

Chapter 48

When these thoughts were upon him he would go away, and perhaps not come again in a month's time or longer; but then as the serious part wore off, the lewd part would wear in, and then he came prepared for the wicked part. Thus we lived for some time; thought he did not keep, as they call it, yet he never failed doing things that were handsome, and sufficient to maintain me without working, and, which was better, without following my old trade.

But this affair had its end too; for after about a year, I found that he did not come so often as usual, and at last he left if off altogether without any dislike to bidding adieu; and so there was an end of that short scene of life, which added no great store to me, only to make more work for repentance.

However, during this interval I confined myself pretty much at home; at least, being thus provided for, I made no adventures, no, not for a quarter of a year after he left me; but then finding the fund fail, and being loth to spend upon the main stock, I began to think of my old trade, and to look abroad into the street again; and my first step was lucky enough.

I had dressed myself up in a very mean habit, for as I had several shapes to appear in, I was now in an ordinary stuff-gown, a blue apron, and a straw hat and I placed myself at the door of the Three Cups Inn in St. John Street. There were several carriers used the inn, and the stage-coaches for Barnet,

for Totteridge, and other towns that way stood always in the street in the evening, when they prepared to set out, so that I was ready for anything that offered, for either one or other. The meaning was this; people come frequently with bundles and small parcels to those inns, and call for such carriers or coaches as they want, to carry them into the country; and there generally attend women, porters' wives or daughters, ready to take in such things for their respective people that employ them.

It happened very oddly that I was standing at the inn gate, and a woman that had stood there before, and which was the porter's wife belonging to the Barnet stage-coach, having observed me, asked if I waited for any of the coaches. I told her Yes, I waited for my mistress, that was coming to go to Barnet. She asked me who was my mistress, and I told her any madam's name that came next me; but as it seemed, I happened upon a name, a family of which name lived at Hadley, just beyond Barnet.

I said no more to her, or she to me, a good while; but by and by, somebody calling her at a door a little way off, she desired me that if anybody called for the Barnet coach, I would step and call her at the house, which it seems was an alehouse. I said Yes, very readily, and away she went.

She was no sooner gone but comes a wench and a child, puffing and sweating, and asks for the Barnet coach. I answered presently, 'Here.' 'Do you belong to the Barnet coach?' says she. 'Yes, sweetheart,' said I; 'what do

ye want?' 'I want room for two passengers,' says she. 'Where are they, sweetheart?' said I. 'Here's this girl, pray let her go into the coach,' says she, 'and I'll go and fetch my mistress.' 'Make haste, then, sweetheart,' says I, 'for we may be full else.' The maid had a great bundle under her arm; so she put the child into the coach, and I said, 'You had best put your bundle into the coach too.' 'No,' says she, 'I am afraid somebody should slip it away from the child.' 'Give to me, then,' said I, 'and I'll take care of it.' 'Do, then,' says she, 'and be sure you take of it.' 'I'll answer for it,' said I, 'if it were for #20 value.' 'There, take it, then,' says she, and away she goes.

As soon as I had got the bundle, and the maid was out of sight, I goes on towards the alehouse, where the porter's wife was, so that if I had met her, I had then only been going to give her the bundle, and to call her to her business, as if I was going away, and could stay no longer; but as I did not meet her, I walked away, and turning into Charterhouse Lane, then crossed into Batholomew Close, so into Little Britain, and through the Bluecoat Hospital, into Newgate Street.

To prevent my being known, I pulled off my blue apron, and wrapped the bundle in it, which before was made up in a piece of painted calico, and very remarkable; I also wrapped up my straw hat in it, and so put the bundle upon my head; and it was very well that I did thus, for coming through the Bluecoat Hospital, who should I meet but the wench that had given me the bundle to hold. It seems she was going with her mistress, whom she had

been gone to fetch, to the Barnet coaches.

I saw she was in haste, and I had no business to stop her; so away she went, and I brought my bundle safe home to my governess. There was no money, nor plate, or jewels in the bundle, but a very good suit of Indian damask, a gown and a petticoat, a laced-head and ruffles of very good Flanders lace, and some linen and other things, such as I knew very well the value of.

This was not indeed my own invention, but was given me by one that had practised it with success, and my governess liked it extremely; and indeed I tried it again several times, though never twice near the same place; for the next time I tried it in White Chapel, just by the corner of Petticoat Lane, where the coaches stand that go out to Stratford and Bow, and that side of the country, and another time at the Flying Horse, without Bishopgate, where the Cheston coaches then lay; and I had always the good luck to come off with some booty.

Another time I placed myself at a warehouse by the waterside, where the coasting vessels from the north come, such as from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sunderland, and other places. Here, the warehouses being shut, comes a young fellow with a letter; and he wanted a box and a hamper that was come from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I asked him if he had the marks of it; so he shows me the letter, by virtue of which he was to ask for it, and which

gave an account of the contents, the box being full of linen, and the hamper full of glass ware. I read the letter, and took care to see the name, and the marks, the name of the person that sent the goods, the name of the person that they were sent to; then I bade the messenger come in the morning, for that the warehouse-keeper would not be there any more that night.

Away went I, and getting materials in a public house, I wrote a letter from Mr. John Richardson of Newcastle to his dear cousin Jemmy Cole, in London, with an account that he sent by such a vessel (for I remembered all the particulars to a title), so many pieces of huckaback linen, so many ells of Dutch holland and the like, in a box, and a hamper of flint glasses from Mr. Henzill's glasshouse; and that the box was marked I. C. No. 1, and the hamper was directed by a label on the cording.

About an hour after, I came to the warehouse, found the warehouse-keeper, and had the goods delivered me without any scruple; the value of the linen being about #22.

I could fill up this whole discourse with the variety of such adventures, which daily invention directed to, and which I managed with the utmost dexterity, and always with success.

At length-as when does the pitcher come safe home that goes so very often to the well?-I fell into some small broils, which though they could not affect

me fatally, yet made me known, which was the worst thing next to being found guilty that could befall me.

I had taken up the disguise of a widow's dress; it was without any real design in view, but only waiting for anything that might offer, as I often did. It happened that while I was going along the street in Covent Garden, there was a great cry of 'Stop thief! Stop thief!' some artists had, it seems, put a trick upon a shopkeeper, and being pursued, some of them fled one way, and some another; and one of them was, they said, dressed up in widow's weeds, upon which the mob gathered about me, and some said I was the person, others said no. Immediately came the mercer's journeyman, and he swore aloud I was the person, and so seized on me. However, when I was brought back by the mob to the mercer's shop, the master of the house said freely that I was not the woman that was in his shop, and would have let me go immediately; but another fellow said gravely, 'Pray stay till Mr. ----' (meaning the journeyman) 'comes back, for he knows her.' So they kept me by force near half an hour. They had called a constable, and he stood in the shop as my jailer; and in talking with the constable I inquired where he lived, and what trade he was; the man not apprehending in the least what happened afterwards, readily told me his name, and trade, and where he lived; and told me as a jest, that I might be sure to hear of his name when I came to the Old Bailey.

Some of the servants likewise used me saucily, and had much ado to keep

their hands off me; the master indeed was civiller to me than they, but he would not yet let me go, though he owned he could not say I was in his shop before.

I began to be a little surly with him, and told him I hoped he would not take it ill if I made myself amends upon him in a more legal way another time; and desired I might send for friends to see me have right done me. No, he said, he could give no such liberty; I might ask it when I came before the justice of peace; and seeing I threatened him, he would take care of me in the meantime, and would lodge me safe in Newgate. I told him it was his time now, but it would be mine by and by, and governed my passion as well as I was able. However, I spoke to the constable to call me a porter, which he did, and then I called for pen, ink, and paper, but they would let me have none. I asked the porter his name, and where he lived, and the poor man told it me very willingly. I bade him observe and remember how I was treated there; that he saw I was detained there by force. I told him I should want his evidence in another place, and it should not be the worse for him to speak. The porter said he would serve me with all his heart. 'But, madam,' says he, 'let me hear them refuse to let you go, then I may be able to speak the plainer.'