A TALE OF TWO CITIES.
In Three Volumes.
BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER IV. THE PREPARATION.

WHEN the mail got successfully to Dover, in the course of the forenoon, the head-drawer at the Royal George Hotel opened the coach-door, as his custom was. He did it with some flourish of ceremony, for a nail journey from London in winter was an achievement to congratulate an adventurous traveller upon.

By that time, there was only one adventurous traveller left to be congratulated; for, the two others had been set down at their respective roadside destinations. The mildewy inside of the coach, with its damp and dirty straw, its disagreeable smell, and its obscurity, was rather like a larger sort of dog-kennel. Mr. Lorry, the coffee-room had no other occupant, that gentleman in brown. His breakfast-table was drawn before the fire, and as he sat, with its light shining on him, waiting for the meal, he sat so still, that he might have been sitting for his portrait.

Very orderly and methodical he looked, with a hand on each knee, and a loud watch ticking a sonorous sermon under his flapped waistcoat, as though it pitted its gravity and longevity against the levity and evanescence of the brisk fire. He had a good leg, and was a little vain of it, for his brown stockings fitted sleek and close, and were of a fine texture; his shoes and buckles, though plain, were trim. He wore an odd little sleek crisp flaxen wig, setting very close to his head; which wig, it is to be presumed, was made of hair, but which looked far more as though it were spun from filaments of silk or glass. His linen, though not of a fineness in accordance with his stockings, was as white as the tops of the waves that broke upon the neighbouring beach, or the specks of sail that glinted in the sunlight far at sea. A face, habitually suppressed and quieted, was still lit up by a pair of moist bright eyes that it must have cost their owner, in years gone by, some pains to drill to the composed and reserved expression of Tellson’s Bank. He had a healthy colour in his cheeks, and his eyes that it must have cost their owner, in years gone by, some pains to drill to the composed and reserved expression of Tellson’s Bank. He had a healthy colour in his cheeks, and his face, though lined, bore few traces of anxiety. But, perhaps the confidential bachelor clerks in Tellson’s Bank were principally occupied with the cares of other people; and perhaps second-hand cares, like second-hand clothes, come easily off and on.

Completing his resemblance to a man who was sitting for his portrait, Mr. Lorry dropped off asleep. The arrival of his breakfast roused him, and he said to the drawer, as he moved his chair to it: “I wish accommodation prepared for a young lady who may come here at any time to-day. She may ask for Mr. Jarvis Lorry, or she may only ask for a gentleman from Tellson’s Bank. Please to let me know.”

“Yes, sir. Tellson’s Bank in London, sir.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Lorry.

“Yes, sir. We have oftentimes the honour to entertain your gentlemen in their travelling backwards and forwards betwixt London and

"Yes. We are quite a French house, as well as an English one, as I have said before, sir."

"Not much in the habit of such travelling yourself, I think, sir?"

"Not of late years. It is fifteen years since we—since I—came last from France."

"Indeed, sir? That was before my time here, sir. Before our people's time here, sir. The George was in other hands at that time, sir."

"I believe so."

"But I would hold a pretty wager, sir, that a House like Tellson and Company was flourishing, a matter of fifty, not to speak of fifteen years ago?"

"You might treble that, and say a hundred and fifty, yet not be far from the truth."

"Indeed, sir!"

Rounding his mouth and both his eyes, as he stepped backward from the table, the waiter shifted his napkin from his right arm to his left, dropped into a comfortable attitude, and stood surveying the guest while he ate and drank, as from an observatory or watch-tower. According to the immemorial usage of waiters in all ages.

When Mr. Lorry had finished his breakfast, he went out for a stroll on the beach. The little narrow, crooked town of Dover hid itself away from the beach, and ran its head into the chalk-cliffs, like a marine ostrich. The beach was a desert of heaps of sea and stones tumbling wildly about, and the sea did what it liked, and what it liked was destruction. It thundered at the town, and thundered at the cliffs, and between them and the fire, a young lady of not more than seventeen, in a riding-dress, and still holding her straw travelling-hat by its ribbon, in her hand. As his eyes rested on a slight, short, pretty figure, a quantity of golden hair, a pair of blue eyes that met his own with an inquiring look, and a forehead with a singular capacity (remember, in a slight fixed attention, though it included one of perplexity, or wonder, or alarm, or merely of a bright fixed attention, though it included all the four expressions—as his eyes rested on these things, a sudden vivid likeness passed before him, of a child whom he had held in his arms on the passage across that very Channel, one cold time, when the hail drifted heavily and the sea ran high. The likeness passed away, say, like a breath along the surface of the gaunt pier-head, and nothing more, as the waiter brought the coffee to the table.

A bottle of good claret after dinner does a digger in the red coals no harm, otherwise than as it has a tendency to throw him out of work. Mr. Lorry had been alive a long time, and had just poured out his last glassful of wine with as complete an appearance of satisfaction as is ever to be found in an elderly gentleman of a fresh complexion who has got to the end of a bottle, when a rattling of wheels came up the narrow street, and shuffled into the inn-yard.

He set down his glass untouched. "This is Man's selle!" said he.

In a very few minutes the waiter came in, to announce that Miss Manette had arrived from London, and would be happy to see the gentleman from Tellson's."

"So soon?"

Miss Manette had taken some refreshment on the road, and required none then, and was extremely anxious to see the gentleman from Tellson's immediately, if it suited his pleasure and convenience.

The gentleman from Tellson's had nothing left for it but to empty his glass with an air of stolid desperation, settle his odd little flaxen wig at the ears, and follow the waiter to Miss Manette's apartment. It was a large, dark room, furnished in a funeral manner with black horsecarriage, and loaded with heavy, dark tables. These had been oiled and oiled, until the two tall candles on the table in the middle of the room were gloomily reflected on every leaf: as if they were buried, in deep graves of black mahogany, and no light to speak of could be expected from them until they were dug out.

The obscurity was so difficult to penetrate that Mr. Lorry, picking his way over the well-worn Turkish carpet, supposed Miss Manette to be, for the moment, in some adjacent room, until, having got past the two tall candles, he saw standing to receive him by the table between them and the fire, a young lady of not more than seventeen, in a riding-dress, and still holding her straw travelling-hat by its ribbon, in her hand. As his eyes rested on a slight, short, pretty figure, a quantity of golden hair, a pair of blue eyes that met his own with an inquiring look, and a forehead with a singular capacity (remember, in a slight fixed attention, though it included all the four expressions—as his eyes rested on these things, a sudden vivid likeness passed before him, of a child whom he had held in his arms on the passage across that very Channel, one cold time, when the hail drifted heavily and the sea ran high. The likeness passed away, say, like a breath along the surface of the gaunt pier-head, and nothing more, as the waiter brought the coffee to the table.

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"Pray take a seat, sir." In a very clear and pleasant young voice: a little foreign in its accent, but a very little indeed.

"If I kiss your hand, miss," said Mr. Lorry, with the manners of an earlier date, as he made his formal bow again, and took his seat.

"I received a letter from the Bank, sir, yesterday, informing me that some new intelligence—" or discovery—"The word is not material, miss; either word will do."

"—respecting the small property of my poor father whom I never saw—so long dead—"
Mr. Lorry moved in his chair, and cast a troubled look towards the hospital procession of negro cupids. "As if they had any help for anybody in their absurd baskets!"

She curtsied to him (young ladies made curtseys in those days), with a pretty desire to convey to him that she felt how much older and wiser he was than she. He made her another bow.

"As I was prepared to hear, sir." She mused, and, the moment she raised her eyes, her glance. The young forehead lifted itself and extended them outward with an argumentative smile.

"Are you quite a stranger to me, sir?"
"Am I not?" Mr. Lorry opened his hands, and extended them outward with an argumentative smile.

"Miss Manette, it was I. And you will see how truly I spoke of myself just now, in saying I had no feelings, and that all the relations I have never had any help for scores of our customers. These are mere business relations, miss; there is no friendship in them, no particular interest, nothing like sentiment. I have passed from one to another, in the course of my business life, just as I pass from one of our customers to another in the course of my business day; in short, I have no feelings; I am a mere machine. To proceed—"

"But this is my father's story, sir; and I begin to think"—the curiously roughened forehead was very intent upon him—"that when I was left an orphan, through my mother's surviving my father only two years, it was you who brought me to England. I am almost sure it was you."

Mr. Lorry took the hesitating little hand that clutched his coat beneath the breast, and said, "No more, sir; I have no feeling in these parts of the body."

"Your reception of it, don't need me any more than if I was a speaking machine—truly I am not much else. I will, with your leave, relate to you, miss, the story of one of our customers."

"Story!"

"He seemed wilfully to mistake the word she had repeated, when he added, in a hurry, "Yes, customers; in the banking business we usually call our connexion our customers. He was a French gentleman; a scientific gentleman; a man of great acquirements—a Doctor."

"Not of Beauvais?"

"Why, yes, of Beauvais. Like Monsieur Manette, your father, the gentleman was of Beauvais. Like Monsieur Manette, your father, the gentleman was of repute in Paris. I had the honour of knowing him there. Our relations were business relations, but confidential. I was at that time in our French House, and, had been—oh! twenty years."

"At that time—I may ask, at what time, sir?"

"I speak, miss, of twenty years ago. He married—an English lady—and I was one of the trustees. His affairs, like the affairs of many other French gentlemen and French families, were entirely in Tellson's hands. In a similar way, I, or I have been, trustee of one kind or other for scores of our customers. These are more business relations, miss; there is no friendship in them, no particular interest, nothing like sentiment. I have passed from one to another, in the course of my business life, just as I pass from one of our customers to another in the course of my business day; in short, I have no feelings; I am a mere machine. To proceed—"

"And you will see how truly I spoke of myself just now, in saying I had no feelings, and that all the relations I hold with my fellow-creatures are mere business relations, when you reflect that I have never seen you since. No; you have been the ward of Tellson's House since, and I have been busy with the other business of Tellson's House since.

"Feelings! I have no time for them, no chance of them. I pass my whole life, miss, in turning an immense pecuniary Mangle."

"After this odd description of his daily routine of employment, Mr. Lorry flattened his flaxen wig upon his head with both hands (which was
most unnecessary, for nothing could be flatter than its shining surface was before), and resumed his former attitude.

"So far, miss (as you have remarked), this is the story of your regretted father. Now comes the difference. If your father had not died when he did—Don’t be frightened! How you start!"

She did, indeed, start. And she caught his wrist with both her hands.

"Pray," said Mr. Lorry, in a soothing tone, "As I was saying; if Monsieur Manette had not died; if he had suddenly and silently disappeared; if he had been spirited away; if it had not been difficult to guess to what dreadful place, though no art could trace him; if he had an enemy in some countryman who could exercise a privilege that I in my own time have known the boldest people afraid to speak of in a whisper, across the water, there; for instance, the privilege of filling up blank forms for the consignment of any one to the obligation of a prison for any length of time; if his wife had implored the king, the queen, the court, the clergy, for any tidings of him, and all quite in vain;—then the history of this unfortunate gentleman, the Doctor of Beauvais."

"I entreat you to tell me more, sir."

"You speak collectedly, and you—are collected. That’s good!" (Though his manner was less satisfied than his words.) "A matter of business. Regard it as a matter of business—business that must be done. Now, if this Doctor’s wife, though a lady of great courage and spirit, had suffered so intensely from this cause before her little child was born—"

"The little child was a daughter, sir."

"A daughter. A—a matter of business—don’t be distressed. Miss, if the poor lady had suffered so intensely before her little child was born, that she came to the determination of sparing the poor child the inheritance of any part of the agony she had known the pains of, by rearing her in the belief that her father was dead—No, don’t kneel! In Heaven’s name why should you kneel to me?"

"For the truth. O dear, good, compassionate sir, for the truth!"

"A—a matter of business. You confuse me, and how can I learn any business if I am confused? Let us be clear-headed. If you could kindly mention now, for instance, what nine times ninepence are, or how many shillingings in twenty guineas, it would be so encouraging. I should be so much more at my ease about your state of mind."

Without directly answering to this appeal, she sat so still when he had very gently raised her, and the hands that had not ceased to clasp his wrists were so much more steady than they had been, that she communicated some reassurance to Mr. Jarvis Lorry.

"That’s right, that’s right. Courage! Business! You have business before you; useful business! Miss Manette, your mother took this course with you. And when she died—I believe broken-hearted—having never slackened her unavailing search for your father, she left you, at two years old, to grow to be blooming, beautiful, and happy, without the dark cloud upon you of living in uncertainty whether your father soon wore his heart out in prison, or wasted there through many lingering years."

As he said the words, he looked down, with an admiring pity, on the flowing golden hair; as if he pictured to himself that it might have been already tinged with grey.

"You know that your parents had no great possession, and that what they had was secured to your mother and to you. There has been no new discovery, of money, or of any other property; but—"

He felt his wrist held closer, and he stopped.

The expression in the forehead, which had so particularly attracted his notice, and which was now immovable, had deepened into one of pain and horror.

"But he has been—been found. He is alive. Greatly changed, it is too probable; almost a wreck, it is possible; though we will hope the best. Still, alive. Your father has been taken to the house of an old servant in Paris, and we are going there: I, to identify him, if I can; you, to restore him to life, love, duty, rest, comfort."

A shiver ran through her frame, and from it through his. She said, in a low, distinct, awe-stricken voice, as if she were saying it in a dream, "I am going to see his Ghost! It will be his Ghost—not him!"

Mr. Lorry quietly chafed the hands that held his arm. "There, there, there! See now, see now! The best and the worst are known to you now. You are well on your way to the poor wronged gentleman, and, with a fair sea voyage, and a fair land journey, you will be soon at his dear side."

She repeated in the same tone, sunk to a whisper, "I have been free, I have been happy, yet his Ghost has never haunted me!"

"Only one thing more," said Mr. Lorry, laying stress upon it as a wholesome means of enforcing her attention: "he has been found under another name; his own, long forgotten or long concealed. It would be worse than useless now to inquire which; worse than useless to seek to know whether he has been for years overlooked, or always despicably held prisoner. It would be worse than useless now to make any inquiries, because it would be dangerous. Better
not to mention the subject, anywhere or in any way, and to remove him—for a while at all events—out of France. Even I, safe as an Englishman, and even Tellson’s, important as they are to French credit, avoid all naming of the matter. I carry about me, not a scrap of writing openly referring to it. This is a secret service altogether. My credentials, entries, and memoranda, are all comprehended in the one line, ‘Recalled to Life;’ which may mean anything. But what is the matter! She doesn’t notice a word! Miss Manette!”

Perfectly still and silent, and not even fallen back in her chair, she sat under his hand, utterly insensitive, with her eyes open and fixed upon him, and with that last expression looking as if it were carved or branded into her forehead. So close was her hold upon his arm, that he feared to detach himself lest he should hurt her; therefore he called out loudly for assistance without moving.

A wild-looking woman, whom, even in his agitation, Mr. Lorry observed to be all of a red colour, and to have red hair, and to be dressed in some extraordinary tight-fitting fashion, and to have on her head a most wonderful bonnet like a deaderider wooden measure, and good measure too, or a great Stilton cheese, came running into the room in advance of the inn servants, and soon settled the question of his detachment from his wife. Mr. Lorry was so exceedingly disconcerted by a question so hard to answer, that he could only look on, at a distance, with much fethered sympathy and humility, “that you accompany Miss Manette to France?”

“‘I hope she will do well now,” said Mr. Lorry.

“A likely thing, too!” replied the strong woman. “If it was ever intended that I should go across salt water, do you suppose Providence would have cast my lot in an island?”

This being another question hard to answer, Mr. Jarvis Lorry withdrew to consider it.

THE GOOD OLD AND WHEREAS.

I am not an unreasonable man, but I have my prejudices. Good, wholesome, sterling, British prejudices, which I hold in common with all right-minded inhabitants of this little island, and won’t abide for anybody. Let the gentlemen who write in the newspapers take this fact to heart, and save themselves a world of trouble. What do I want with dinners à la Russe, for example, with all their culinary fripperies? If I dine at home I delight to look at my wife over the top of a hot joint (the bigger the better), while she, dear soul, smiles pleasantly on me through the steam from the pudding. If I honour the theatre with my presence in pursuit of the British Drama (which I can never discover), I don’t go there in expectation of being comfortably, but of being melodramatically excited. And, as this has a tendency to create thirst, I like to have my ginger-beer and oranges brought to me in the pit. If anybody’s knees are damaged in the process, I can’t help that.

When I go to law, or rather when I used to go to law (for the County Courts have robbed the process of one-half its pleasurable excitement), I knew what that meant. Now, I don’t. I solemnly declare that I am so perplexed by the innovating tendencies of this degenerate age, that I don’t know what the law is coming to.

Take that most magnificent and perfect product of the human intellect, built up by the accumulated wisdom of ages—the law of real property. What is it coming to? The old-established, well-appointed legal conveyance is to be taken off the road. Feoffment, grant, release, confirmation, surrender, assignment, deeds, leases, are to be cast away; the legal mind as relics of a bygone age.

But this is not the end of it. The titles tinkered up into a respectable state of soundness, by the gentlemen of ten years’ experience in the trade, are to be registered (as vulgar stoves and coffee-pots are registered, I suppose); the certificate of registration is to circulate as a patent litigation annihilator, guaranteed to effectually quench the professional prying of the most seditious lawyer for ever.