palace-gardens. Thinking myself free, I warmly thanked my supposed deliverer, who hurried me towards a gate, at which she informed me a man was waiting to guide me to a cottage about a mile from the city, where I should be in perfect safety."

"I see the device," cried Leonard. "But, why—why did you trust her?"

"What could I do?" rejoined Nizza. "To stay was as bad as to fly, and might have been worse. At all events, I had no distrust. My companion opened the gate, and called to some person without. It was profoundly dark; but I could perceive a carriage, or some other vehicle, at a little distance. Alarmed at the sight, I whispered my fears to my companion, and would have retreated; but she laid hold of my hand, and detained me. The next moment I felt a rude grasp upon my arm. Before I could cry out, a hand was placed over my mouth so closely as almost to stifle me; and I was forced into the carriage by two persons, who seated themselves on either side of me, threatening to put me to death if I made the slightest noise. The carriage was then driven off at a furious pace. For some miles it pursued the high road, and then struck into a lane, where, in consequence of the deep and dangerous ruts, the driver was obliged to relax his speed. But in spite of all his caution, one of the wheels sunk into a hole, and in the efforts to extricate it, the carriage was overturned. No injury was sustained either by me or the others inside, and the door being forced open without much difficulty, we were let out. One of my captors kept near me, while the other lent his assistance to the coachman to set the carriage to rights. It proved, however, to be so much damaged, that it could not proceed; and, after considerable delay, my conductors ordered the coachman to remain with it till further assistance could be sent; and, taking the horses, one of them, notwithstanding my resistance, placed me beside him, and galloped off. Having ridden about five miles, we crossed an extensive common, and passed an avenue of trees, which brought us to the entrance of an old house. Our arrival seemed to be expected; for the instant we appeared, the gate was opened, and the old woman you have just seen, and who is called Mrs. Carteret, together with a dumb African, named Hassan, appeared at it. Some muttered discourse passed between my conductors and these persons, which ended in my being committed to the care of Mrs. Carteret who led me upstairs to a

richly-furnished chamber, and urged me to take some refreshment before I retired to rest, which, however, I declined."

"Still, you saw nothing of Sir Paul Parravicin?" asked Leonard.

"On going downstairs next morning, he was the first person I beheld," replied Nizza. "Falling upon his knees, he implored my pardon for the artifice he had practised, and said he had been compelled to have recourse to it in order to save me from the king. He then began to plead his own suit; but finding his protestations of passion of no effect, he became yet more importunate; when, at this juncture, one of the men who had acted as my conductor on the previous night suddenly entered the room, and told him he must return to Oxford without an instant's delay, as the king's attendants were in search of him. Casting a look at me that made me tremble, he then departed; and though I remained more than two months in that house, I saw nothing more of him."

"Did you not attempt to escape during that time?" asked Leonard.

"I was so carefully watched by Mrs. Carteret and Hassan, that it would have been vain to attempt it," she replied. "About a week ago, the two men who had conducted me to my place of captivity, again made their appearance, and told me I must accompany them to London. I attempted no resistance, well aware it would be useless; and as the journey was made by by-roads, three days elapsed before we reached the capital. We arrived at night, and I almost forgot my own alarm in the terrible sights I beheld at every turn. It would have been useless to call out for assistance, for there was no one to afford it. I asked my conductors if they had brought me there to die, and they answered, sternly, 'It depended on myself.' At Ludgate we met Chowles, the coffin-maker, and he brought us to this house. Yesterday, Sir Paul Parravicin made his appearance, and told me he had brought me hither to be out of the king's way. He then renewed his odious solicitations. I resisted him as firmly as before; but he was more determined; and I might have been reduced to the last extremity but for your arrival, or for the terrible disorder that has seized me. But I have spoken enough of myself. Tell me what has become of Amabel?"

"She, too, has got the plague," replied Leonard, mournfully.

"Alas! alas!" cried Nizza, bursting into tears; "she is so dear to you, that I grieve for her far more than for myself."

"I have not seen her since I last beheld you," said Leonard, greatly touched by the poor girl's devotion. "She was carried off by the Earl of Rochester on the same night that you were taken from Kingston Lisle by the king."

"And she has been in his power ever since?" demanded Nizza, eagerly.

"Ever since," repeated Leonard.

"The same power that has watched over me, I trust has protected her," cried Nizza, fervently.

"I cannot doubt it," replied Leonard. "She would now not be alive were it otherwise. But I have now something of importance to disclose to you. You remember the stranger we met near the plague-pit in Finsbury Fields, and whose child I buried?"

"Perfectly," replied Nizza.

"What if I tell you he is your father?" said Leonard.

"What!" cried Nizza, in the utmost surprise. "Have I, then, been mistaken all these years in supposing the piper to be my father?"

"You have," replied Leonard. "I cannot explain more to you at present; but a few hours will reveal all. Thirlby is the name of your father. Have you ever heard it before?"

"Never," returned Nizza. "It is strange what you tell me. I have often reproached myself for not feeling a stronger affection for the piper, who always treated me with the kindness of a parent. But it now seems the true instinct was wanting. Tell me your reasons for supposing this person to be my father."

As Leonard was about to reply, the door was opened by Mrs. Carteret, who said that Sir Paul Parravicin had just returned with Doctor Hodges and another gentleman. The words were scarcely uttered, when Thirlby rushed into the room, and, flinging himself on his knees before the couch, cried, "At last I have found you—my child! my child!" The surprise which Nizza must have experienced at such an address was materially lessened by what Leonard had just told her; and, after earnestly regarding the stranger for some time, she exclaimed, in a gentle voice, "My father!"

Thirlby sprang to his feet, and would have folded her in his arms, if Doctor Hodges, who by this time had reached the couch, had not prevented him. "Touch her not, or you destroy yourself," he cried.

"I care not if I do," rejoined Thirlby. "The gratification would be cheaply purchased at the price of my life; and if I could preserve hers by the sacrifice, I would gladly make it."

"No more of this," cried Hodges, impatiently, "or you will defeat any attempt I may make to cure her. You had better not remain here. Your presence agitates her."

Gazing wistfully at his daughter, and scarcely able to tear himself away, Thirlby yielded at last to the doctor's advice, and quitted the room. He was followed by Leonard, who received a hint to the same effect. On reaching the adjoining room, they found Sir Paul Parravicin walking to and fro in an agitated manner. He immediately came up to Thirlby, and, in an anxious but deferential tone, inquired how he had found Nizza? The latter shook his head, and, sternly declining any further conversation, passed on with the apprentice to an outer room. He then flung himself into a chair, and appeared lost in deep and bitter reflection. Leonard was unwilling to disturb him; but at last his own anxieties compelled him to break silence.

"Can you tell me aught of Amabel?" he asked.

"Alas! no," replied Thirlby, rousing himself. "I have had no time to inquire about her, as you shall hear. After leaving you on the bridge, I went into Southwark, and hurrying through all the principal streets, inquired from every watchman I met whether he had seen any person answering to Doctor Hodges's description, but could hear nothing of him. At last I gave up the quest, and, retracing my steps, was proceeding along Cannon-street, when I descried a person a little in advance of me, whom I thought must be the doctor, and, calling out to him, found I was not mistaken. I had just reached him, when two other persons turned the corner of Nicholas-lane. On seeing us, one of them ran up to the doctor, exclaiming, 'By Heaven, the very person I want!' It was Sir Paul Parravicin; and he instantly explained his errand. Imagine the feelings with which I heard his account of the illness of my daughter. Imagine, also, the horror I must have experienced in recognising in her persecutor my—"

The sentence was not completed, for at that moment the door was opened by Sir Paul Parravicin, who, advancing towards Thirlby, begged, in the same deferential tone as before, to have a few words with him.

"I might well refuse you," replied Thirlby, sternly, "but it is necessary we should have some explanation of what has occurred."

"It is," rejoined Parravicin, "and, therefore, I have sought you." Thirlby arose, and accompanied the knight into the outer room, closing the door after him. More than a quarter of an hour—it seemed an age to Leonard—elapsed, and still no one came. Listening intently, he heard voices in the next room. They were loud and angry, as if in quarrel. Then all was quiet, and at last Thirlby reappeared, and took his seat beside him.

"Have you seen Doctor Hodges?" inquired the apprentice, eagerly.

"I have," replied Thirlby—"and he speaks favourably of my poor child. He has administered all needful remedies, but as it is necessary to watch their effect, he will remain with her some time longer."

"And, meanwhile, I shall know nothing of Amabel," cried Leonard, in a tone of bitter disappointment.

"Your anxiety is natural," returned Thirlby, "but you may rest satisfied, if Doctor Hodges has seen her, he has done all that human aid can effect. But as you must perforce wait his coming forth, I will endeavour to beguile the tedious interval by relating to you so much of my history as refers to Nizza Macascree."

After a brief pause, he commenced. "You must know, then, that in my youth I became desperately enamoured of a lady named Isabella Morley. She was most beautiful—but I need not enlarge upon her attractions, since you have beheld her very image in Nizza. When I first met her she was attached to another, but I soon rid myself of my rival. I quarrelled with him, and slew him in a duel. After a long and urgent suit, for the successful issue of which I was mainly indebted to my rank and wealth, which gave great influence with her parents, Isabella became mine. But I soon found out she did not love me. In consequence of this discovery, I became madly jealous, and embittered her life and my own by constant, and, now I know too well, groundless suspicions. She had borne me a son, and in the excess of my jealous fury, fancying the child was not my own, I threatened to put it to death. This violence led to the unhappy result I am about to relate. Another child was born, a daughter—need I say Nizza, or to give her her proper name, Isabella, for she was so christened after her mother—and one night—one luckless night,—maddened by some causeless doubt, I snatched the innocent babe from her mother's arms, and if I had not been prevented by the attendants, who rushed into the room on hearing their mistress's shrieks, should have destroyed her. After awhile, I became pacified, and on reviewing my conduct more calmly on the morrow, bitterly reproached myself, and hastened to express my penitence to my wife. 'You will never have an opportunity of repeating your violence,' she said; 'the object of your cruel and unfounded suspicions is gone.'—'Gone!' I exclaimed; 'whither?' And as I spoke I looked around the chamber. But the babe was nowhere to be seen. In answer to my inquiries, my wife admitted that she had caused her to be removed to a place of safety, but refused, even on my most urgent entreaties, accompanied by promises of amended conduct, to tell me where. I next interrogated the servants, but they professed entire ignorance of the matter. For three whole days I made ineffectual search for the child, and offered large rewards to any one who would bring her to me. But they failed to produce her; and repairing to my wife's chamber, I threatened her with the most terrible consequences if

she persisted in her vindictive project. She defied me, and, transported with rage, I passed my sword through her body, exclaiming as I dealt the murderous blow, 'You have sent the brat to her father—to your lover, madam.' Horror and remorse seized me the moment I had committed the ruthless act, and I should have turned my sword against myself, if I had not been stayed by the cry of my poor victim, who implored me to hold my hand. 'Do not add crime to crime,' she cried; 'you have done me grievous wrong. I have not, indeed, loved you, because my affections were not under my control, but I have been ever true to you, and this I declare with my latest breath. I freely forgive you, and pray God to turn your heart.' And with these words she expired. I was roused from the stupefaction into which I was thrown by the appearance of the servants. Heaping execrations upon me, they strove to seize me; but I broke through them, and gained a garden at the back of my mansion, which was situated on the bank of the Thames, not far from Chelsea. This garden ran down to the river side, and was defended by a low wall, which I leapt, and plunged into the stream. A boat was instantly sent in pursuit of me, and a number of persons ran along the banks, all eager for my capture. But being an excellent swimmer, I tried to elude them, and as I never appeared again, it was supposed I was drowned."

"And Nizza, or as I ought now to call her, Isabella, was confided, I suppose, to the piper?" inquired Leonard.

"She was confided to his helpmate," replied Thirlby, "who had been nurse to my wife. Mike Macascree was one of my father's servants, and was in his younger days a merry, worthless fellow. The heavy calamity under which he now labours had not then befallen him. On taking charge of my daughter, his wife received certain papers substantiating the child's origin, together with a miniature, and a small golden amulet. The papers and miniature were delivered by her on her death-bed to the piper, who showed them to me to-night."

"And the amulet I myself have seen," remarked Leonard.

"To resume my own history," said Thirlby—"after the dreadful catastrophe I have related, I remained concealed in London for some months, and was glad to find the report of my death generally believed. I then passed over into Holland, where I resided for several years, in the course of which time I married the widow of a rich merchant, who died soon after our union, leaving me one child." And he covered his face with his hands to hide his emotion. After awhile he proceeded:

"Having passed many years, as peacefully as one whose conscience was so heavily burdened as mine could hope to pass them, in Amsterdam, I last summer brought my daughter, around whom my affections were closely twined, to London, and took up my



abode in the eastern environs of the city. There again I was happy—too happy!—until at last the plague came. But why should I relate the rest of my sad story?" he added, in a voice suffocated with emotion—"you know it as well as I do."

"You said you had a son," observed Leonard, after a pause—"Is he yet living?"

"He is," replied Thirlby, a shade passing over his countenance. "On my return to England I communicated to him through Judith Malmayns, who is my foster-sister, that I was still alive, telling him the name I had adopted, and adding, I should never disturb him in the possession of his title and estates."

"Title!" exclaimed Leonard.

"Ay, title!" echoed Thirlby. "The title I once bore was that of Lord Argentine."

"I am glad to hear it," said Leonard, "for I began to fear Sir Paul Parravicin was your son."

"Sir Paul Parravicin, or, rather, the Lord Argentine, for such is his rightful title, is my son," returned Thirlby; "and I lament to own I am his father. When among his worthless associates,—nay, even with the king—he drops the higher title, and assumes that by which you have known him; and it is well he does so, for his actions are sufficient to tarnish a far nobler name than that he bears. Owing to this disguise I knew not he was the person who carried off my daughter. But, thank Heaven, another and fouler crime has been spared us. All these things have been strangely explained to me to-night. And thus, you see, young man, the poor piper's daughter turns out to be the Lady Isabella Argentine." Before an answer could be returned, the door was opened by Hodges, and both starting to their feet, hurried towards him.

## Old Saint Paul's Volume IV by William Harrison Ainsworth

### IV.

#### THE TRIALS OF AMABEL.

It will now be necessary to return to the period of Amabel's abduction from Kingston Lisle. The shawl thrown over her head prevented her cries from being heard; and, notwithstanding her struggles, she was placed on horseback before a powerful man, who galloped off with her along the Wantage-road. After proceeding at a rapid pace for about two miles, her conductor came to a halt, and she could distinguish the sound of other horsemen approaching. At first she hoped it might prove a rescue; but she was quickly undeceived. The shawl was removed, and she beheld the Earl of Rochester, accompanied by Pillichody, and some half-dozen mounted attendants. The earl would have transferred her to his own steed, but she offered such determined resistance to the arrangement, that he was compelled to content himself with riding by her aide. All his efforts to engage her in conversation were equally unsuccessful. She made no reply to his remarks, but averted her gaze from him; and, whenever he approached, shrank from him with abhorrence. The earl, however, was not easily repulsed, but continued his attentions and discourse, as if both had been favourably received.

In this way they proceeded for some miles, one of the earl's attendants, who was well acquainted with the country, being in fact a native of it, serving as their guide. They had quitted the Wantage-road, and leaving that ancient town, renowned as the birthplace of the great Alfred, on the right, had taken the direction of Abingdon and Oxford. It was a lovely evening, and their course led them through many charming places. But the dreariest waste would have been as agreeable as the richest prospect to Amabel. She noted neither the broad meadows, yet white from the scythe, nor the cornfields waving with their deep and abundant, though yet immature crops; nor did she cast even a passing glance at any one of those green spots which every lane offers, and upon which the eye of the traveller ordinarily delights to linger. She rode beneath a natural avenue of trees, whose branches met overhead like the arches of a cathedral, and was scarcely conscious of their pleasant shade. She heard neither the song of the wooing thrush, nor the cry of the startled blackbird, nor the evening hymn of the soaring lark. Alike to her was the gorse-covered common, along which they swiftly speeded, and the steep hill-side up which they more swiftly mounted. She breathed not the delicious fragrance of the new-mown hay, nor listened to the distant lowing herds, the bleating sheep, or the cawing rooks. She thought of nothing but her perilous situation,—heard nothing but the voice of Rochester,—felt nothing but the terror inspired by his presence.

As the earl did not desire to pass through any village, if he could help it, his guide led him along the most unfrequented roads; but in spite of his caution, an interruption occurred which had nearly resulted in Amabel's deliverance. While threading a narrow lane, they came suddenly upon a troop of haymakers, in a field on the right, who, up to that moment, had been hidden from view by the high hedges. On seeing them, Amabel screamed loudly for assistance, and was instantly answered by their shouts. Rochester ordered his men to gallop forward, but the road winding round the meadow, the haymakers were enabled to take a shorter cut and intercept them. Leaping the hedge, a stout fellow rushed towards Amabel's conductor, and seized the bridle of his steed. He was followed by two others, who would have instantly liberated the captive girl, if the earl had not, with great presence of mind, cried out, "Touch her not, as you value your lives! She is ill of the plague!"

At this formidable announcement, which operated like magic upon Amabel's defenders, and made them fall back more quickly than the weapons of the earl's attendants could have done, they retreated, and communicating their fears to their comrades, who were breaking through the hedge in all directions, and hurrying to their aid, the whole band took to their heels, and, regardless of Amabel's continued shrieks, never stopped till they supposed themselves out of the reach of infection. The earl was thus at liberty to pursue his way unmolested, and laughing heartily at the success of his stratagem, and at the consternation he had created among the haymakers, pressed forward.

Nothing further occurred till, in crossing the little river Ock, near Lyford, the horse ridden by Amabel's conductor missed its footing, and precipitated them both into the water. No ill consequences followed the accident. Throwing himself into the shallow stream, Rochester seized Amabel, and placed her beside him on his own steed. A deathly paleness overspread her countenance, and a convulsion shook her frame as she was thus brought into contact with the earl, who, fearing the immersion might prove dangerous in her present delicate state of health, quickened his pace to procure assistance. Before he had proceeded a hundred yards, Amabel fainted. Gazing at her with admiration, and pressing her inanimate frame to his breast, Rochester imprinted a passionate kiss on her cheek.

"By my soul!" he mentally ejaculated, "I never thought I could be so desperately enamoured. I would not part with her for the crown of these realms."

While considering whither he should take her, and much alarmed at her situation, the man who acted as guide came to his relief. Halting till the earl came up, he said, "If you want assistance for the young lady, my lord, I can take you to a good country inn, not far

from this, where she will be well attended to, and where, as it is kept by my father, I can answer that no questions will be asked."

"Precisely what I wish, Sherborne," replied Rochester. "We will halt there for the night. Ride on as fast as you can."

Sherborne struck spurs into his steed, and passing Kingston Bagpuze, reached the high road between Abingdon and Faringdon, at the corner of which stood the inn in question,—a good-sized habitation, with large stables and a barn attached to it. Here he halted, and calling out in a loud and authoritative voice, the landlord instantly answered the summons; and, on being informed by his son of the rank of his guest, doffed his cap, and hastened to assist the earl to dismount. But Rochester declined his services, and bidding him summon his wife, she shortly afterwards made her appearance in the shape of a stout middle-aged dame. Committing Amabel to her care, the earl then alighted, and followed them into the house.

The Plough, for so the inn was denominated, was thrown into the utmost confusion by the arrival of the earl and his suite. All the ordinary frequenters of the inn were ejected, while the best parlour was instantly prepared for the accommodation of his lordship and Pillichody. But Rochester was far more anxious for Amabel than himself, and could not rest for a moment till assured by Dame Sherborne that she was restored to sensibility, and about to retire to rest. He then became easy, and sat down to supper with Pillichody. So elated was he by his success, that, yielding to his natural inclination for hard drinking, he continued to revel so freely and so long with his follower, that daybreak found them over their wine, the one toasting the grocer's daughter, and the other Patience, when they both staggered off to bed.

A couple of hours sufficed Rochester to sleep off the effects of his carouse. At six o'clock he arose, and ordered his attendants to prepare to set out without delay. When all was ready, he sent for Amabel, but she refused to come downstairs, and finding his repeated messages of no avail, he rushed into her room, and bore her, shrieking to his steed.

In an hour after this, they arrived at an old hall, belonging to the earl, in the neighbourhood of Oxford. Amabel was entrusted to the care of a female attendant, named Prudence, and towards evening, Rochester, who was burning with impatience for an interview, learnt, to his infinite disappointment, that she was so seriously unwell, that if he forced himself into her presence, her life might be placed in jeopardy. She continued in the same state for several days, at the end of which time, the surgeon who attended her, and who was a creature of the earl's, pronounced her out of danger. Rochester then sent her word by Prudence that he must see her in the course of that day,

and a few hours after the delivery of the message, he sought her room. She was much enfeebled by illness, but received him with great self-possession.

"I cannot believe, my lord," she said, "that you desire to destroy me, and when I assure you—solemnly assure you, that if you continue to persecute me thus, my death, will be the consequence, I am persuaded you will desist, and suffer me to depart."

"Amabel," rejoined the earl, passionately, "is it possible you can be so changed towards me? Nothing now interferes to prevent our union."

"Except my own determination to the contrary, my lord," she replied. "I can never be yours."

"Wherefore not?" asked the earl, half angrily, half reproachfully.

"Because I know and feel that I should condemn myself to wretchedness," she replied. "Because—for since your lordship will force the truth from me, I must speak out—I have learnt to regard your character in its true light,—and because my heart is wedded to heaven."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the earl, contemptuously; "you have been listening so long to your saintly father's discourses, that you fancy them applicable to yourself. But you are mistaken in me," he added, altering his tone; "I see where the main difficulty lies. You think I am about to delude you, as before, into a mock marriage. But I swear to you you are mistaken. I love you so well that I would risk my temporal and eternal happiness for you. It will rejoice me to raise you to my own rank—to place you among the radiant beauties of our sovereign's court, the brightest of whom you will outshine, and to devote my whole life to your happiness."

"It is too late," sighed Amabel.

"Why too late?" cried the earl, imploringly. "We have gone through severe trials, it is true. I have been constantly baffled in my pursuit of you, but disappointment has only made me love you more devotedly. Why too late? What is to prevent our nuptials from taking place to-day—to-morrow—when you will? The king himself shall be present at the ceremony, and shall give you away. Will this satisfy your scruples. I know I have offended you. I know I deserve your anger. But the love that prompted me to act thus, must also plead my pardon."

"Strengthen me!" she murmured, looking supplicatingly upwards.

"Strengthen me, for my trial is very severe."

"Be not deceived, Amabel," continued Rochester, yet more ardently; "that you love me I am well assured, however strongly you may at this moment persuade yourself to the contrary. Be not governed by your father's strait-laced and puritanical opinions. Men, such as he is, cannot judge of fiery natures like mine. I myself have had to conquer a stubborn and rebellious spirit,—the demon pride. But I have conquered. Love has achieved the victory,—love for you. I offer you my heart, my hand, my title. A haughty noble makes this offer to a grocer's daughter. Can you—will you refuse me?"

"I can and do, my lord," she replied. "I have achieved a yet harder victory. With me, principle has conquered love. I no longer respect you, no longer love you—and, therefore, cannot wed you."

"Rash and obstinate girl," cried the earl, unable to conceal his mortification; "you will bitterly repent your inconsiderate conduct. I offer you devotion such as no other person could offer you, and rank such as no other is likely to offer you. You are now in my power, and you shall be mine,—in what way rests with yourself. You shall have a week to consider the matter. At the end of that time, I will again renew my proposal. If you accept it, well and good. If not, you know the alternative." And without waiting for a reply, he quitted the room.

He was as good as his word. During the whole of the week allowed Amabel for consideration, he never intruded upon her, nor was his name at any time mentioned by her attendants. If she had been, indeed, Countess of Rochester, she could not have been treated with greater respect than was shown her. The apartment allotted her opened upon a large garden, surrounded by high walls, and she walked within it daily. Her serenity of mind remained undisturbed; her health visibly improved; and, what was yet more surprising, she entirely recovered her beauty. The whole of her time not devoted to exercise, was spent in reading, or in prayer. On the appointed day, Rochester presented himself. She received him with the most perfect composure, and with a bland look, from which he augured favourably. He waved his hand to the attendants, and they were alone.

"I came for your answer, Amabel," he said; "but I scarcely require it, being convinced from your looks that I have nothing to fear. Oh! why did you not abridge this tedious interval? Why not inform me you had altered your mind? But I will not reproach you. I am too happy to complain of the delay?"

"I must undeceive you, my lord," returned Amabel, gravely. "No change has taken place in my feelings. I still adhere to the resolution I had come to when we last parted."

"How!" exclaimed the earl, his countenance darkening, and the evil look which Amabel had before noticed taking possession of it. "One moment lured on, and next rebuffed.

But no—no!" he added, constraining himself, "you cannot mean it. It is not in woman's nature to act thus. You have loved me—you love me still. Make me happy—make yourself happy."

"My lord," she replied, "strange and unnatural as my conduct may appear, you will find it consistent. You have lost the sway you had once over me, and, for the reasons I have already given you, I can never be yours."

"Oh, recall your words, Amabel," he cried, in the most moving tones he could command; "if you have no regard for me—at least have compassion. I will quit the court if you desire it; will abandon title, rank, wealth; and live in the humblest station with you. You know not what I am capable of when under the dominion of passion. I am capable of the darkest crimes, or of the brightest virtues. The woman who has a man's heart in her power may mould it to her own purposes, be they good or ill. Reject me, and you drive me to despair, and plunge me into guilt. Accept me, and you may lead me into any course, you please."

"Were I assured of this—" cried Amabel.

"Rest assured of it," returned the earl, passionately. "Oh, yield to impulses of natural affection, and do not suffer a cold and calculating creed to chill your better feelings. How many a warm and loving heart has been so frozen! Do not let yours be one of them. Be mine! be mine!"

Amabel looked at him earnestly for a moment; while he, assured that he had gained his point, could not conceal a slightly triumphant smile.

"Now, your answer!" he cried. "My life hangs upon it."

"I am still unmoved," she replied, coldly, and firmly.

"Ah!" exclaimed the earl with a terrible imprecation, and starting to his feet. "You refuse me. Be it so. But think not that you shall escape me. No, you are in my power, and I will use it. You shall be mine and without the priest's interference. I will not degrade myself by an alliance with one so lowly born. The strongest love is nearest allied to hatred, and mine has become hatred—bitter hatred. You shall be mine, I tell you, and when I am indifferent to you, I will cast you off. Then, when you are neglected, despised, shunned, you will regret—deeply but unavailingly—your rejection of my proposals."

"No, my lord, I shall never regret it," replied Amabel, "and I cannot sufficiently rejoice that I did not yield to the momentary weakness that inclined me to accept them. I thank you for the insight you have afforded me into your character."

"You have formed an erroneous opinion of me, Amabel," cried the earl, seeing his error, and trying to correct it. "I am well nigh distracted by conflicting emotions. Oh, forgive my violence—forget it."

"Readily," she replied; "but think not I attach the least credit to your professions."

"Away, then, with further disguise," returned the earl, relapsing into his furious mood, "and recognise in me the person I am—or, rather the person you would have me be. You say you are immovable. So am I; nor will I further delay my purpose."

Amabel, who had watched him uneasily during this speech, retreated a step, and taking a small dagger from a handkerchief in which she kept it concealed, placed its point against her breast.

"I well know whom I have to deal with, my lord," she said, "and am, therefore, provided against the last extremity. Attempt to touch me, and I plunge this dagger into my heart."

"Your sense of religion will not allow you to commit so desperate a deed," replied the earl, derisively.

"My blood be upon your head, my lord," she rejoined; "for it is your hand that strikes the blow, and not my own. My honour is dearer to me than life, and I will unhesitatingly sacrifice the one to preserve the other. I have no fear but that the action, wrongful though it be, will be forgiven me."

"Hold!" exclaimed the earl, seeing from her determined look and manner that she would unquestionably execute her purpose. "I have no desire to drive you to destruction. Think over what I have said to you, and we will renew the subject tomorrow."

"Renew it when you please, my lord, my answer will still be the same," she replied. "I have but one refuge from you—the grave—and thither, if need be, I will fly." And as she spoke, she moved slowly towards the adjoining chamber, the door of which she fastened after her.

"I thought I had some experience of her sex," said Rochester to himself, "but I find I was mistaken. To-morrow's mood, however, may be unlike to-day's. At all events, I must take my measures differently."



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### V.

#### THE MARRIAGE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Unwilling to believe he had become an object of aversion to Amabel, Rochester renewed his solicitations on the following day, and calling into play his utmost fascination of manner, endeavoured to remove any ill impression produced by his previous violence. She was proof, however, against his arts; and though he never lost his mastery over himself, he had some difficulty in concealing his chagrin at the result of the interview. He now began to adopt a different course, and entering into long discussions with Amabel, strove by every effort of wit and ridicule, to shake and subvert her moral and religious principles. But here again he failed; and once more shifting his ground, affected to be convinced by her arguments. He entirely altered his demeanour, and though Amabel could not put much faith in the change, it was a subject of real rejoicing to her. Though scarcely conscious of it herself, he sensibly won upon her regards, and she passed many hours of each day in his society without finding it irksome. Seeing the advantage he had gained, and well aware that he should lose it by the slightest indiscretion, Rochester acted with the greatest caution. The more at ease she felt with him, the more deferential did he become; and before she was conscious of her danger, the poor girl was once more on the brink of the precipice.

It was about this time that Leonard Holt, as has been previously intimated, discovered her retreat, and contrived, by clambering up a pear-tree which was nailed against the wall of the house, to reach her chamber-window. Having received her assurance that she had resisted all Rochester's importunities, the apprentice promised to return on the following night with means to effect her liberation, and departed. Fully persuaded that she could now repose confidence in the earl, Amabel acquainted him, the next morning, with Leonard's visit, adding that he would now have an opportunity of proving the sincerity of his professions by delivering her up to her friends.

"Since you desire it," replied the earl, who heard her with an unmoved countenance, though internally torn with passion, "I will convey you to your father myself. I had hoped," he added with a sigh, "that we should never part again."

"I fear I have been mistaken in you, my lord," rejoined Amabel, half-repenting her frankness.

"Not so," he replied. "I will do anything you require, except deliver you to this hateful apprentice. If it is your pleasure, I repeat, I will take you back to your father."

"Promise me this, my lord, and I shall be quite easy," cried Amabel, joyfully.

"I do promise it," he returned. "But oh! why not stay with me, and complete the good work you have begun?"

Amabel averted her head, and Rochester sighing deeply, quitted the room. An attendant shortly afterwards came to inform her that the earl intended to start for London without delay, and begged her to prepare for the journey. In an hour's time, a carriage drove to the door, and Rochester having placed her and Prudence in it, mounted his horse, and set forth. Late on the second day they arrived in London, and passing through the silent and deserted streets, the aspect of which struck terror into all the party, shaped their course towards the city. Presently they reached Ludgate, but instead of proceeding to Wood-street, the carriage turned off on the right, and traversing Thames-street, crossed London Bridge. Amabel could obtain no explanation of this change from Prudence; and her uneasiness was not diminished when the vehicle, which was driven down a narrow street on the left immediately after quitting the bridge, stopped at the entrance of a large court-yard. Rochester, who had already dismounted, assisted her to alight, and in answer to her hasty inquiries why he had brought her thither, told her he thought it better to defer taking her to her father till the morrow. Obligated to be content with this excuse, she was led into the house, severely reproaching herself for her indiscretion. Nothing, however, occurred to alarm her that night. The earl was even more deferential than before, and assuring her he would fulfil his promise in the morning, confided her to Prudence.

The house whither she had been brought was large and old-fashioned. The rooms had once been magnificently fitted up, but the hangings and furniture were much faded, and had a gloomy and neglected air. This was especially observable in the sleeping-chamber appointed for her reception. It was large and lofty, panelled with black and shining oak, with a highly-polished floor of the same material, and was filled with cumbrous chests and cabinets, and antique high-backed chairs. But the most noticeable object was a large state-bed, with a heavy square canopy, covered, with the richest damask, woven with gold, and hung with curtains of the same stuff, though now decayed and tarnished. A chill crept over Amabel as she gazed around.

"I cannot help thinking," she observed to Prudence, "that I shall breathe my last in this room, and in that bed."

"I hope not, madam," returned the attendant, unable to repress a shudder.

Nothing more was said, and Amabel retired to rest. But not being able to sleep, and having vainly tried to compose herself, she arose and opened the window. It was a serene and beautiful night, and she could see the smooth river sparkling in the starlight, and flowing at a hundred yards' distance at the foot of the garden. Beyond, she could indistinctly perceive the outline of the mighty city, while nearer, on the left, lay the bridge. Solemnly across the water came the sound of innumerable bells, tolling for those who had died of the plague, and were now being borne to their last home. While listening to these sad sounds, another, but more doleful and appalling noise, caught her ears. It was the rumbling of cart-wheels in the adjoining street, accompanied by the ringing of a hand-bell, while a hoarse-voice cried, "Bring out your dead! bring out your dead!" On hearing this cry, she closed the window and retired. Morning broke before sleep visited her weary eyelids, and then, overcome by fatigue, she dropped into a slumber, from which she did not awake until the day was far advanced. She found Prudence sitting by her bedside, and alarmed by the expression of her countenance, anxiously inquired what was the matter?

"Alas! madam," replied the attendant, "the earl has been taken suddenly ill. He set out for Wood-street the first thing this morning, and has seen your father, who refuses to receive you. On his return, he complained of a slight sickness, which has gradually increased in violence, and there can be little doubt it is the plague. Advice has been sent for. He prays you not to disturb yourself on his account, but to consider yourself sole mistress of this house, whatever may befall him."

Amabel passed a miserably anxious day. A fresh interest had been awakened in her heart in behalf of the earl, and the precarious state in which she conceived him placed did not tend to diminish it. She made many inquiries after him, and learned that he was worse, while the fearful nature of the attack could not be questioned. On the following day Prudence reported that the distemper had made such rapid and terrible progress, that his recovery was considered almost hopeless.

"He raves continually of you, madam," said the attendant, "and I have no doubt he will expire with your name on his lips."

Amabel was moved to tears by the information, and withdrawing into a corner of the room, prayed fervently for the supposed sufferer. Prudence gazed at her earnestly and compassionately, and muttering something to herself, quitted the room. The next day was the critical one (so it was said) for the earl, and Amabel awaited, in tearful anxiety, the moment that was to decide his fate. It came, and he was pronounced out of danger. When the news was brought the anxious girl, she fainted.

A week passed, and the earl, continued to improve, and all danger of infection—if any such existed—being at an end, he sent a message to Amabel, beseeching her to grant him an interview in his own room. She willingly assented, and, following the attendant, found him stretched upon a couch. In spite of his paleness and apparent debility, however, his good looks were but little impaired, and his attire, though negligent, was studiously arranged for effect. On Amabel's appearance he made an effort to rise, but she hastened to prevent him. After thanking her for her kind inquiries, he entered into a long conversation with her, in the course of which he displayed sentiments so exactly coinciding with her own, that the good opinion she had already begun to entertain for him was soon heightened into the liveliest interest. They parted, to meet again on the following day—and on the day following that. The bloom returned to the earl's countenance, and he looked handsomer than ever. A week thus passed, and at the end of it, he said—"To-morrow I shall be well enough to venture forth again, and my first business shall be to proceed to your father, and see whether he is now able to receive you."

"The plague has not yet abated, my lord," she observed, blushing.

"True," he replied, looking passionately at her. "Oh, forgive me, Amabel," he added, taking her hand, which she did not attempt to withdraw. "Forgive me, if I am wrong. But I now think your feelings are altered towards me, and that I may venture to hope you will be mine?"

Amabel's bosom heaved with emotion. She tried to speak, but could not. Her head declined upon his shoulder, and her tears flowed fast. "I am answered," he cried, scarcely able to contain his rapture, and straining her to his bosom.

"I know not whether I am doing rightly," she murmured, gazing at him through her tears, "but I believe you mean me truly. God forgive you if you do not."

"Have no more doubts," cried the earl. "You have wrought an entire change in me. Our union shall not be delayed an hour. It shall take place in Saint Saviour's to-night."

"Not to-night," cried Amabel, trembling at his eagerness—"to-morrow."

"To-night, to-night!" reiterated the earl, victoriously. And he rushed out of the room.

Amabel was no sooner left to herself than she repented what she had done. "I fear I have made a false step," she mused; "but it is now too late to retreat, and I will hope for the best. He cannot mean to deceive me."

Her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of Prudence, who came towards her with a face full of glee. "My lord has informed me of the good news," she said. "You are to be wedded to him to-day. I have expected it all along, but it is somewhat sudden at last. He is gone in search of the priest, and in the mean time has ordered me to attire you for the ceremony. I have several rich dresses for your ladyship—for so I must now call you—to choose from."

"The simplest will suit me best," replied Amabel, "and do not call me ladyship till I have a right to that title."

"That will be so soon that I am sure there can be no harm in using it now," returned Prudence. "But pray let me show you the dresses."

Amabel suffered herself to be led into another room, where she saw several sumptuous female habiliments, and selecting the least showy of them, was soon arrayed in it by the officious attendant. More than two hours elapsed before Rochester returned, when he entered Amabel's chamber, accompanied by Sir George Etherege and Pillichody. A feeling of misgiving crossed Amabel, as she beheld his companions.

"I have had some difficulty in finding a clergyman," said the earl, "for the rector of Saint Saviour's has fled from the plague. His curate, however, will officiate for him, and is now in the church."

Amabel fixed a searching look upon him. "Why are these gentlemen here?" she asked.

"I have brought them with me," rejoined Rochester, "because, as they were aware of the injury I once intended you, I wish them to be present at its reparation."

"I am satisfied," she replied.

Taking her hand, the earl then led her to a carriage, which conveyed them to Saint Saviour's. Just as they alighted, the dead-cart passed, and several bodies were brought towards it. Eager to withdraw her attention from the spectacle, Rochester hurried her into the old and beautiful church. In another moment they were joined by Etherege and Pillichody, and they proceeded to the altar, where the priest, a young man, was standing. The ceremony was then performed, and the earl led his bride back to the carriage. On their return they had to undergo another ill-omened interruption. The dead-cart was stationed near the gateway, and some delay occurred before it could be moved forward.

Amabel, however, suffered no further misgiving to take possession of her. Deeming herself wedded to the earl, she put no constraint on her affection for him, and her

happiness, though short-lived, was deep and full. A month passed away like a dream of delight. Nothing occurred in the slightest degree to mar her felicity. Rochester seemed only to live for her—to think only of her. At the end of this time, some indifference began to manifest itself in his deportment to her, and he evinced a disposition to return to the court and to its pleasures.

"I thought you had for ever abandoned them, my dear lord," said Amabel, reproachfully.

"For awhile I have," he replied, carelessly.

"You must leave me, if you return to them," she rejoined.

"If I must, I must," said the earl.

"You cannot mean this, my lord," she cried, bursting into tears. "You cannot be so changed."

"I have never changed since you first knew me," replied Rochester.

"Impossible!" she cried, in a tone of anguish; "you have not the faults—the vices, you once had."

"I know not what you call faults and vices, madam," replied the earl sharply, "but I have the same qualities as heretofore."

"Am I to understand, then," cried Amabel, a fearful suspicion of the truth breaking upon her, "that you never sincerely repented your former actions?"

"You are to understand it," replied Rochester.

"And you deceived me when you affirmed the contrary?"

"I deceived you," he replied.

"I begin to suspect," she cried, with a look of horror and doubt, "that the attack of the plague was feigned."

"You are not far wide of the truth," was the reply.

"And our marriage?" she cried—"our marriage? Was that feigned likewise?"

"It was," replied Rochester, calmly.

Amabel looked at him fixedly for a few minutes, as if she could not credit his assertion, and then receiving no contradiction, uttered a wild scream, and rushed out of the room. Rochester followed, and saw her dart with lightning swiftness across the court-yard. On gaining the street, he perceived her flying figure already at some distance; and greatly alarmed, started in pursuit. The unfortunate girl was not allowed to proceed far. Two persons who were approaching, and who proved to be Etherege and Pillichody, caught hold of her, and detained her till Rochester came up. When the latter attempted to touch her, she uttered such fearful shrieks, that Etherege entreated him to desist. With some difficulty she was taken back to the house. But it was evident that the shock had unsettled her reason. She alternately uttered wild, piercing screams, or broke into hysterical laughter. The earl's presence so much increased her frenzy, that he gladly withdrew.

"This is a melancholy business, my lord," observed Etherege, as they quitted the room together, "and I am sorry for my share in it. We have both much to answer for."

"Do you think her life in danger?" rejoined Rochester.

"It would be well if it were so," returned the other; "but I fear she will live to be a perpetual memento to you of the crime you have committed."

Amabel's delirium produced a high fever, which continued for three days. Her screams were at times so dreadful, that her betrayer shut himself up in the furthest part of the house, that he might not hear them. When at last she sank into a sleep like that of death, produced by powerful opiates, he stole into the room, and gazed at her with feelings which those who watched his countenance did not envy. It was hoped by the surgeon in attendance, that when the violence of the fever abated, Amabel's reason would be restored. But it was not so. Her faculties were completely shaken, and the cause of her affliction being effaced from her memory, she now spoke of the Earl of Rochester with her former affection.

Her betrayer once ventured into her presence, but he did not repeat the visit. Her looks and her tenderness were more than even his firmness could bear, and he hurried away to hide his emotion from the attendants. Several days passed on, and as no improvement took place, the earl, who began to find the stings of conscience too sharp for further endurance, resolved to try to deaden the pangs by again plunging into the dissipation of the court. Prudence had been seized by the plague, and removed to the pest-house, and not knowing to whom to entrust Amabel, it at last occurred to him that Judith Malmayns would be a fitting person, and he accordingly sent for her from Saint

Paul's, and communicated his wishes to her, offering her a considerable reward for the service. Judith readily undertook the office, and the earl delayed his departure for two days, to see how all went on; and finding the arrangements, to all appearances, answer perfectly, he departed with Etherege and Pillichody.

Ever since the communication of the fatal truth had been made to her by the earl, his unfortunate victim had occupied the large oak-panelled chamber, on entering which so sad a presentiment had seized her; and she had never quitted the bed where she thought she would breathe her last. On the night of Rochester's departure she made many inquiries concerning him from Judith Malmayns, who was seated in an old broad-cushioned, velvet-covered chair, beside her, and was told that the king required his attendance at Oxford, but that he would soon return. At this answer the tears gathered thickly in Amabel's dark eyelashes, and she remained silent. By-and-by she resumed the conversation.

"Do you know, nurse," she said, with a look of extreme anxiety, "I have forgotten my prayers. Repeat them to me, and I will say them after you."

"My memory is as bad as your ladyship's," replied Judith, contemptuously. "It is so long since I said mine, that I have quite forgotten them."

"That is wrong in you," returned Amabel, "very wrong. When I lived with my dear father, we had prayers morning and evening, and I was never so happy as then. I feel it would do me good if I could pray as I used to do."

"Well, well, all in good time," replied Judith. "As soon as you are better, you shall go back to your father, and then you can do as you please."

"No, no, I cannot go back to him," returned Amabel. "I am the Earl of Rochester's wife—his wedded wife. Am I not Countess of Rochester?"

"To be sure you are," replied Judith—"to be sure."

"I sometimes think otherwise," rejoined Amabel, mournfully.

"And so my dear lord is gone to Oxford?"

"He is," returned Judith, "but he will be back soon. And now," she added, with some impatience, "you have talked quite long enough. You must take your composing draught, and go to sleep."



With this she arose, and stepping to the table which stood by the side of the bed, filled a wine-glass with the contents of a silver flagon, and gave it to her. Amabel drank the mixture, and complaining of its nauseous taste, Judith handed her a plate of fruit from the table to remove it. Soon after this she dropped asleep, when the nurse arose, and taking a light from the table, cautiously possessed herself of a bunch of keys which were placed in a small pocket over Amabel's head, and proceeded to unlock a large chest that stood near the foot of the bed. She found it filled with valuables—with chains of gold, necklaces of precious stones, loops of pearl, diamond crosses, and other ornaments. Besides these, there were shawls and stuffs of the richest description. While contemplating these treasures, and considering how she should carry them off without alarming the household, she was startled by a profound sigh; and looking towards the bed, perceived to her great alarm, that Amabel had opened her eyes, and was watching her.

"What are you doing there, nurse?" she cried.

"Only looking at these pretty things, your ladyship," replied Judith, in an embarrassed tone.

"I hope you are not going to steal them?" said Amabel.

"Steal them?" echoed Judith, alarmed. "Oh, no! What should make your ladyship think so?"

"I don't know," said Amabel; "but put them by, and bring the keys to me."

Judith feigned compliance, but long before she had restored the things to the chest, Amabel had again fallen asleep. Apprised by her tranquil breathing of this circumstance, Judith arose; and shading the candle with her hand, crept noiselessly towards the bed. Dark thoughts crossed her as she gazed at the unfortunate sleeper; and moving with the utmost caution, she set the light on the table behind the curtains, and had just grasped the pillow, with the intention of plucking it from under Amabel's head, and of smothering her with it, when she felt herself restrained by a powerful grasp, and turning in utmost alarm, beheld the Earl of Rochester.

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### VI.

#### THE CERTIFICATE.

"Wretch!" cried the earl. "An instinctive dread that you would do your poor charge some injury brought me back, and I thank Heaven I have arrived in time to prevent your atrocious purpose."

"Your lordship would have acted more discreetly in staying away," replied Judith, recovering her resolution; "and I would recommend you not to meddle in the matter, but to leave it to me. No suspicion shall alight on you, nor shall it even be known that her end was hastened. Leave the house as secretly as you came, and proceed on your journey with a light heart. She will never trouble you further."

"What!" exclaimed Rochester, who was struck dumb for the moment by surprise and indignation, "do you imagine I would listen to such a proposal? Do you think I would sanction her murder?"

"I am sure you would, if you knew as much as I do," replied Judith, calmly. "Hear me, my lord," she continued, drawing him to a little distance from the bed, and speaking in a deep low tone. "You cannot marry Mistress Mallet while this girl lives."

Rochester looked sternly and inquiringly at her. "You think your marriage was feigned," pursued Judith; "that he was no priest who performed the ceremony; and that no other witnesses were present except Sir George Etherege and Pillichody. But you are mistaken. I and Chowles were present; and he who officiated was a priest. The marriage was a lawful one; and yon sleeping girl, who, but for your ill-timed interference, would, ere this, have breathed her last, is to all intents and purposes Countess of Rochester."

"A lie!" cried the earl, furiously.

"I will soon prove it to be truth," rejoined Judith. "Your retainer and unscrupulous agent, Major Pillichody, applied to Chowles to find some one to personate a clergyman in a mock marriage, which your lordship wished to have performed, and promised a handsome reward for the service. Chowles mentioned the subject to me, and we speedily contrived a plan to outwit your lordship, and turn the affair to our advantage."

The earl uttered an ejaculation of rage.

"Being acquainted with one of the minor canons of Saint Paul's, a worthy and pious young man, named Vincent," pursued Judith, utterly unmoved by Rochester's anger, "who resided hard by the cathedral, we hastened to him, and acquainted him with the design, representing ourselves as anxious to serve the poor girl, and defeat your lordship's wicked design—for such we termed it. With a little persuasion, Mr. Vincent consented to the scheme. Pillichody was easily duped by Chowles's statement, and the ceremony was fully performed."

"The whole story is a fabrication," cried the earl, with affected incredulity.

"I have a certificate of the marriage," replied Judith, "signed by Mr. Vincent, and attested by Chowles and myself. If ever woman was wedded to man, Amabel is wedded to your lordship."

"If this is the case, why seek to destroy her?" demanded the earl. "Her life must be of more consequence to you than her removal."

"I will deal frankly with you," replied Judith. "She discovered me in the act of emptying that chest, and an irresistible impulse prompted me to make away with her. But your lordship is in the right. Her life is valuable to me, and she shall live. But, I repeat, you cannot marry the rich heiress, Mistress Mallet."

"Temptress!" cried the earl, "you put frightful thoughts into my head."

"Go your ways," replied Judith, "and think no more about her. All shall be done that you require. I claim as my reward the contents of that chest."

"Your reward shall be the gallows," rejoined the earl, indignantly. "I reject your proposal at once. Begone, wretch! or I shall forget you are a woman, and sacrifice you to my fury. Begone!"

"As your lordship pleases," she replied; "but first, the Countess of Rochester shall be made acquainted with her rights." So saying, she broke from him, and rushed to the bed.

"What are you about to do?" he cried.

"Waken her," rejoined Judith, slightly shaking the sleeper.

"Ah!" exclaimed Amabel, opening her eyes, and gazing at her with a terrified and bewildered look.

"His lordship is returned," said Judith.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Amabel, raising herself in the bed. "Where is he?—Ah, I see him.—Come to me, my dear lord," she added, stretching out her arms to him, "Come to me."

But evil thoughts kept Rochester motionless. "Oh! come to me, my lord," cried Amabel, in a troubled tone, "or I shall begin to think what I have dreamed is true, and that I am not wedded to you."

"It was merely a dream, your ladyship," observed Judith. "I will bear witness you are wedded to his lordship, for I was present at the ceremony."

"I did not see you," remarked Amabel.

"I was there, nevertheless," replied Judith.

"I am sorry to hear it," replied Amabel.

"Your ladyship would rejoice if you knew all," returned Judith, significantly.

"Why so?" inquired the other, curiously.

"Because the clergyman who married you is dead of the plague," was the answer; "and it may chance in these terrible times that the two gentlemen who were present at the ceremony may die of the same distemper, and then there will be no one left but me and another person to prove that your marriage was lawful."

"But its lawfulness will never be questioned, my dear lord, will it?" asked Amabel, looking beseechingly at Rochester.

"Never," replied Judith, producing a small piece of parchment, "while I hold this certificate."

"Give me that document," said the earl, in an undertone, to her.

Judith directed her eyes towards the chest. "It is yours," said the earl, in the same tone as before.

"What are you whispering, my lord?" inquired Amabel, uneasily.

"I am merely telling her to remove that chest, sweetheart," he replied.

"Do not send it away," cried Amabel. "It contains all the ornaments and trinkets you have given me. Do you know," she added in a whisper, "I caught her looking into it just now, and I suspect she was about to steal something."

"Pshaw!" cried the earl, "she acted by my directions. Take the chest away," he added to Judith.

"Has your lordship no further orders?" she rejoined, significantly.

"None whatever," he replied, with a frown.

"Before you go, give me the certificate," cried Amabel. "I must have it."

Judith pretended not to hear her. "Give it her," whispered the earl, "I will remove it when she falls asleep."

Nodding acquiescence, Judith took the parchment from her bosom, and returned with it to the bed. While this was passing, the earl walked towards the chest, and cast his eye over such of its contents as were scattered upon the floor. Judith watched him carefully, and when his back was turned, drew a small lancet, and affecting to arrange her dress, slightly punctured Amabel's neck. The pain was trifling, but the poor girl uttered a cry.

"What is the matter?" cried the earl, turning suddenly round.

"Nothing—nothing," replied Judith; "a pin in my sleeve pricked her as I was fastening her cap, that was all. Her death is certain," she added to herself, "she is inoculated with the plague-venom."

She then went to the chest, and replacing everything within it, removed it, by the help of the Earl of Rochester, into the adjoining room. "I will send for it at midnight," she said.

"It shall be delivered to your messenger," rejoined the earl; "but you will answer for Chowles's secrecy?"

"I will," returned Judith, with a meaning smile. "But you may take my word for it you will not be troubled long with your wife. If I have any judgment respecting the plague, she is already infected."

"Indeed!" cried Rochester—"then—" but he checked himself, and added, "I do not believe it. Begone."  
"He does believe it for all that," muttered Judith, as he slunk away.

Rochester returned to Amabel, and sat by her until she fell asleep, when he took the parchment from beneath the pillow where she had placed it. Examining it, he found it, as Judith had stated, a certificate of his marriage, signed by Mark Vincent, the clergyman who had officiated, and duly attested. Having carefully perused it, he held it towards the taper, with the intention of destroying it. As he was about to perpetrate this unworthy action, he looked towards the bed. The soft sweet smile that played upon the sleeper's features, turned him from his purpose. Placing the parchment in his doublet, he left the room, and summoning a female attendant, alleged some reason for his unexpected return, and ordered her to watch by the bedside of her mistress. Giving some further directions, he threw himself upon a couch and sought a few hours' repose. At daybreak, he repaired to Amabel's chamber, and finding her wrapped in a peaceful slumber, he commended her to the attendant, and departed.

On awaking, Amabel complained of an uneasy sensation on her neck, and the attendant examining the spot, found, to her great alarm, a small red pustule. Without making a single observation, she left the room, and despatched a messenger after the Earl of Rochester to acquaint him that the countess was attacked by the plague. Such was the terror inspired by this dread disorder, that the moment it was known that Amabel was attacked by it, the whole household, except an old woman, fled. This old woman, whose name was Batley, and who acted as the earl's housekeeper, took upon herself the office of nurse. Before evening, the poor sufferer, who had endured great agony during the whole of the day, became so much worse, that Mrs. Batley ran out in search of assistance. She met with a watchman, who told her that a famous apothecary, from Clerkenwell, named Sibbald, who was celebrated for the cures he had effected, had just entered a neighbouring house, and offered to await his coming forth, and send him to her. Thanking him, Mrs. Batley returned to the house, and presently afterwards, Sibbald made his appearance. His looks and person had become even more repulsive than formerly. He desired to be led to the patient, and on seeing her, shook his head. He examined the pustule, which had greatly increased in size, and turning away, muttered, "I can do nothing for her."

"At least make the attempt," implored Mrs. Batley. "She is the Countess of Rochester. You shall be well rewarded—and if you cure her, the earl will make your fortune."

"If his lordship would change stations with me, I could not cure her," replied Sibbald. "Let me look at her again," he added, examining the pustule. "There is a strange appearance about this tumour. Has Judith Malmayns attended her?"

"She was here yesterday," replied Mrs. Batley.

"I thought so," he muttered. "I repeat it is all over with her." And he turned to depart.

"Do not leave her thus, in pity do not!" cried the old woman, detaining him. "Make some effort to save her. My lord loves her to distraction, and will abundantly reward you."

"All I can do is to give her something to allay the pain," returned Sibbald. And drawing a small phial from his doublet, he poured its contents into a glass, and administered it to the patient.

"That will throw her into a slumber," he said, "and when she wakes, she will be without pain. But her end will be not far off."

Mrs. Batley took a purse from a drawer in one of the cabinets, and gave it to the apothecary, who bowed and retired. As he had foretold, Amabel fell into a heavy lethargy, which continued during the whole of the night. Mrs. Batley, who had never left her, noticed that an extraordinary and fearful change had taken place in her countenance, and she could not doubt that the apothecary's prediction would be realized. The tumour had increased in size, and was surrounded by a dusky brown circle, which she knew to be a bad sign. The sufferer's eyes, when she opened them, and gazed around, had a dim and glazed look. But she was perfectly calm and composed, and, as had been prognosticated, free from pain. She had, also, fully regained her faculties, and seemed quite aware of her dangerous situation.

But the return of reason brought with it no solace. On the contrary, the earl's treachery rushed upon her recollection, and gave her infinitely more anguish than the bodily pain she had recently endured. She bedewed the pillow with her tears, and fervently prayed for forgiveness for her involuntary fault. Mrs. Batley was deeply moved by her affliction, and offered her every consolation in her power.

"I would the plague had selected me for a victim instead of your ladyship," she said. "It is hard to leave the world at your age, possessed of beauty, honours, and wealth. At mine, it would not signify."

"You mistake the cause of my grief," returned Amabel; "I do not lament that my hour is at hand, but—" and her emotion so overpowered her that she could not proceed.

"Do not disturb yourself further, dear lady," rejoined the old woman.

"Let the worst happen, I am sure you are well prepared to meet your Maker."

"I once was," replied Amabel in a voice of despair, "but now—Oh, Heaven forgive me!"

"Shall I fetch some holy minister to pray beside you, my lady?" said Mrs. Batley; "one to whom you can pour forth the sorrows of your heart?"

"Do so! oh, do!" cried Amabel, "and do not call me lady. I am not worthy to be placed in the same rank as yourself."

"Her wits are clean gone," muttered Mrs. Batley, looking at her compassionately.

"Heed me not," cried Amabel; "but if you have any pity for the unfortunate, do as you have promised."

"I will—I will," said Mrs. Batley, departing.

Half an hour, which scarcely seemed a moment to the poor sufferer, who was employed in fervent prayer, elapsed before Mrs. Batley returned. She was accompanied by a tall man, whom Amabel recognised as Solomon Eagle.

"I have not been able to find a clergyman," said the old woman, "but I have brought a devout man who is willing to pray with you."

"Ah!" exclaimed the enthusiast, starting as he beheld Amabel. "Can it be Mr. Bloundel's daughter?"

"It is," returned Amabel with a groan. "Leave us, my good woman," she added to Mrs. Batley, "I have something to impart to Solomon Eagle which is for his ear alone." The old woman instantly retired, and Amabel briefly related her hapless story to the enthusiast.

"May I hope for forgiveness?" she inquired, as she concluded.

"Assuredly," replied Solomon Eagle, "assuredly! You have not erred wilfully, but through ignorance, and therefore have committed no offence. You will be forgiven—but woe to your deceiver, here and hereafter."

"Oh' say not so," she cried. "May Heaven pardon him as I do. While I have strength left I will pray for him." And she poured forth her supplications for the earl in terms so earnest and pathetic, that the tears flowed down Solomon Eagle's rough cheek. At this



juncture, hasty steps were heard in the adjoining passage, and the door opening, admitted the Earl of Rochester, who rushed towards the bed.

"Back!" cried Solomon Eagle, pushing him forcibly aside. "Back!"

"What do you here?" cried Rochester, fiercely.

"I am watching over the death-bed of your victim," returned Solomon Eagle. "Retire, my lord. You disturb her."

"Oh, no," returned Amabel, meekly. "Let him come near me." And as Solomon Eagle drew a little aside, and allowed the earl to approach, she added, "With my latest breath I forgive you, my lord, for the wrong you have done me, and bless you."

The earl tried to speak, but his voice was suffocated by emotion. As soon as he could find words, he said, "Your goodness completely overpowers me, dearest Amabel. Heaven is my witness, that even now I would make you all the reparation in my power were it needful. But it is not so. The wrong I intended you was never committed. I myself was deceived. I intended a feigned marriage, but it was rightfully performed. Time will not allow me to enter into further particulars of the unhappy transaction, but you may credit my assertion when I tell you you are indeed my wife, and Countess of Rochester."

"If I thought so, I should die happy," replied Amabel.

"Behold this proof!" said Rochester, producing the certificate.

"I cannot read it," replied Amabel. "But you could not have the heart to deceive me now."

"I will read it, and you well know I would not deceive you," cried Solomon Eagle, casting his eye over it—"His lordship has avouched the truth," he continued. "It is a certificate of your marriage with him, duly signed and attested."

"God be thanked," ejaculated Amabel, fervently. "God be thanked! You have been spared that guilt, and I shall die content."

"I trust your life will long be spared," rejoined the earl. Amabel shook her head.

"There is but one man in this city who could save her," whispered Solomon Eagle, and I doubt even his power to do so.'

"Who do you mean?" cried Rochester, eagerly.

"Doctor Hodges," replied the enthusiast.

"I know him well," cried the earl. "I will fly to him instantly. Remain with her till I return."

"My lord—my dear lord," interposed Amabel, faintly, "you trouble yourself needlessly. I am past all human aid."

"Do not despair," replied the earl. "Many years of happiness are, I trust, in store for us. Do not detain me. I go to save you. Farewell for a short time."

"Farewell, for ever, my lord," she said, gently pressing his hand. "We shall not meet again. Your name will be coupled with my latest breath."

"I shall be completely unmanned if I stay here a moment longer," cried the earl, breaking from her, and rushing out of the room.

As soon as he was gone, Amabel addressed herself once more to prayer with Solomon Eagle, and in this way an hour passed by. The earl not returning at the end of that time, Solomon Eagle became extremely uneasy, every moment being of the utmost consequence, and summoning Mrs. Batley, committed the patient to her care, and set off in search of Hodges. He hastened to the doctor's house—he was absent—to Saint Paul's—he was not there, but he learnt that a person answering to the earl's description had been making similar inquiries after him.

At last, one of the surgeon's assistants told him that he thought the doctor was gone towards Cornhill, and hoping, accidentally, to meet with him, the enthusiast set off in that direction. While passing near the Exchange, he encountered Leonard, as before related, but did not think fit to acquaint him with more than Amabel's dangerous situation; and he had reason to regret making the communication at all, on finding its effect upon the poor youth. There was, however, no help for it, and placing him in what appeared a situation of safety, he left him.

Rochester, meanwhile, had been equally unsuccessful in his search for Hodges. Hurrying first in one direction and then in another, at the suggestion of the surgeon's assistant, he at last repaired to the doctor's residence, determined to await his return. In half an hour he came, and received the earl, as the old porter stated to Thirlby and Leonard, with angry astonishment. As soon as they were alone, the earl told him all that had occurred, and besought him to accompany him to the poor sufferer.

"I will go to her," said Hodges, who had listened to the recital with mixed feelings of sorrow and indignation, "on one condition—and one only—namely, that your lordship does not see her again without my permission."

"Why do you impose this restriction upon, me sir?" demanded Rochester.

"I do not think it necessary to give my reasons, my lord," returned Hodges; "but I will only go upon such terms."

"Then I must perforce submit," replied the earl; "but I entreat you to set forth-without a moment's delay, or you will be too late."

"I will follow you instantly," rejoined Hodges. "Your lordship can wait for me at the Southwark side of the bridge." He then opened the door, reiterating the terms upon which alone he would attend, and the earl departed.

Shortly afterwards he set out, and making the best of his way, found Rochester at the appointed place. The latter conducted him to the entrance of the habitation, and indicating a spot where he would remain till his return, left him. Hodges soon found his way to the chamber of the sufferer, and at once perceived that all human aid was vain. She exhibited much pleasure at seeing him, and looked round, as if in search of the earl. Guessing her meaning, the physician, who now began to regret the interdiction he had placed upon him, told her that he was the cause of his absence.

"It is well," she murmured—"well." She then made some inquiries after her relatives, and receiving a satisfactory answer, said, "I am glad you are come. You will be able to tell my father how I died."

"It will be a great comfort to him to learn the tranquil frame in which I have found you," replied Hodges.

"How long have I to live?" asked Amabel, somewhat quickly. "Do not deceive me."

"You had better make your preparations without delay," returned Hodges.

"I understand," she replied; and joining her hands upon her breast, she began to murmur a prayer.

Hodges, who up to this moment had had some difficulty in repressing his emotion, withdrew to a short distance to hide his fast-falling tears. He was roused shortly after, by a sudden and startling cry from the old woman.

"Oh, sir, she is going! she is going!" ejaculated Mrs. Batley. He found the exclamation true. The eyes of the dying girl were closed. There was a slight quiver of the lips, as if she murmured some name—probably Rochester's—and then all was over.

Hodges gazed at her sorrowfully for some time. He then roused himself, and giving some necessary directions to the old woman respecting the body, quitted the house. Not finding the earl at the place he had appointed to meet him, after waiting for a short time, he proceeded, towards his own house. On the way he was met by Thirlby and Parravicin, as previously related, and conducted to the house in Nicholas-lane. It will not be necessary to recapitulate what subsequently occurred. We shall, therefore, proceed to the point of time when he quitted his new patient, and entered the room where Thirlby and Leonard were waiting for him. Both, as has been stated, rushed towards him, and the former eagerly asked his opinion respecting his daughter.

"My opinion is positive," replied Hodges. "With care, she will undoubtedly recover."

"Heaven be thanked!" cried Thirlby, dropping on his knees.

"And now, one word to me, sir," cried Leonard. "What of Amabel?"

"Alas!" exclaimed the doctor, "her troubles are ended."

"Dead!" shrieked Leonard.

"Ay, dead!" repeated the doctor. "She died of the plague to-night."

He then proceeded to detail briefly all that had occurred. Leonard listened like one stupefied, till he brought his recital to a close, and then asking where the house in which she had died was situated, rushed out of the room, and made his way, he knew not how, into the street. His brain seemed on fire, and he ran so quickly that his feet appeared scarcely to touch the ground. A few seconds brought him to London Bridge. He crossed it, and turning down the street on the left, had nearly reached the house to which he had been directed, when his career was suddenly checked. The gate of the court-yard was opened, and two men, evidently, from their apparel, buriers of the dead, issued from it. They carried a long narrow board between them, with a body wrapped in a white sheet placed upon it. A freezing horror rooted Leonard to the spot where he stood. He could neither move nor utter a cry.

The men proceeded with their burden towards the adjoining habitation, which was marked with a fatal red cross and inscription. Before it stood the dead-cart, partly filled with corpses. The foremost burier carried a lantern, but he held it so low that its light

did not fall upon his burden. Leonard, however, did not require to see the body to know whose it was. The moon was at its full, and shed a ghastly light over the group, and a large bat wheeled in narrow circles round the dead-cart.

On reaching the door of the house, the burier set down the lantern near the body of a young man which had just been thrust forth. At the same moment, Chowles, with a lantern in his hand, stepped out upon the threshold. "Who have you got, Jonas?" he asked.

"I know not," replied the hindmost burier. "We entered yon large house, the door of which stood open, and in one of the rooms found, an old woman in a fainting state, and the body of this young girl, wrapped in a sheet, and ready for the cart. So we clapped it on the board, and brought it away with us."

"You did right," replied Chowles. "I wonder whose body it is."

As he spoke, he held up his lantern, and unfastening it, threw the light full upon the face. The features were pale as marble; calm in their expression, and like those of one wrapped in placid slumber. The long fair hair hung over the side of the board. It was a sad and touching sight.

"Why, as I am a living man, it is the grocer's daughter, Amabel,—somewhile Countess of Rochester!" exclaimed Chowles.

"It is, it is!" cried the earl, suddenly rushing from behind a building where he had hitherto remained concealed. "Whither are you about to take her? Set her down—set her down."

"Hinder them not, my lord," vociferated another person, also appearing on the scene with equal suddenness. "Place her in the cart," cried Solomon Eagle—for he it was—to the bearers. "This is a just punishment upon you, my lord," he added to Rochester, as his injunctions were obeyed—"oppose them not in their duty."

It was not in the earl's power to do so. Like Leonard, he was transfixed with horror. The other bodies were soon placed in the cart, and it was put in motion. At this juncture, the apprentice's suspended faculties were for an instant—and an instant only—restored to him. He uttered a piercing cry, and staggering forward, fell senseless on the ground.

***Free***editorial 