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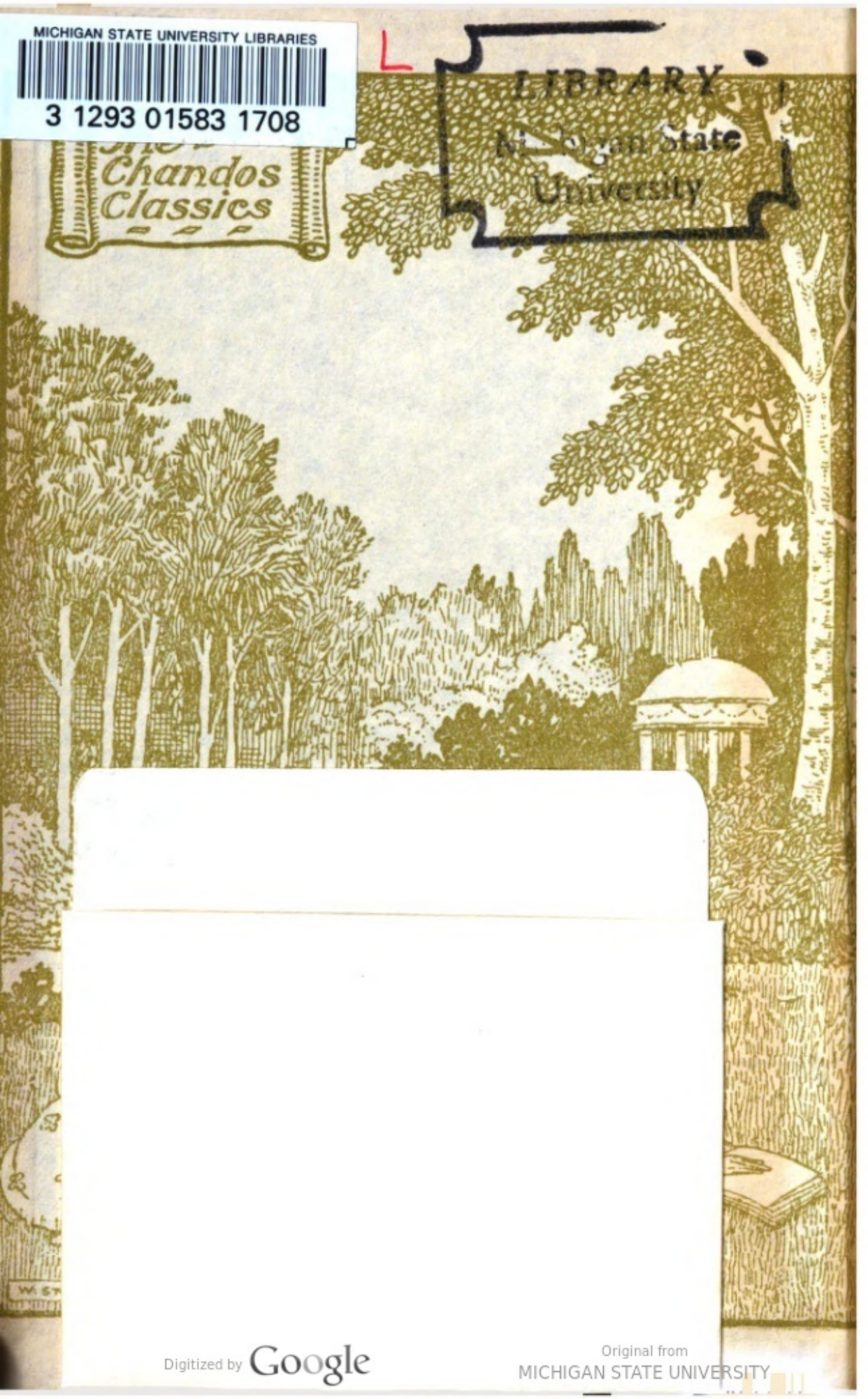

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JACK SHEPPARD

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JACK SHEPPARD

By

W. HARRISON AINSWORTH

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

Printed in Great Britain

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JACK SHEPPARD

EPOCH THE FIRST

1703

JONATHAN WILD

I

The Widow and her Child.

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

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

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

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

"Well, good-night, Mr. Wood," she said, in the deep, hoarse accents of consumption; "and may God Almighty bless and reward you for your kindness! You were always the best of masters to my poor husband; and now you've proved the best of friends to his widow and orphan boy."

"Pooh! pooh! say no more about it," rejoined the man hastily. "I've done no more than my duty, Mrs. Sheppard, and neither deserve, nor desire your thanks.

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'Whoso giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord'; that's my comfort. And such slight relief as I can afford should have been offered earlier, if I'd known where you had taken refuge after your unfortunate husband's——"

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

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

So saying, he re-entered the house, closed the door, and, followed by the widow, proceeded to the fireplace, where a handful of chips, apparently just lighted, crackled within the rusty grate.

The room in which this interview took place had a sordid and miserable look. Rotten, and covered with a thick coat of dirt, the boards of the floor presented a very insecure footing. The bare walls were scored all over with grotesque designs, the chief of which represented the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar. The rest were hieroglyphic characters, executed in red chalk and charcoal. The ceiling had in many places given

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way; the laths had been removed, and, where any plaster remained, it was either mapped and blistered with damps, or festooned with dusty cobwebs. Over an old crazy bedstead was thrown a squalid patchwork counterpane, and upon the counterpane lay a black hood and scarf, a pair of bodice of the cumbrous form in vogue at the beginning of the last century, and some other articles of female attire. On a small shelf near the foot of the bed stood a couple of empty phials, a cracked ewer and basin, a brown jug without a handle, a small tin coffee-pot without a spout, a saucer of rouge, a fragment of looking-glass, and a flask labelled "*Rosa Solis.*" Broken pipes littered the floor, if that can be said to be littered which, in the first instance, was a mass of squalor and filth.

Over the chimney-piece was pasted a handbill, purporting to be "*The last Dying Speech and Confession of* Tom Sheppard, *the Notorious Housebreaker, who suffered at Tyburn on the 25th of February* 1703." This placard was adorned with a rude woodcut, representing the unhappy malefactor at the place of execution. On one side of the handbill a print of the reigning sovereign, Anne, had been pinned over the portrait of William the Third, whose aquiline nose, keen eyes, and luxuriant wig were just visible above the diadem of the queen. On the other, a wretched engraving of the Chevalier de Saint George, or, as he was styled in the label attached to the portrait, James the Third, raised a suspicion that the inmate of the house was not altogether free from some tincture of Jacobitism.

Beneath these prints a cluster of hobnails, driven into the wall, formed certain letters, which, if properly deciphered, produced the words, "*Paul Groves, cobler*"; and under the name, traced in charcoal, appeared the following record of the poor fellow's fate: "*Hung himsel in this room for luv off licker*," accompanied by

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a graphic sketch of the miserable suicide dangling from a beam. A farthing candle, stuck in a bottle-neck, shed its feeble light upon the table, which, owing to the provident kindness of Mr. Wood, was much better furnished with eatables than might have been expected, and boasted a loaf, a knuckle of ham, a meat pie, and a flask of wine.

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

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

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

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

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

"That likeness is the chief cause of my misery," replied the widow, shuddering. "Were it not for that, he would indeed be a blessing and a comfort to

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me. He never cries nor frets, as children generally do, but lies at my bosom, or on my knee, as quiet and as gentle as you see him now. But, when I look upon his innocent face, and see how like he is to his father —when I think of that father's shameful ending, and recollect how free from guilt *he* once was—at such times, Mr. Wood, despair will come over me; and, dear as this babe is to me, far dearer than my own wretched life, which I would lay down for him any minute, I have prayed to Heaven to remove him, rather than he should grow up to be a man, and be exposed to his father's temptations — rather than he should live as wickedly, and die as disgracefully, as his father. And, when I have seen him pining away before my eyes getting thinner and thinner every day, I have sometimes thought my prayers were heard."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Lord bless us!" ejaculated Wood, "how shocking! No, I did *not* know that."

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

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

"Fooled or not," returned Mrs. Sheppard mysteri-

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ously, "old Van told me *one* thing which has come true already."

"What's that?" inquired Wood, with some curiosity

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

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

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

"Nor any one else in his senses," rejoined Wood, with a laugh. "It's not very likely that a babby of nine months old will save *my* life, if I'm to be his friend, as you seem to say, Mrs. Sheppard. But I've not promised to stand by him yet; nor will I, unless he turns out an honest lad—mind that. Of all crafts—and it was the only craft his poor father, who, to do him justice, was one of the best workmen that ever handled a saw or drove a nail, could never understand—of all crafts, I say, to be an honest man is the master-craft. As long as your son observes that precept, I'll befriend him, but no longer."

"I don't desire it, sir," said Mrs. Sheppard meekly.

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

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"Well, sir," gasped Mrs Sheppard.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"If I ask you to part with him, my good woman, it's to better his condition, I suppose, ain't it?" rejoined Wood angrily; for, though he had no serious intention of carrying his proposal into effect, he was rather offended at having it declined. "It's not an offer," he continued, "that I'm likely to make, or you're likely to receive, every day in the year."

And muttering some remarks, which it is needless to repeat, reflecting upon the consistency of the sex, he was preparing once more to depart, when Mrs. Sheppard stopped him.

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

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

"Don't be angry with me, sir," cried the widow, sobbing bitterly; "pray don't. I know I am undeserving of your bounty; but if I were to tell you what hardships I have undergone—to what frightful extremities I have been reduced—and to what infamy I have submitted, to earn a scanty subsistence for this child's sake—if you could feel what it is to stand alone in the world as I do, bereft of all who have ever loved me, and shunned by all who have ever known me, except the worthless and the wretched—if you knew (and Heaven grant you may be spared the knowledge!) how much affliction sharpens love, and how much more dear to me my child has become for every sacrifice I have made for him—if you were

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told all this, you would, I am sure, pity rather than reproach me because I cannot at once consent to a separation which I feel would break my heart. But give me till to-morrow—only till to-morrow—I may be able to part with him then."

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

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

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

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

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

"And that's true," rejoined Mrs. Sheppard; "for if

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I had *not* been a mother, I would not have survived the day on which I became a widow."

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

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

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

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

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

"It may be; but if it shortens the distance and lightens the journey, I care not," retorted the widow, who seemed by this reproach to be roused into sudden eloquence. "To those who, like me, have never been able to get out of the dark and dreary paths of life, the grave is indeed a refuge, and the sooner they reach it the better. The spirit I drink may be poison—it may kill me—perhaps it *is* killing me:—but so would hunger, cold, misery—so would my own thoughts. I should have gone mad without it. Gin is the poor man's friend—his sole set-off against the rich man's luxury. It comforts him when he is most forlorn. It may be treacherous, it may lay up a store of future woe; but it ensures present happiness, and that is

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sufficient. When I have traversed the streets a houseless wanderer, driven with curses from every door where I have solicited alms, and with blows from every gateway where I have sought shelter—when I have crept into some deserted building, and stretched my weary limbs upon a bulk, in the vain hope of repose—or worse than all, when frenzied with want, I have yielded to horrible temptation, and earned a meal in the only way I could earn one—when I have felt, at times like these, my heart sink within me, I have drunk of this drink, and have at once forgotten my cares, my poverty, my guilt. Old thoughts, old feelings, old faces, and old scenes have returned to me, and I have fancied myself happy—as happy as I am now." And she burst into a wild, hysterical laugh.

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

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

"God forbid!" exclaimed Wood fervently. And, as if afraid of prolonging the interview, he added with some precipitation, "But I must be going; I've stayed here too long already. You shall hear from me to-morrow."

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

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

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

"It's mine, I'll be sworn," rejoined Wood. "Well,

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who'd have thought of finding it in this unexpected way!"

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

"By all means," replied the carpenter.

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

"Don't leave him if you're at all fearful, my dear," replied Wood, receiving the little burden with a laugh. "Poor thing!" he muttered, as the widow departed on her errand, "she's seen better days and better circumstances than she'll ever see again, I'm sure. Strange! I could never learn her history. Tom Sheppard was always a close file, and would never tell whom he married. Of this I'm certain, however, she was much too good for him, and was never meant to be a journeyman-carpenter's wife, still less what she is now. Her heart's in the right place, at all events; and, since that's the case, the rest may perhaps come round—that is, if she gets through her present illness. A dry cough's the trumpeter of death. If that's true, she's not long for this world. As to this little fellow, in spite of the Dutchman, who, in my opinion, is more of a Jacobite than a conjurer, and more of a knave than either, he shall never mount a horse foaled by an acorn, if I can help it."

The course of the carpenter's meditations was here interrupted by a loud note of lamentation from the child, who, disturbed by the transfer, and not receiving the gentle solace to which he was ordinarily accustomed, raised his voice to the utmost, and exerted his feeble strength to escape. For a few moments Mr. Wood dandled his little charge to and fro, after the most approved nursery fashion, essaying at the same time

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the soothing influence of an infantine melody proper to the occasion; but failing in his design, he soon lost all patience, and being, as has before been hinted, rather irritable, though extremely well meaning, he lifted the unhappy bantling in the air, and shook him with so much goodwill, that he had well-nigh silenced him most effectually. A brief calm succeeded. But with returning breath came returning vociferations; and the carpenter, with a faint hope of lessening the clamour by change of scene, took up his lantern, opened the door, and walked out.

II

The Old Mint.

Mrs. Sheppard's habitation terminated a row of old ruinous buildings, called Wheeler's Rents; a dirty thoroughfare, part street, and part lane, running from Mint Street, through a variety of turnings, and along the brink of a deep kennel, skirted by a number of petty and neglected gardens in the direction of Saint George's Fields. The neighbouring houses were tenanted by the lowest order of insolvent traders, thieves, mendicants, and other worthless and nefarious characters, who fled thither to escape from their creditors, or to avoid the punishment due to their different offences; for it may be observed that the Old Mint, although divested of some of its privileges as a sanctuary by a recent statute passed in the reign of William the Third, still presented a safe asylum to the debtor, and even continued to do so until the middle of the reign of George the First, when the crying nature of the evil called loudly for a remedy, and another and more sweeping enactment entirely took

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away its immunities. In consequence of the encouragement thus offered to dishonesty, and the security afforded to crime, this quarter of the borough of Southwark was accounted (at the period of this narrative) the grand receptacle of the superfluous villainy of the metropolis. Infested by every description of vagabond and miscreant, it was perhaps a few degrees worse than the rookery near Saint Giles', and the desperate neighbourhood of Saffron Hill at the present time. And yet, on the very side of the sordid tenements and squalid courts above mentioned, where the felon openly made his dwelling, and the fraudulent debtor laughed the object of his knavery to scorn—on this spot, not two centuries ago, stood the princely residence of Charles Brandon, the chivalrous Duke of Suffolk, whose stout heart was a well of honour, and whose memory breathes of loyalty and valour. Suffolk House, as Brandon's palace was denominated, was subsequently converted into a mint by his royal brother-in-law, Henry the Eighth; and, after its demolition, and the removal of the place of coinage to the Tower, the name was still continued to the district in which it had been situated.

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

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of the former occupant of the apartment, Paul Groves, the cobbler, to whom allusion has already been made.

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

A narrow entry, formed by two low walls, communicated with the main thoroughfare; and in this passage, under the cover of a penthouse, stood Wood, with his little burden, to whom it will be necessary to return.

As Mrs. Sheppard did not make her appearance quite so soon as he expected, the carpenter became a a little fidgety, and, having succeeded in tranquilising the child, he thought proper to walk so far down the entry as would enable him to reconnoitre the upper windows of the house. A light was visible in the garret, feebly struggling through the damp atmosphere, for the night was raw and overcast. This light did not remain stationary; but could be seen at one moment glimmering through the rents in the roof, and at another shining through the cracks in the wall, or the broken panes of the casement. Wood was unable to discover the figure of the widow; but he recognised her dry, hacking cough, and was about to call her down if she

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