

## RESIDENCE OF JONATHAN WILD,

THE CELEBRATED LONDON THIEF-TAKER, &amp;c.

From "Jack Sheppard," a Tale by Mr. Ainsworth, editor of Bentley's Miscellany.

The thief-taker's residence was a large dismal-looking habitation, separated from the street by a flagged court-yard, and defended from general approach by an iron railing. Even in the daylight, it had a sombre and suspicious air, and seemed to slink back from the adjoining houses, as if afraid of their society. In the obscurity in which it was now seen, it looked like a prison, and, indeed, it was Jonathan's fancy to make it resemble one as much as possible. The windows were grated, the doors barred; each room had the name as well as the appearance of a cell; and the very porter who stood at the gate, habited like a gaoler, with his huge bunch of keys at his girdle, his forbidding countenance and surly demeanour seemed to be borrowed from Newgate. The clanking of chains, the grating of locks, and the rumbling of bolts must have been music in Jonathan's ears, so much pains did he take to subject himself to such sounds. The scanty furniture of the rooms corresponded with their dungeon-like aspect. The walls were bare, and painted in stone-colour; the floors, devoid of carpet; the beds, of hangings; the windows, of blinds; and, excepting in the thief-taker's own audience-chamber, there was not a chair or a table about the premises; the place of these conveniences being elsewhere supplied by benches, and deal-boards laid across joint-stools. Great stone staircases leading no one knew whither, and long gloomy passages, impressed the occasional visitor with the idea that he was traversing a building of vast extent; and, though this was not the case in reality, the deception was so cleverly contrived that it seldom failed of producing the intended effect. Scarcely any one entered Mr. Wild's dwelling without apprehension, or quitted it without satisfaction. More strange stories were told of it than of any other house in London. The garrets were said to be tenanted by coiners, and artists employed in altering watches and jewelry; the cellars to be used as a magazine for stolen goods. By some it was affirmed that a subterranean communication existed between the thief-taker's abode and Newgate, by means of which he was enabled to maintain a secret correspondence with the imprisoned felons: by others, that an underground passage led to extensive vaults, where such malefactors as he chose to screen from justice might be concealed till the danger was blown over. Nothing, in short, was too extravagant to be related of it; and Jonathan, who delighted in investing himself and his residence with mystery, encouraged, and perhaps originated, these marvellous tales. However this may be, such was the ill report of the place that few passed along the Old Bailey without bestowing a glance of fearful curiosity at its dingy walls, and wondering what was going on inside them; while fewer still, of those who paused at the door, read, without some internal trepidation, the formidable name—inscribed in large letters on its bright brass-plate—of JONATHAN WILD.

Arrived at his habitation, Jonathan knocked in a peculiar manner at the door, which was instantly opened by the grim-visaged porter just alluded to. No sooner had Trenchard crossed the threshold than a fierce barking was heard at the farther extremity of the passage, and, the next moment, a couple of mastiffs of the largest size rushed furiously towards him. The knight stood upon his defence; but he would unquestionably have been torn in pieces by the savage hounds, if a shower of oaths, seconded by a vigorous application of kicks and blows from their master, had not driven them growling off. Apologizing to Sir Rowland for this unpleasant reception, and swearing lustily at his servant for occasioning it by leaving the dogs at liberty, Jonathan ordered the man to light them to the audience-room. The command was sullenly obeyed, for the fellow did not appear to relish the rating. Ascending the stairs, and conducting them along a sombre gallery, in which Trenchard noticed that every door was painted black, and numbered, he stopped at the entrance of a chamber; and, selecting a key from the bunch at his girdle, unlocked it. Following his guide, Sir Rowland found himself in a large and lofty apartment, the extent of which he could not entirely discern until lights were set upon the table. He then looked around him with some curiosity; and, as the thief-taker was occupied in giving directions to his attendant in an undertone, ample leisure was allowed him for investigation. At the first glance, he imagined he must have stumbled upon a museum of rarities, there were so many glass cases, so many open cabinets ranged against the wall; but the next convinced him that if Jonathan was a virtuoso, his tastes did not run in the ordinary channels. Trenchard was tempted to examine the contents of some of these cases, but a closer inspection made him recoil from them in disgust. In the one he approached was gathered together a vast assortment of weapons, each of which, as appeared from the ticket attached to it, had been used as an instrument of destruction, and every jibbet at Tyburn and Hounslow appeared to have been plundered of its charnel spoil to enrich the adjoining cabinet, so well was it stored with skulls and bones, all purporting to be the relics of highwaymen famous in their day. Halters, each of which had fulfilled its destiny, formed the attraction of the next compartment; while a fourth was occupied by an array of implements of housebreaking almost innumerable, and ut-

terly indescribable. All these interesting objects were carefully arranged, classed, and, as we have said, labelled by the thief-taker.

From this singular collection Trenchard turned to regard its possessor, who was standing at a little distance from him, still engaged in earnest discourse with his attendant, and, as he contemplated his ruthless countenance, on which duplicity and malignity had set their strongest seals, he could not help calling to mind all he had heard of Jonathan's perfidiousness to his employers, and deeply regretting that he had placed himself in the power of so unscrupulous a miscreant.

Jonathan Wild, at this time, was on the high-road to the greatness which he subsequently, and not long afterwards, obtained. He was fast rising to an eminence that no one of his nefarious profession ever reached before him, nor, it is to be hoped, will ever reach again. He was the Napoleon of knavery, and established an uncontrolled empire over all the practitioners of crime. This was no light conquest; nor was it a government easily maintained. Resolution, severity, subtlety, were required for it; and these were qualities which Jonathan possessed in an extraordinary degree. The danger or difficulty of an exploit never appalled him. What his head conceived his hand executed. Professing to stand between the robber and the robbed, he himself plundered both. He it was who formed the grand design of a rogue's corporation, of which he should be the sole head and director, with the right of delivering those who concealed their booty, or refused to share it with him, to the gallows. He divided London into districts, appointed a gang to each district, and a leader to each gang, whom he held responsible to himself. The country was partitioned in a similar manner. Those whom he retained about his person, or placed in offices of trust, were for the most part convicted felons, who, having returned from transportation before their term had expired, constituted, in his opinion, the safest agents, inasmuch as they could neither be legal evidences against him, nor withhold any portion of the spoil of which he chose to deprive them. But the crowning glory of Jonathan, that which raised him above all his predecessors in iniquity, and clothed his name with undying notoriety—was to come. When in the plenitude of his power, he commenced a terrible trade, till then unknown—namely, a traffic in human blood. This he carried on by procuring witnesses to swear away the lives of those persons who had incurred his displeasure, or whom it might be necessary to remove.

No wonder that Trenchard, as he gazed at this fearful being, should have some misgivings cross him.

Apparently, Jonathan perceived he was an object of scrutiny; for, hastily dismissing his attendant, he walked towards the knight.

## THE COLLEGE PROCTOR.

From "Vincent Eden," Bentley's Miscellany.

Few were the weeks that the Reverend Burnaby had been in office, and those moreover in the vacation time; yet, few as they were, they had amply sufficed to convince him that that office was by no means a sinecure (the only situation, perhaps, for which either by nature or education the reverend gentleman was exactly qualified.) Ever and anon, as he cast his eyes upon the proctorial velvet suspended over the door, some fresh source of annoyance, either in the way of reminiscence or anticipation, seemed to strike him, and a fresh shade of horror to pass over his substantial face. Growing wearied at last, however, of these ill-arranged and indefinite speculations on the miseries of his official situation, the Reverend Burnaby betook himself to arithmetic, and went off into the following ingenious calculation, by means of a sum in the Double Rule of Three, viz.:—Supposing that the running after fifty young men, stopping up in the vacation, takes seven pounds out of a man's weight in one month, how many pounds will the running after twelve hundred take out of it in a year? Arithmetic, however, being a branch of knowledge which (among others) had been rather overlooked in the course of the Reverend Burnaby's education, he soon gave the investigation up as a bad job, and relapsed for a while into his former musings.

"And, as if I had not got enough to do already," suddenly ejaculated he, kicking at the same time from under him the chair which supported his feet, and laying violent hands upon a large packet of manuscripts which were lying beside him on the table,—"as if I had not got enough to do already, what with hat-hunting and house-searching, and one thing or another, in all lights and all weathers, why, they must needs send me this cargo of nonsense to read through. I wonder what makes men write for prizes. I don't see why they should. I never did."

So saying, the reverend gentleman caught up one of the manuscripts, which were no less than the essays and poems destined to compete for the annual prizes, and prepared somewhat pettishly to peruse it.

"I don't suppose, after all," said he, as he replaced his legs on the lately discarded chair,—"I don't suppose, after all, that my opinion's good for much. I wish the other examiners would settle it among themselves. It would save me a world of trouble—that it would."

This remark being, like many others which people are in the habit of making, exceedingly true, but nothing to the purpose, the

Reverend Burnaby was proceeding with his perusal, when he was interrupted by a timid tap at the door, to which he immediately advanced, took down his gown from the peg, put it on, with an extra frown to correspond, buttoned his waistcoat, and struck terror to the soul of the visitor by a ferocious "Come in!"

"Oh," said he, as a submissive-looking undergraduate obeyed the summons,—"oh—ah—yes—Mr. Fluke, of — Church, I believe."

The Reverend Burnaby had a very bad memory, by the by; and, by a consequence not unfrequent in the moral world, piqued himself exceedingly on it.

"No, sir," stammered the undergraduate; "Mr. Stifles, of Pembroke."

"Oh—ah—yes," said the Proctor,—"yes—Mr. Stifles, of Pembroke. Mr. Stifles of Pembroke, you were tying two cows' tails together during the hours of Divine service yesterday."

"No, sir," said the astonished Stifles, who was a very quiet and orderly young man, but had been caught by the Proctor returning in his hat from a walk,—"no, sir; indeed I was at church, and—"

"Not tying two cows' tails together?" said the Reverend Burnaby. "Why, the farmer came to complain last night."

"It was not me, sir, indeed," meekly rejoined Stifles. "It was for wearing a hat you told me to call on you."

"Oh—ah—yes," said the Proctor, who had meanwhile consulted his black book, and found the account true,—"here it is. Mr. Stifles—hat in High Street—said he'd come from a walk—did not believe him. Yes. Mr. Stifles, a hundred lines of Homer. Bring 'em to me to-morrow morning. Good day."

"I thought we might wear hats out walking, sir," expostulated the retreating Stifles.

"You may wear anything you please out walking, sir," said the Proctor; "but you must not wear anything but a cap and gown either going out or coming in to the town. If you like to keep a hat at a cottage outside the town, and pull your cap and gown off there, and put them on as you come back, I've no objection. A hundred lines of Homer, Mr. Stifles. Good morning."

As Mr. Stifles retreated, the Reverend Burnaby composed himself once more to the attentive consideration of the manuscript which he had resumed, and which consisted of about two hundred and fifty lines of English rhyme, written out very neatly on gilt-edged paper, with a very large margin, which looked as if it had been left open on purpose for each individual of the five examiners to write his own private and peculiar panegyrics upon the beauty of any particular passage which might happen to strike his fancy. It was bound, moreover, in a very neatly-stitched, blue, satin-paper cover, (evidently the work of some young lady unknown, who was interested in its success—terrible flirts these young poets are—) and being distinguished by the delicate and chivalrous motto of "All for love," presented altogether such a gay and pretty appearance, that it really seemed as if it meant not only to get the prize, but by its cheerful looks to express, moreover, the gratitude which it felt to the examiners for the honour afterwards.

"Here she is again!" suddenly roared the Reverend Burnaby, in the tone of a man who has just hooked an enormous fish,—"here she is again—that eternal moon! Stars, too!" shouted he, after another couplet. "Oh! this will never do. I don't know how it is," said the Reverend gentleman, after a short pause, "I don't know how it is, but somehow or other all the Latin poems began with *Ergo*, or *Audin*, or *Jamdudum*, or some stick-jaw word of that sort, and ended with *Calum*, or something in the religious line; and now all the English ones seem to open with the moon—ah—and then the young man compares the moon to his own pale face, eh?—and so gets up a little private interest on his own account—and then a touch at the planets, eh?—just as if he was a sucking astronomer—lunatic I should call him—never mind. Well, and then a little about the subject, perhaps, and a sly hit or two at patriotism—ah—and then woman's love, of course—kiss and bliss, eh?—and so wind up with heaven. Well, I suppose it's all right. My opinion isn't worth much. I never wrote poetry,—except," added he, "those lines I wrote at school to the young woman across the counter at the pastry cook's,—and perhaps they could hardly be called poetry." Perhaps they could not—meanwhile the Reverend Burnaby resumed his labours.

"I'm not so sure that it is all right, though," exclaimed he presently, as if a new idea had struck him. "How come young men to write such a lot about the moon, unless they're always out at night looking at her—eh? Ah!—Morality before poetry, any day in the week. I sha'n't vote for any poem with a moon in it getting the prize. Ah! I forgot, though," added he, looking rather disappointed; "they might have seen her out of the window,—or in vacation time either, for the matter of that—yes."

Another interruption now took place, caused by the arrival of the atrocious criminal and real cow-connector during Divine service, Mr. Fluke, of — Church, to whom the Proctor forthwith began to read a long lecture concerning cruelty to animals.