A Tale of Two Cities: Part 09

Charles Dickens
BOOK THE SECOND. THE GOLDEN THREAD.

CHAPTER VII. MONSIEUR THE MARQUIS IN TOWN.

Monsieur, one of the great lords in power at the Court, held his fortnightly reception in his grand hotel in Paris. Monsieur was in his inner room, his sanctuary of sanctuaries, the Holiest of Holiests to the crowd of worshippers in the suite of rooms without. Monsieur was about to take his chocolate. Monsieur could swallow a great many things with ease, and was by some few sullen minds supposed to be rather rapidly swallowing France; but, his morning's chocolate could not so much as get into the throat of Monsieur, without the aid of four strong men besides the Cook.

Yes. It took four men, all a-blaze with gorgeous decoration, and the Chief of them unable to exist with fewer than two gold watches in his pocket, emulative of the noble and chaste fashion set by Monsieur, to conduct the happy chocolate to Monsieur's lips. One lacquey carried the chocolate-pot into the sacred presence; a second, milled and frothed the chocolate with the little instrument he bore for that function; a third, presented the favoured napkin; a fourth (he of the two gold watches) poured the chocolate out. It was impossible for Monsieur to dispense with one of these attendants on the chocolate and hold his high place under the admiring Heavens. Deep would have been the blot upon his escutcheon if his chocolate had been ignobly waited on by only three men; e must have died of two.

Monsieur had one truly noble idea of general public business, which was, to let everything go on in its own way; of particular public business, Monsieur had the other truly noble idea that it must all go his way—tend to his own power and pocket. Of his pleasures, general and particular, Monsieur had the other truly noble idea, that the world was made for them. The text of his order (altered from the original by only a pronoun, which is not worth) ran: "The earth and the fulness thereof are mine, saith Monsieur."

Yet, Monsieur had slowly found that vulgar embarrassments crept into his affairs, both private and public; and he had, as to both classes of affairs, allied himself per force with a Farmer-General. As to finances public, because Monsieur could not make anything at all of them, and must consequently let them out to somebody who could; as to finances private, because Farmer-Generals were rich, and Monsieur, after generations of great luxury and expense, was growing poor. Hence, Monsieur had taken his sister from a convent, while there was yet time to ward off the impending veil, the cheapest garment she could wear, and had bestowed her as a prize upon a very rich Farmer-General, poor in family, Which Farmer-General, carrying an appropriate cane with a golden apple on the top of it, was now among the company in the outer rooms, much prostrated before mankind—always excepting superior mankind of the blood of Monsieur, who, his own wife included, looked down upon him with the loftiest contempt.

A sumptuous man was the Farmer-General. Thirty horses stood in his stables, twenty-four male domestics sat in his halls, six body-women waited on his wife. As one who pretended to do nothing but plunder and forage where he could, the Farmer-General—howsoever his matrimonial relations conduced to social morality—was at least the greatest reality among the personages who attended at the hotel of Monsieur that day.

For, the rooms, though a beautiful scene to look at, and adorned with every device of decoration that the taste and skill of the time could achieve, were, in truth, not a sound business; considered with any reference to the scarecrows in the rags and nightcaps elsewhere (and not so far off, either, that the watching towers of Notre-Dame, almost equidistant from the two
themselves whether they should foam, rage, roar and turn cataleptic, on the spot—thereby setting them right, half of the half-dozen had become members of a fantastic sect of Convulsionists, and were even then considering within their looser lives; all totally unfit for their several callings, all lying horribly in pretending to belong to them, but all nearly or remotely of the order of Monseigneur, and therefore foisted on all public employments from which anything was to be got; these were to be told off by the score and the score. People not immediately connected with Monseigneur or the State, yet equally unconnected with anything that was real, or with lives passed in travelling by any straight road to any true earthly end, were no less abundant. Doctors who made great fortunes out of imaginary remedies for imaginary disorders that never existed, smiled upon their courtly patients in the ante-chambers of Monseigneur. Projectors who had discovered every kind of remedy for the little evils with which the State was troubled, except the remedy of setting to work in earnest to root out a single sin, poured their distracting babble into any ears they could lay hold of, at the reception of Monseigneur. Unbelieving Philosophers who were remodelling the world with words, and making curd-towers of Babel to scale the skies with, talked with Unbelieving Chemists who had an eye on the transmutation of metals, at this wonderful gathering accumulated by Monseigneur. Exquisite gentlemen of the finest breeding, which was at that remarkable time—and has been since—to be known by its fruits of indiffer- ence to every natural subject of human interest, were in the most exemplary state of exhaustion, at the hotel of Monseigneur. Such homes had been found it hard to discover among the angels connected with Monseigneur or the State, yet people not immediately connected with the provinces, Monsieur Orleans, and the rest, to call him, presided in this dainty dress. And who among the company at the grand hotel of Monseigneur were useful for keeping all things in their places. Everybody was dressed for a Fancy Ball that was never to leave off. From the Palaces de la Tulleries, through Monseigneur and the whole Court, through the Chambers, the Tribunals of Justice, and all society (except the scare-crows), the Fancy Ball descended to the Common Executioner: who, in pursuance of the charm, was required to officiate "frizzled, powdered, in a gold-laced coat, pumps, and white silk stockings," while the very stars out! At the gallow's and the wheel—the axe was a rarity—Monseigneur Paris, as it was the episcopal mode among his brother Professors of the provinces, Monseigneur Orleans, and the rest, to call him, presided in this dainty dress. And who among the company at Monseigneur's reception in that seventeen hundred and eightieth year of our Lord, could possibly doubt, that a system of the worst world of Paris, that the Spies among the Unbelieving Chemists who had an eye on the transmutation of metals, at this wonderful gathering accumulated by Monseigneur. Exquisite gentlemen of the finest breeding, which was at that remarkable time—and has been since—to be known by its fruits of indifference to every natural subject of human interest, were in the most exemplary state of exhaustion, at the hotel of Monseigneur. Such homes had been these various notabilities left behind them in the fine world of Paris, that the Spies among the assembled devotees of Monseigneur—forcing a goodly half of the polite company—would have found it hard to discover among the angels of that sphere, one solitary wife, who, in her manners and appearance, owned to being a Mother. Indeed, except for the mere act of bringing a troublesome creature into this world—which does not go far towards the realisation of the name of mother—there was no such thing known to the fashion. Peasant women kept the unfashionable babies close, and brought them up; and charming grand-nannies of sixty dressed and supped as at twenty. The leprosy of unreality disfigured every human creature in attendance upon Monseigneur. In the outermost room were half a dozen exceptional people who had had, for a few years, some vague misgiving in them that things in general were going rather wrong. As a promising way of setting them right, half of the half-dozen had become members of a fantastic sect of Convulsionists, and were even then considering within themselves whether they should foam, rage, roar, and turn cataleptic on the spot—thereby setting up a highly intelligible finger-post to the Future, for Monseigneur's guidance. Beside these Delusions, were other three who had rushed into another sect, which mended matters with a jargon about "the Centre of truth:" holding that Man had got out of the Centre of truth—which did not need much demonstration—but had not got out of the Circumference, and that he was to be kept from flying out of the Circumference, and was even to be shoved back into the Centre, by fasting and seeing of spirits. Among these, accordingly, much discoursing with spirits went on—and it did a world of good which never became manifest.

But, the comfort was, that all the company at the grand hotel of Monseigneur were perfectly dressed. If the Day of Judgment had only been ascertained to be a dress day, everybody there would have been eternally correct. Such frizzling and powdered and sticking up of hair, such delicate complications artificially preserved and enabled such gallant swords to look at, and such delicate costume to the sense of smell, would surely keep anything going, for ever and ever. The exercising gentlemen of the finest breeding wore little pleasant trinkets that tinkled as they languidly moved; these golden fetters rang like precious little bells; and what with that ringing, and with the rustle of silk and brocade and fine laces, there was a flutter in the air that fooled Saint Antoine and his devouring hunger far away.

Dress was the one unfailing talisman and charm used for keeping all things in their places. Everybody was dressed for a Fancy Ball that was never to leave off. From the Palaces of the Tulleries, through Monseigneur and the whole Court, through the Chambers, the Tribunals of Justice, and all society (except the scare-crows), the Fancy Ball descended to the Common Executioner: who, in pursuance of the charm, was required to officiate "frizzled, powdered, in a gold-laced coat, pumps, and white silk stockings." At the gallow's and the wheel—the axe was a rarity—Monseigneur Paris, as it was the episcopal mode among his brother Professors of the provinces, Monseigneur Orleans, and the rest, to call him, presided in this dainty dress. And who among the company at Monseigneur's reception in that seventeen hundred and eightieth year of our Lord, could possibly doubt, that a system rooted in a frizzled hairgown, powdered, gold-laced, pumped, and white-silk stockinged, would see the very stars out! Monseigneur having eased his four men of their burdens and taken his chocolate, opened the doors of the Holiest of Holiests to be thrown open, and issued forth. Then, what submission, what cringing and fawning, what servility, what abject humiliation! As to bowing down in body and spirit, nothing in that way was left for Heaven—which may have been one among other reasons why the worshippers of Monseigneur never troubled it.

Bestowing a word of promise here and a smile there, a whisper on one happy slave and a wave
of the hand on another, Monseigneur affably passed through his rooms to the remote region of the Circumference of Truth. There, Monseigneur turned, and came back again, and so in due course of time got himself shut up in his sanctuary by the chocolate sprites, and was seen no more.

The show being over, the flutter in the air became quite a little stronger, and the precious little bells were ringing down stairs. There was soon but one person left of all the crowd, and he, with his hat under his arm and his snuff-box in his hand, slowly passed among the mirrors on his way out.

"I devote you," said this person, stopping at the last door on his way, and turning in the direction of the sanctuary, "to the Devil!"

With that, he shook the snuff from his fingers as if he had shaken the dust from his feet, and quietly walked down stairs.

He was a man of about sixty, handsomely dressed, haughty in manner, and with a face like a fine mask. A face of a transparent paleness; every feature in it clearly defined; one set of each nostril. In those two compressions, or dints, the only little change that the face showed, resided. They persisted in occasionally dilated and contracted by something like a faint pulsation; then, they gave a look of treachery, and cruelty, to the whole countenance. Examined with attention, its changing colour sometimes, and they would-be expression on it. The nose, beautifully formed, was a handsome face, and a remarkable one.

Its owner went down stairs into the courtyard, got into his carriage, and drove away. Not many people had talked with him at the reception; he had stood in a little space apart, and Monseigneur might have been warmer in his manner. It appeared, under the circumstances, rather agreeable to him to see the common people dispersed before his horses, and often barely escaping from being run down. His man drove as if he were charging an enemy, and the furious recklessness of the man brought no check into the face, or to the lips, of the master. The complaint had sometimes made itself audible, even in that deaf city and dumb age, that, in the narrow streets without footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving ended
gently about it. They were as silent, however, as the men. 

"I know all, I know all," said the last comer.

"Be a brave man, my Gaspard! It is better for the poor little plaything to die so, than to live. It has died in a moment without pain. Could it have lived an hour as happily?"

"You are a philosopher, you there," said the Marquis, smiling. "How do they call you?"

"They call me Defarge."

"Of what trade?"

"Monseur the Marquis, vendor of wine."

"Pick up that, philosopher and vendor of wine," said the Marquis, throwing him another gold coin, "and spend it as you will. The horses there; are they right?"

Without design to look at the assemblage a second time, Monseur the Marquis leaned back in his seat, and was just being driven away with the air of a gentleman who had accidentally broken some common thing, and had paid for it, and could afford to pay for it; when his case was suddenly disturbed by a coin flying into his carriage and ringing on its floor.

"Hold!" said Monsieur the Marquis. "Hold the horses! Who threw that?"

He looked to the spot where Defarge the vendor of wine had stood, a moment before; but the wretched father was face on the pavement in that spot, and the figure that stood beside him was the figure of a dark stout woman, knitting.

"You dogs!" said the Marquis, but smoothly, and with an unchanged front, except as to the spots on his nose: "I ... which rascal threw at the carriage, and if that brigand were suf-ficiently near it, he should be crushed under the wheels."

So cowed was their condition, and so long and so hard their experience of what such a man could do to them, within the law and beyond it, that not a voice, or a hand, or even an eye, was raised. Among the men, not one. But, the woman who stood knitting looked up steadily, and looked the Marquis in the face. It was not for his dignity to notice; his contemptuous eyes passed over her, and over all the other rats; and he leaned back in his seat again, and gave the word "Go on!"

He was driven on, and other carriages came whirling by in quick succession; the Minister, the State-Projector, the Farmer-General, the Doctor, the Lawyer, the Ecclesiastic, the Grand Opera, the Comedy, the whole Fancy Ball in a bright continuous flow, came whirling by. The rats had crept out of their holes to look on, and they remained looking on for hours; soldiers and police often passing between them and the spectators, and making a barrier behind which they slunk, and through which they peeped. The father had long ago taken up his bundle and hidden himself away with it, when the women who had tended the bundle while it lay on the base of the fountain, sat there watching the running of the water and the rolling of the Fancy Ball—when the one woman who had stood conspicuous, knitting, still knitted on with the steadfastness of Fate. The water of the foun-tain ran, the swift river ran, the day ran into evening, so much life in the city ran into death, according to rule, time and tide waited for no man, the rats were sleeping close together in their dark holes again, the Fancy Ball was lighted up at supper, all things ran their course.

CHAPTER VIII. MONSIEUR THE MARQUIS IN THE COUNTRY.

A beautiful landscape, with the corn bright in it but not abundant. Patches of poor rye where corn should have been, patches of poor peas and beans, patches of most coarse vegetable subsi-dates for wheat. On inanimate nature, as on man, the air was now heavy; the sun was not within the mark to cultivate it, a pres-ent tendency towards an appearance of vegetating unwillingly—a dejected disposition to give up, and wither away.

Monsieur the Marquis in his travelling carriage (which might have been lighter), conducted by four post-horses and two postilions, fagged up a steep hill. A blush on the countenance of Monsieur the Marquis was no impeachment of his high breeding; it was not from within; it was occasioned by an external circumstance beyond his control—the setting sun.

The sunset struck so brilliantly into the tra-velling carriage when it gained the hill-top, that its occupant was steeped in crimson. "It will die out," said Monsieur the Marquis, glancing at his hands, "directly."

In effect, the sun was so low that it dipped at the moment. When the heavy drag had been adjusted to the wheel, and the carriage slid down hill, with a cinderous smell, a cloud of dust, the red glow departed quickly; the sun and the Marquis going down together, there was no glow left when the drag was taken off.

But, there remained a broken country, bold and open, a little village at the bottom of the hill, a broad sweep and rise beyond it, a church-tower, a windmill, a forest for the chase, and a crag with a fortress on it used as a prison. Round upon all these darkening objects as the night drew on, the Marquis looked, with the air of one who was coming near home.

The village had its one poor street, with its poor brewery, poor tannery, poor tavern, poor stable-yard for relays of post-horses; poor foun-tain, all usual poor appointments. It had its poor people too. All its people were poor, and many of them were sitting at their doors, shredding spare onions and the like for supper, while many were at the ford cultivating it, a prov-ent local tax for the state, the tax for the church, the tax for the lord, tax local and tax general, were to be paid here and to be paid there, according to solemn inscription in the little village, until the wonder was, that there was any village left un-swallowed.
A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens

Fleat children were to be seen, and no dogs.

As to the men and women, their choice on earth
was stated in the prospect—Life on the lowest
terms that could sustain it, down in the little village under the mill; or captivity and Death
in the dominant prison on the crag.

Heralded by a courier in advance, and by the
cranking of his positions' whips, which twined
like a spectre!

"What was he like?"

"Monseigneur, he was whiter than the miller."

"Your clemency, Monseigneur! He was not
so fortunate."

"May the Devil carry away these idiots!"

"Truly, you did well," said the Marquis.

"I passed you on the road?"

"Pardon, Monseigneur; he swung by the chain—when a grizzled mender of the roads
joined the group.

"Bring me hither that fellow!" said the Mar-
quis to the courier.

"Monseigneur, he precipitated himself over
the hill-side, head first, as a person plunges into
the river."

"See to it, Gabelle. Go on!"

"What do you look at, so fixedly?"

"Myself, Monseigneur, I looked at the man."

"What man, pig? And why look there?"

"Pardon, Monseigneur; he swung by the
chain of the shoe—the drag."

"Who?" demanded the traveller.

"Monseigneur, the man."

"May the Devil carry away these idiots! How
do you call the man? You know all the other
men of this part of the country. Who was he?"

"Your clemency, Monseigneur! He was not
of this part of the country. Of all the days of
my life, I never saw him."

"Swinging by the chain? To be suffocated?
With your gracious permission, that was the
wonder of it, Monseigneur. His head hang-
ning over—like this!"

He turned himself sideways to the carriage,
and leant back, with his face thrown up to the
sky, and his head hanging down; then recovered
himself, fumbled with his cap, and made a bow.

"What was he like?"

"Monseigneur, he was whiter than the miller.
All covered with dust, white as a spectre, tall
as a spectre!"
"Monseigneur, not yet.

"Monsieur Charles, whom I expect; is he arrived from England?"

"Monsieur, not yet."

**TOO MUCH FREEDOM ON THE SEAS.**

The time should be gone by when we look for an outlaw in the bold sea captain; but there is still a restricted sense, and that a very painful one, in which the master of a trading vessel on the high seas is an outlaw. He may be an outlaw just, honest, and merciful, whose right mind is his own best lawgiver and judge. Happy are the men who row in the same boat with him! He may be unjust, dishonest, and merciless: one who can be terrified only by the horsehair of the law, and punished only by suffering and loss. Was such a man has others beneath his control, as is himself subject to no control, were to be his victims! Men rougher than the seas the traverse, and more pitiless, are among the who command, in merchant vessels trading between England and America, as masters; more commonly have power as mates. The men are not types of the true American. Monseigneur, hear me! Monseigneur, hear my petition! My husband died of want; so many die of want; so many more will die of want."

"Again, well? Can I feed them?"

"Monseigneur, the good God knows; but I don't ask it. My petition is, that a morsel of grass. Monseigneur, they are so many, they shall not disgrace by their atrocities a great national calling, and escape swift retribution. A Liverpool Merchant, in a published letter, calls attention to "Unpunished Cruelties of the High Seas." At Liverpool they excite particular attention, because there is visible and constant evidence of their result. One or two hundred hospital patients who have been worn down by cruelties endured on board American ships, are every year under medical or surgical care, as "consul's cases." Into the den of London there comes much of the same kind of suffering; but its cry cannot so well be heard. It does, we believe, happen that cruelty more common in the mercantile marine of the United States than in that of England. But on the twenty cases of cruelty sent back to the United States for trial, not one had an American for defendant, and, in five of them, the criminals were natives of Great Britain. This is no discussion, therefore, about purging others of offence. The Bogota, in which a demerit was inflicted, was an English vessel. But it happens that the part of the case presents itself in the form most available for purposes of explanation concerning merchant ships of the United States trading with Liverpool. If an offence be committed in a foreign ship, while actually lying in an English river, it is punishable by the English law; but, if it be committed in an American ship some four miles from the shore, all that can be done is this:...