CHAPTER CLXVI
Todd is at Sea, and gets on Indifferently — the Storm

It seemed now as though the lull in the weather was over; for after that one gust of wind, there came others; and in the course of a very short time, indeed, the surface of the water was much agitated, and such a howling noise was kept up by the wind, that Todd thought every moment that he heard the voices of his foes.

"What am I to do now?" he said. "Oh, what am I to do? I dare not wait here until daylight. That would be destruction. What is to become of me?"

He came round the sides of the barge with the hope that some wherry had been moored to it, but he found that that hope was a fallacious one indeed. There was the gloomy looking vessel moored far out in the stream, with him as its only passenger.

Anyone without Todd's load of guilt upon his soul, and upon better terms with human nature, could soon have got assistance, for the distance from the shore was by no means so great but that his voice must have been heard had he chosen to exert it; but that would not do for him. He dreaded that his presence upon the barge should be known, and yet he alike dreaded that the morning's light should come shiningly upon him, without any boat coming to take him off.

To be sure, the two men who had brought him there had made a half promise to come to his aid, but he felt certain he could not depend upon their doing so. The look with which they had regarded him upon the doubt, even, that he might be so frightful a criminal as he really was, was sufficient to convince him that while that doubt remained they would not return.

"And what," he said, "is to dissipate the doubt? Nothing — nothing! But anything may confirm it. Accidents always tell for the truth — never to its prevention, and so I am lost — lost — quite lost."

The bitterness of death seemed almost to be upon the point of assailing Todd. He could fancy that spirits of the murdered shrieked and wailed around him, as the wind whistled by his trembling frame.

In this wretched state an hour passed, and then Todd thought he heard a voice.

"What is that?" he said. "Oh, what is that?"

He inclined his head as low down to the edge of the water as he could get it, and heard distinctly some one singing to the stroke of a pair of oars, as they were deliberately dipped into the stream. The voice sounded like that of some young lad, and a hope of succour sprung up in the breast of Todd.

In the course of a few moments he became perfectly convinced that the boat was approaching the barge, and he shrunk down so that by being prematurely seen he might not alarm the boy who was rowing down the stream. The song continued, and it was quite evident from the manner in which the boy sung it, that he was quite delighted with his own powers in that line.

"I must speak to him," thought Todd. "If I let him pass there may not be another chance, now. I must speak to this boy, and speak to him freely too. He comes — he comes."

It was not so dark but that Todd could see pretty well the surface of the river, and presently in dusky outline he was conscious of the approach of a wherry in which was a boy, and he could see how the boy moved his head to and fro to the tune that he was amusing himself with.

"Hilloa!" cried Todd.

Now Todd in this "Hilloa!" had for once in a way tuned his voice to such a gentle pleasant sound, that it was quite a wonder to hear it, and he was rather himself surprised at the manner in which he managed it so as not to be at all alarming.

The boy stopped rowing and looked about him. It was evident at the moment that he could not tell where the sound came from.

"Hilloa!" said Todd, again.

"Ay — ay!" said the boy; "where are you?"

"Here, my dear," said Todd, "on board of the barge, bless you. How are you, my fine fellow — eh?"

"Oh, I'm pretty well. Who are you?"

"Why, don't you know me? I'm Mr. Smith. How is your father, my lad — eh?"

"Oh, father's all right enough; but I didn't know as he knowed a Mr. Smith at all."

"Oh, yes, he does. Everybody knows a Mr. Smith. Come on, you can give me a lift to shore off the barge here. This way. Just step up to the side and I'll step into your pretty little wherry. And so your father is quite well — eh, my fine lad? Do you know I was afraid he had caught a little cold, and really have been quite uneasy about him."

"Have you?" said the boy, as he pulled up to the side of the barge. "Where do you want to go to?"

"Oh, anywhere you happen to be going, that's all, my fine lad. How you do grow, to be sure!"

"But how came you here, out in the river on the dredging barge? Do you belong to her?"

"To be sure I do. I am Mr. Deputy Inspector Dredger Smith, and am forced to come and superintend the barge, you see; but my boat that I sent to shore for something, has not come back, and I am getting cold, for I am not so young as you are, you know."

"Why, I don't suppose you is, sir," said the boy; "but I'll put you ashore, if you like."

"Thank you, I should like."

"Get in, then, sir. All's right. I'll hold on to the barge. Easy — easy with you, sir. That will do. Which side of the river, sir, would you like to be put ashore at, if you please?"

The boy was evidently deeply impressed with the importance of the title of Deputy Inspector Dredger, and was quite deferential to Todd.

How delighted was Todd to get off the barge! It seemed to him like a reprieve from death.

"Which way is the tide, boy?" he said.

"Running down, sir, but not fast."

"That will do. I will trouble you, then, to row with it as comfortably and as fast as you can.

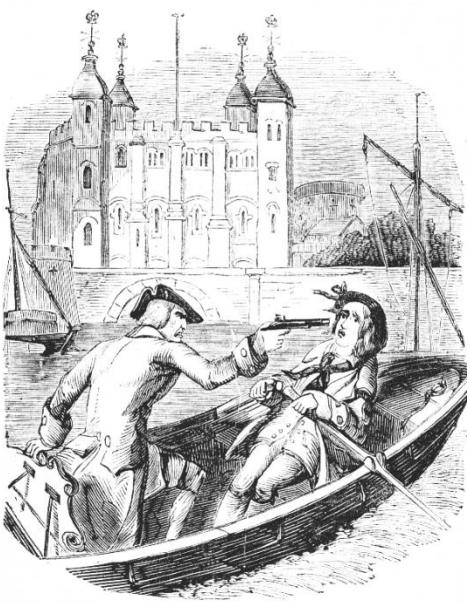
"But I'm going, sir, to Westminster, to meet father. I can't go down the river, please sir. I would if I could. I said I would put you on shore on either side you like, and that's a waste of time, for the tide is getting fuller every minute, and it will be a hard pull against it, as it is. I can't go down the river, so don't ask me, sir; indeed I can't."

"Indeed?"

"No, sir. If I put you ashore, you will find lots of watermen who will be glad enough of the job."

"What's your name?"

"Bill White, sir."



Todd Compels Bill White to Assist his Escape from the Thames Police.

"Very well, Bill White. I dare say you have ears at your age, and guess that to have one's brains blown out is not one of the most agreeable things in the world, and perhaps you know a pistol when you see one. This that I take from my pocket and hold at your head is carefully loaded, and if you don't pull away at once with the tide down the river, I will scatter your brains into the river, and throw your lifeless carcass after them. Do you understand that, Mr. Bill White?"

Todd uttered these words in such a tone of fiendish malignity, and glared into the eyes of the poor boy so, that he nearly drove him out of his wits, and it was as much as his trembling hands could do to hold the oars. For the space of about half a minute he could only glare at Todd with his eyes and mouth as wide open as they could be.

"Speak, devil's whelp!" cried Todd. "Why do you not answer me?"

"Murder!" cried the boy.

Todd caught him by the throat, and if the oars had not been well up in the rollocks, they must have gone overboard.

"Another such cry," said Todd, "and it is the last you shall have the opportunity of making in this world."

"Oh, no — no —"

"But I say yes. Listen to me! If you row me as I direct you, I will not only do you no harm, but I will pay you well. If you still obstinately refuse, I will murder you, and murder your father likewise, upon the first opportunity."

"I will row you down the river, sir. Oh, yes, I will do it. Indeed I will, sir."

"Very well. Take your oars, and pull away."

The boy was in such a state of trembling, that although it was quite evident he did his best to obey Todd, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could pull a stroke, and it took him some minutes to get the boat's head round to the tide.

"Be careful," said Todd. "If I see you willing, I make any allowance for you; but if I fancy, for a moment, that there is any idea of not obeying me, I will kill you!"

"I am obeying you, sir."

"Very well. Now, listen attentively to what I am about further to say to you, Bill White. You can pull away while you listen. We are going now very well with the stream."

"Yes, sir."

"We shall, no doubt, pass many wherries, and you may think it a very good thing to call out for help, and to say that I threatened to murder you, and all that sort of thing; but so soon as you do, you die. I will hold this pistol in my hand, and whenever we come near a wherry, my finger will be upon the trigger, and the muzzle at your head. You understand all that, I hope, Bill White?"

"Of course I do, sir."

"Go on then."

Todd reclined back in the stern of the boat, and kept his eyes fixed upon the boy, down whose cheeks the tears rolled in abundance, as he pulled down the stream. Having the tide fully in its favour, the wherry, with very little labour, made great way; and Todd, as he saw the dawn slowly creeping on, began to congratulate himself upon the cleverness with which he had escaped from the barge.

The river began to widen — the pool was left behind, and the dull melancholy shore of Essex soon began to show itself, as the tide, by each moment increasing in strength, carried the light boat swiftly along its undulating surface, with its frightfully wicked load.

Todd thought it would be as well now to say something of a cheering character to the boy. Modulating his voice, he said —

"Now, you see, my lad, that by obeying me you have done the very best thing you possibly could, and when I think proper to land, I will give you a guinea for yourself."

"I don't want it," said the boy.

"You don't want it?"

"No; and I won't have it."

"What do you mean by that, you idiot of a boy? How dare you tell me to my face that you won't have what I offer you?"

"I don't see," said Bill White, "how that ought to put you in a passion. All you want is to make me row you down the river. Well, you have made me, 'cos I don't want to be shot down like a mad dog, of course; but I won't be paid for doing what I don't like — not I."

"Well, it don't matter to me. You may please yourself about that; I am just as well pleased at being rowed for nothing as if I paid for it. You can please yourself in that particular; but it would have been better for you to have taken what I chose to give you than to have refused it."

The boy made no answer to this speech, but rowed on in sullen silence. He no longer wept now, and it was evident to Todd that indignation was rapidly taking the place of fear in his heart. Todd even began to debate with himself whether it would not be better to throw him into the river and take the oars himself, and trust to his own skill to conduct the boat with the stream to Gravesend, than was the risk of any sudden act of the boy's that might bring danger upon him.

It would have been but a poor satisfaction to Todd to have shot the boy at the moment possibly of his calling for help, when the sight of such an act would be sufficient to insure his capture, without people troubling themselves about what he had done or not done before.

These were considerations that began to make Todd very unhappy indeed.

"Well, Bill White," he said; "as your father, no doubt, expects you by this time, and I daresay you will be glad enough to go back and forget all about the little disagreement that we have had, I will get you to land me at once at those stairs yonder, and then we will shake hands and part."

"No we won't."

"Ah?"

"I say we won't shake hands. I'm willing enough that we should part, but as for the shaking hands, I won't do it; and I'm quite willing to pull in to the stairs."

As he spoke he inclined the head of the boat to a little landing place, where a few wherries were moored.

CHAPTER CLXVII
Todd, as he Thinks, bids England Adieu Forever

"Bill White," said Todd.

"Well, what now?" said the boy, in a sulky tone.

Todd pointed to the pistol, and merely uttered the one word — "Remember!" and then, with a horrible misgiving at his heart, he let the lad pull into the landing place. Some half dozen lazy looking fellows were smoking their pipes upon the dirty beach, and Todd, concealing the pistol within his capacious cuff, sprang on the shore. He turned and looked at the boy, who slowly pushed off, and gained the deep water again.

"He is afraid," thought Todd, "he is afraid, and will be too glad to get away and say nothing."

Bill White's actions were now not a little curious, and they soon attracted the observation of all the idlers on the beach, and put Todd in a perfect agony of apprehension. When the boy was about half a dozen boats' length from the shore, he shipped one of his oars, and then, with his disengaged hand, he lifted from the bottom of the boat an old saucepan, which he held up in an odd, dodging kind of way before his face, with an evident idea that if Todd fired the pistol at him, he could interrupt the bullet in that way. Then, in a loud clear voice, he cried —

"Hilloa! Don't have anything to do with that Mr. Smith. He has been threatening to shoot me, and he has got a pistol in his hand. He's a bad 'un, he is. Take him up! That's the best thing you can do. He's well-nigh as bad as old Todd the murderer of Fleet Street, that they can't catch. Take him up. I advises you. Blaze away, old curmudgeon."

Todd's rage was excessive, but he thought that the best plan would be to try to laugh the thing over, and with a hideous affectation of mirth, he cried out —

"Goodbey, Bill — goodbye. Remember me to your father, and tell him all the joke."

"It wasn't a joke," said Bill White.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Todd. "Well — well, I forgive you, Bill — I forgive you. Mind you take my message to your aunt, and tell her I shall be at the chapel on Wednesday."

"Oh, go to the deuce with you," said Bill, as he put down the saucepan upon finding that his late fare was not disposed to carry his threat of shooting him into effect. "You are an old rogue, that you are, and I daresay you have done something that it would be well worth while to take you up for."

With this, Bill began vigorously to pull away against the stream, puffing and blowing, and looking as indignant as he possibly could. Todd turned with a sigh to the men at the little landing, and affecting to wipe a tear from his left eye, he said —

"You would not believe, gentlemen, that that boy could say such things to his poor old uncle, and yet you wouldn't believe if I were to tell you the pounds and pounds that boy has cost me and his poor aunt. He don't behave well to either of us; but we are as fond of him as possible. It's in our natures to love him, and we can't help it."

"Lor'!" said one of the men.

"You looks tenderhearted," said another.

The others all laughed at this, and Todd thought it was as well to seem as if he thought that some very capital joke was going on, so he laughed too.

"I was thinking," he said, when the merriment had a little subsided, "I was thinking of going right on to Gravesend. What do you say to taking me now, a couple of you? There's the tide nicely with you all the way, and I am always a liberal enough paymaster."

"What will you give?" said one with a voice like a cracked trumpet with a bad cold.

"Why, name your price, and I shall not say no to it."

"What shall we take the gemman for, Bill?" said this man to another, who was smoking a short pipe.

"A rum 'un," was the reply of Bill.

"Don't be a *hass*. I didn't go for to ask you what sort of *indiwiddle* he was, but what we'd take him to Gravesend for."

"Oh, that's the caper, is it?"

"Yes it is, idiot."

"Well — fifteen bob and a tanner."

"Will that do, sir?" said the other to Todd, who thought that it would look bad to acquiesce too readily in the amount, so he said —

"I will give the fifteen shillings."

"Very good. We won't go to loggerheads about the tanner; so come along, sir, and we'll soon get you to Gravesend, with this tide a-running all the way there, as comfortably as it can, all of a purpose."

Todd was well enough pleased to find that these two men owned the longest and strongest looking wherry that was at the landing-place. He ensconced himself snugly enough in the stern of the boat and they put aside their pipes, and soon pushed off into the middle of the stream.

"Once more," thought Todd, "once more I am on the road to escape; and all may yet be well."

The two men now set to work with the oars in earnest. They felt, that as they were paid by the job, the best way was to get it over as quickly as possible; and, aided by the tide, it was perfectly astonishing what progress they made down the river.

Todd every now and then cast a long and anxious glance behind him; and presently he saw a boat shooting along, by the aid of six rowers, at great speed, and evidently turning into the little landing place from where he had just come. His eyesight was either sharpened by the morning light, or fancy deceived him, for he thought he saw the boy, Bill White, seated in the stern of the boat.

Todd was in an agony. He knew not whether to attract the attention of the two watermen to the large boat with all its rowers, so that he might get an opinion from them concerning it or not; and then again, he thought that at the moment, there would be a good chance of working upon the cupidity of the men, if any real danger should befall him of capture.

"I say, Bill," said one.

"Well, say it."

"There's one of the police officer's gone into the old stairs. There's something afloat this here morning."

"Ah! They are always at some manoeuvre or another. Pull away. It ain't no business of our'n."

Todd could almost have hugged the man for the sentiment he uttered; and how he longed to echo those two words, "pull away;" but he was afraid to do so, lest, by any seemingly undue anxiety just then for speed upon his part, he should provoke the idea that the police boat was as interesting to him as it really was.

Poor, wretched, guilty Todd surely suffered a hundred times the pangs of death during his progress down the river; and now he sat in the stern of the boat, looking as pale as death itself.

"You don't seem very well," said one of the men.

"Oh, yes — yes, I am quite well, I thank you."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it; for you look just as if you had been buried a month, and then dug up again."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Todd, — what a hideous attempt at a laugh it was! — "That is very good."

"Oh, lor'! do you laugh that way when you are at home? 'cos if you do, I should expect the roof to tumble in with fright, I should."

"How funny you are," said Todd. "Pull away."

He did venture to say, "pull away!" and the men did pull with right goodwill, so that the landing place, and the long police boat that was at it, looked just like two specks by the riverside; and, indeed it would have been a long pull and a strong one to catch Todd's wherry.

The murderer breathed a little more freely.

"How far have we got to go now?" he said.

"Oh, a matter of nine miles yet."

"And how long will it take you?"

"About one hour and a quarter, with the tide running at such a pace as it is. There's some wind, too, and what there is, is all with us, so we cut along favourably. What are they doing away yonder, Bill?"

"Where?" said Bill.

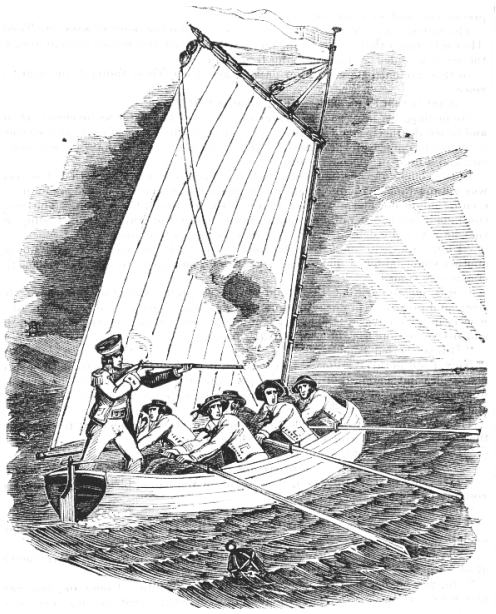
"Right in our wake, there. Oh, they are getting up a sail. I'll be hanged if they ain't, and pulling away besides! Why, what a hurry they must be in, to be sure, to get down the river. I never knew them do that before."

Todd looked along the surface of the water, and he saw the police boat coming along at such a rate, that the spray was tossed up in the air before her prow in millions of white particles.

A puff of smoke came from her side, and a slight sharp report rung upon the morning air. A musket or a pistol had been discharged on board of her.

"What's the meaning of that, Bill?"

“I can tell you,” said Todd, sharply, before Bill had done moving his head from side to side, which was a habit of his preparatory to replying to any very intricate question. “I can tell you easily.”



The Police Galley Chasing Todd to Gravesend.

“What is it then?”

“You pull away, and I’ll tell you. You see that boat with the sail and the six rowers there?”

“Yes, yes!”

“And you heard them fire a gun?”

“To be sure.”

“Well, pull away. It’s enough to make a cat laugh; but it was Mr. Anthony Strong that fired that gun.”

“How very droll? But what did he do it for?”

“Well, pull away, and I’ll tell you. You must know that Mr. Anthony Strong, who is in command of that police boat, is my brother-in-law, and he laid a wager with me, that he would start from the pier at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, at daybreak this morning, and get to Gravesend before me, if I started from Blackfriars, and did the best I possibly could to get on that money and men could do for me. I allowed that he was to take all his six rowers with him, and hoist his sail if he liked, and I was to take no more than two watermen at a time. When he saw me, he was to fire a gun, you see; and the wager is for twenty pounds and a dinner. I should like to win it, and so, if you can fairly beat him, with the start you have, which is above a mile — ”

"It's above two," said Bill, "Water's deceiving."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it; and I was going to say, I would stand five guineas!"

"You will, old fellow?"

"I will; and to convince you of it, here they are, and I will place them in your hands at once; so now, I do hope that you will pull away like devils!"

"Won't we! If Mr. Anthony Strong, with all his sail and his six hands, catches us on this side of Gravesend, I'll give him leave to skin me and eat me at the dinner that he would win. No, no! If we don't know the currents, and the shortcuts of the river a little bit better than ever a captain of police boat that ever lived, or that ever will live, why you may set me down for a frog or a Frenchman, which, I take it, are much of a muchness."

"They is," said the other.

Todd shouted with delight, and it was real now the wild laughter that shook his frame, for he began to think he was safe. The confident tone in which the waterman spoke, had quite convinced him that he could do what he said. With a perfect confidence in the power of his two watermen, he looked at the police wherry without any alarm, and the foam that it dashed up as it came bounding on, did not seem to fall coldly upon his breast, as it had seemed to do before.

"Two miles," he said. "That's a long start."

"In a stern chase," said Bill, "it's half of the blessed world to get over is them two miles."

"Yes, yes — exactly; and I shall beat Mr. Anthony Strong, I feel now. You see, my little nephew, Bill White, gave me the first start from Blackfriars; but I knew I could not depend upon him all the way, so I — There's another gun. Ha! Ha! Mr. Strong, it won't do."

"Well," said Bill, with a look of what he, no doubt, thought was great cleverness, "if I didn't know as this was a bit of fun between Mr. Anthony Strong and you, sir, I should have said that them guns was for us to lie to."

"That's just what he wants," cried Todd.

"Does he?"

"Yes. He thinks that he will frighten whoever is rowing into a dead stop, when they find a police galley firing guns; but I think he is mistaken in this matter, my friends."

"Rather!" said Dick, as he bent his back to the oars, and pulled away like a giant.

How the boat shot through the water! And yet to Todd's apprehension, the police galley gained upon him. Of course, he told himself that it must gain with its sail and six rowers; but the question was, how much it would gain in the seven or eight miles they had got to go? With what a feverish action Todd licked his lips.

CHAPTER CLXVIII
Todd goes through some Vicissitudes at Sea

"Oh, quicker — quicker!" cried Todd.

"That would be difficult," said Bill. "But I rather think as we is a doing of it something out of the common way."

Bang! Went another gun from the pursuing boat, and this time there certainly was the greatest possible hint given by the police galley that it was in earnest, for a bullet struck the water not above a couple of boats' length from Todd's wherry.

"Well," said Bill, "that may be firing, but I'll be hanged if it is at all pleasant."

"Oh, heed it not," said Todd; "heed it not. They would have such a laugh at both me and you, if by any means they could frighten you into stopping, and so giving me up — no, no, I mean giving up the wager. What am I saying?"

"I tell you what it is," said Bill, "to my mind this is a very odd sort of wager, and if you have no sort of objection to it, sir, we will just pull to the next stairs, and put you ashore. If you don't like that, why, I rather think you must be content to lose your wager."

"You will desert me? Oh, no — no. Surely you will not, and cannot. You have but to name your price, and you shall have it."

"No. That won't do. You must land now."

Todd looked nervously along the bank of the river, and he saw a little miserable landing place, towards which the men now began to urge the boat. He thought then that if he could get anything like a start of his pursuers on the shore, all might yet be well. "I could get across the country to Gravesend, and if once there, I might find some vessel to take me off."

"Pull to shore, then," he said; "I will take my chance. Pull to shore at once, as swiftly as you possibly can."

When the boat's head was turned towards the shore, it was pretty evident that the police galley was much more intent upon getting to Todd than to Gravesend, for the rowers in it on the instant turned the boat's head in the same direction, and it became then, truly, a case of life and death to Todd.

Vigorously as the boatmen worked, the little wherry was quickly so close to the shore, that Todd saw he could land by a scramble through the water.

"There is your money," he cried, to the men; "and for what you have done, I thank you with all my heart. Goodbye to you."

He sprang over the side of the boat, although by so doing he was up to his knees in the river; but that he heeded not, and in the course of half a minute he had scrambled to the shore, and going at a great rate up the little steps at the landing place, he gained the road and began to run at great speed.

The two boatmen were not a little amazed at this proceeding, and Bill said, —

"I say, I rather think that this is another queer sort of a piece of work than a wager; but if we don't wish to get ourselves into trouble, we must stick to it tooth and nail, that that was what we believed it to be."

"Ay," said the other. "I believe you, we must, or else we shall get into limbo for our share of the affair, and no mistake. Here they come, hand over hand, and they don't look very well pleased, either."

The rowers in the police galley had made such strenuous exertions to reach the landing place quickly, that they were really not far behind the wherry that had conducted Todd there, and the first thing that was done was to lay hold of the wherry with a boat hook, and drag it alongside of them. Then the officer in command of the police boat called out in a voice hoarse with rage —

"What do you mean, you infernal rascals, by running off in this way, when you know by our flag that we were the police? But you will have leisure to repent of it in jail. Clap handcuffs upon them both, my men."

"Why, what have we done?" said Bill. "You will win your wager yet, I should say, if you look sharp about it."

"Wager? What wager? What do you mean?"

"Why, the gentleman told us that he had a wager with you about who was to get to Gravesend first, and he was to take what means he could, and you were to cut along in the galley, and there was to be quite a grand dinner on the strength of it."

"Oh, nonsense — nonsense."

"Well, that's what he told me, and that's why we pulled away so for; but if so be as it ain't, we are sorry enough, for why should we get into trouble about a man we never saw before, and ain't likely to see again?"

"This excuse won't serve you."

"But who is he, and what's he done?"

"For all we know to the contrary, he is the infamous Todd, the murderer."

"What? The fellow that made the people into pies! Oh, if we had only had half a quarter of an idea of that! But, hold — I saw the way he went. It was along that chalky bit of road. If you really want to nab him, why do you waste time here talking to us? Come on shore, and I will go with you, and we will soon have him now, if that will do any good."

The officer saw at once that this was the only mode of proceeding that promised him the least chance of capturing the fugitive, whether he were Todd or not; for, after all, the persons in the police galley had nothing like positive evidence that it was Todd of whom they were in pursuit. A couple of officers were left in the charge of the boats, and the whole of the remainder of them landed along with Bill, and ran up the steps to the road along which Todd had been seen to run.

They did not know, however, what a wily, cunning personage they had to deal with.

When Todd found himself in such comparatively close quarters with the enemy, he felt perfectly sure that to continue scampering along the high road was not the most likely way to escape. If he were to succeed in eluding his foes, he felt that it must be by *finesse*, and not by speed.

With this idea, he did not go along the road for a greater distance than sufficed to bring him to a hedge, across which he then instantly made his way, and then turning, he crouched down and crept back towards the other direction. On the side of the hedge where he was now, there was not a very pleasant kind of field drain, but Todd's circumstances did not permit of his being very particular, and getting right down into the drain, he crept along, stooping so low that only a portion of his head and back were visible above it.

This was certainly the most likely way to baffle his pursuers, who were not very likely to think that he had so rapidly doubled upon them. Knowing now that his destination was Gravesend, they would in all probability run along the road after him, or if they took to the fields it would still be with the idea that he was ahead of them.

After proceeding for some distance, Todd thought it would be just as well if he were to reconnoitre the foe a little, and, accordingly, he raised his head sufficiently to enable him just to peep through the hedge, and when he did so, he found that he was on sufficiently high ground to command a view of the road, and the landing place, and the river. To his immense consternation, he saw the police advancing rapidly towards him.

"Lost! Lost!" said Todd, as he sunk down into the ditch, with a conviction that he was all but taken. He felt in his pocket for a pistol, and getting one out, he placed it to his ear, and there held it, for he had made up his mind now, to shoot himself, rather than be dragged back to prison, from where another escape would be quite out of the question.

"They shall not take me. I will die — I will die," he murmured; and then he concentrated all his attention to the act of listening to the proceedings of the police.

They came on in a straggling kind of way from the landing place, and the principal officer cried out —

"You, Jenkins, get up the first tree you come to, and take a long look about you. The country is flat enough, and he will find it no easy matter to hide from us, I should say."

"Oh, it's all right, sir," said another voice. "We have him as safe as if he were lying at the bottom of our boat with the darbies on him; and as far as I can judge of him, sir, I should say it is Todd."

"I hope so," said the officer. "It will not be a bad morning's work for you all, my lads, if it is."

Not very far off from where Todd lay concealed in the ditch, only, fortunately for him, on the other side of the road, was a stunted tree, rising about twenty feet from the barren soil, and upon this the man, who was named Jenkins, made his way carefully, and took a long look all round him, and particularly in advance.

"Do you see him?" said the officer commanding the party.

"No, sir, I don't."

"Then he is hiding somewhere, and the only plan is to go right on, and hunt him up if he is among the hedges. Come on, now, at once. We must have him. He cannot possibly escape us now."

Todd, upon this, again gave himself up for lost; but, as luck would have it, although two of the men got over the hedge, and began looking about, and dashing their cutlasses into the hedge, the officer called to them —

"Oh, he never came so far up the road. You don't suppose he was goose enough to come back again? If he is hiding, it will be more likely by the time he lost breath, I should say. Come now; I saw him myself get past yonder little chestnut trees, and the white cottage."

Upon this the men ran on, and Todd felt, for the present, at all events, he was saved.

"The idiots!" said Todd, as he looked up and listened. "The idiots! — So they think that I am as far gone in stupidity as they are, and that I have nothing to do, but to run on until they, younger and more fleet of foot, overtake me."

He crawled out of the ditch, and a most pitiable figure he was when he did so. In his anxiety to hide himself completely, he had, in fact, lain himself down comfortably enough, as far as regarded the softness of the place, right at the bottom of the ditch, and had only, in the midst of a thick growth of rank weeds, kept his face above the water.

"This is horrible," he said; "and they will be back soon, too. What on earth am I to do?"

He heard a loud shout at this moment, and he raised his head sufficiently to see along the road to observe the actions of the officers. He found that they had paused, and were talking to a man on horseback, who was pointing in the very direction where he (Todd) stood, or rather crouched. The idea that this man had from some eminence, he being mounted, too, seen him (Todd) hide in the ditch, at once crossed his mind, and from that moment he felt that he was not in the safety that he had fondly hoped he was.

To remain where he was, with such an idea prevailing in his mind, would have been madness and, accordingly, crawling down close to the hedge, he ran along, splashing, like some gigantic waterfowl, in the ditch, until he came to a thickly planted fence, at right angles with the hedge that bordered the road. There he was forced to come to a standstill.

The fence was composed of the common privet, so that there would have been neither difficulty nor danger in forcing his way through it; but what he might encounter upon the other side was a subject of consideration well worth his attention.

Through the interstices of the foliage he could see that there was a pretty and well-kept mixed garden on the other side. Roses and other flowers grew in quite loving companionship with all kinds of culinary vegetables, and the little plot of ground was well shadowed by some half dozen fruit trees. A part of the ground was made into a kind of lawn, and upon that lawn was a child about one year old crawling about, and amusing itself by making weak efforts to pull up the grass.

While Todd was observing these things, a woman came out of a little whitewashed cottage that was at the farther end of the garden, with some clothes to hang up to dry. The woman spoke to the child, and from the tone in which she did so, it was quite evident she was the mother of it.

Todd waited until she had hung the clothes up that she had brought out into the garden, and then when she went into the house for more, he burst his way through the hedge, and with a resolution and firmness that nothing but the exigencies of his situation could possibly have endowed him with, he took the child up in his arms and walked slowly across the lawn towards the cottage.

The woman, with another heap of wet clothes in her arms, met him, and uttered a loud scream.

“Peace,” said Todd. “Peace, I say. There is no danger unless you make some. Listen to me, and I will tell you how you can do a service to me, and spare your child.”

“Help! Help! Murder! Thieves!” cried the woman.

Todd took one of his pistols from his pocket, and held it to the head of the child.

“Another word,” he said, “and I fire!”



Todd Resorts to a Frightful Stratagem with a Mother and Child.

The woman fell upon her knees, and holding up her hands in the attitude of prayer, she said —

“Oh, have mercy! Kill me, if you must take a life, but spare the child!”

“The child’s life,” said Todd, “is in your own hands. Why do you seek to destroy me?”

“I do not — I do not, indeed.”

“Then, peace, and do not cry out for help. Do not shout that dreadful word ‘Murder!’ for that will destroy me. I am hunted by my fellow men. I am a poor proscribed wretch, and all I ask of you is that you will not betray me.”

“You will spare my child?”

“I will. Why should I harm the little innocent? I was once myself a little child, and considered to be rather a beauty.”

As Todd said this, he made one of his most hideous faces, so that the woman cried out with terror, and tried to snatch the child from him, but he held it with a firm grasp.

CHAPTER CLXIX
Todd gets on Shipboard

"It is in vain," said Todd; "my safety is wound up now with the safety of this little one. If you would save it, you will save me."

"Oh, no, no. Why should it be so? I cannot save you."

"You can, I think. At all events, I will be satisfied if you make the effort to do so. I tell you I am pursued by the officers of the law. It does not matter to you what I am, or who I am, or what crime it is that they lay to my charge; your child's life is as dear to you in any case. Hide me in the cottage, and deny my being seen here, and the child shall live. Betray me, and as sure as the sun gives light, it dies."

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"But, I say, yes. Your course is easy. It is all but certain that my prosecutors will come to this cottage, as it is the only habitation on the route that I have taken. They will ask you if you have seen such a man as I am, and they will tell you that you may earn a large reward by giving such information as may deliver me into the hands of justice; but what reward — what sum of money would pay you for your child's life?"

"Oh, not all the world's worth!"

"So I thought; and so you will deny seeing me, or knowing ought of me, for your child's sake? Is it agreed?"

"It is — it is! God knows who you are, or what you have done that the hands of your fellow creatures should be raised against you; but I will not betray you. You may depend upon my word. If you are found in this place, it shall not be by any information of mine."

"Can you hide me?"

"I will try to do so. Come into the cottage. Ah! What noise is that? I hear the tread of feet, and the shouts of men!"

Todd paused to listen. He shook for a moment or two; and then, with a bitter tone, he said —

"My pursuers come! They begin to suspect the trick that I have played them! — They now know — or think they know, that I have turned upon my route. They come — they come!"

"Oh, give me the child! I swear to you that I will hide you to the utmost of my means; but give me the child!"

"Not yet."

The woman looked at him in an agony of tears.

"Listen to me," she said. "If they discover you it will not be my fault, nor the fault of this little innocent — you feel that! Ah! Then tell me upon what principle of justice can you take its life?"

"I will be just," said Todd. "All I ask of you is, to hide me to the best of your ability, and to keep secret the fact of my presence here. If, after you have done all that, you still find that I am taken, it will be no fault of yours. I do not ask impossibilities of any one, nor do I threaten punishment against you for not performing improbable feats. Come in — come in at once! They come — they come! Do you not hear them now?"

It was quite evident now that a number of persons were approaching, and beating the bushes as they came on. The tread of a horse's feet, too, upon the road convinced Todd that among his foes, now, was the mounted man whom he had seen, and whom he thought he saw point to him as he lay crouching down behind the hedge, half hidden in the ditch.

With the little child still in his arms, he rushed into the cottage, and the woman followed him, wringing her hands with terror. And yet Todd was gentle with the child. He knew that from the mother he had everything to hope, and everything to dread, and he did not wish to drive her to despair by any display of harshness to the little one.

"This way," she cried, "this way," as she led the way into an inner room. "There is a cupboard here in which you can conceal yourself. If they do not search the house, they will not find you, and I will do all that I can to prevent them."

"That will do," said Todd; "but, remember, I will have the child near me, so that upon the least symptom of treachery from you, I can put it to death; and I shall not, under any circumstances, at all scruple so to do. Where is this cupboard that you speak of?"

"It is here — it is here!"

"Ah! That will do." Todd now cast his eyes around the room, and perceived a little cot, that, at night, was devoted to the slumbers of the child. "Take that," he said, pointing to it, "and place it against the door of the cupboard with the child in it. It will seem then not likely that I am hidden here."

"I will do so."

Todd did not feel any apprehension of treachery from the mother of the child. He was not slow to perceive that every other feeling was in her breast weak in

comparison with the all absorbing one of love for the infant; and so he calculated that, rather than run the shadow of a risk of injury to it, she would do all that he required. The cupboard was a deep one; but it was not high enough for Todd quite to stand upright in. That, however, was a trifling inconvenience, and he got into it at once. The child's cot was placed against the door; and the young mother, with a thousand fears tugging at her heart, pretended to busy herself about her household affairs.

The little interval that now ensued, before Todd's pursuers reached the spot, was certainly to him rather a fearful one; and he felt that his fate hung upon the proceedings of the next few moments. He called to the woman in an earnest tone —

"Courage — courage — all will be well."

"Oh, peace — peace!" she said. "They come!"

Todd quite held his breath now in the painful effort that he made to listen, so that not the slightest sound that might be indicative of the approach of his enemies might escape him; and he gave such a start, that he nearly threw open the cupboard door, and upset the cot, as he heard a hoarse man's voice suddenly call out from the garden —

"Hilloa! — House here — house — Hilloa!"

"Now — now," he gasped. "Now I live or die! Upon the next few moments hangs my fate!"

The cold dew of intense fear stood upon his brow, and his sense of hearing appeared to be getting preternaturally acute. Not a word that was said escaped him, although it was right away in the garden that this, to him, fearfully interesting conversation took place.

"What is the matter?" he heard the woman say, and then the rough voice replied to her —

"We are the police, my good woman, and we are in search of a man who is hidden somewhere about this neighbourhood. Has any one come into your place, or have you seen a tall man pass the cottage?"

"No," said the woman.

Todd breathed a little more freely.

"It's very odd," said another voice; "for he must be about this spot, that is quite clear, as he was dodging about the field at the back of here, and hiding in the hedge. We must have passed him."

"Well, he can't get away," said a third; "but after all, he may be lying down somewhere in the garden, for all we know to the contrary."

"I don't think it," said the woman.

At this moment, the child began to cry violently.

"Oh, confound you for a brat!" said Todd, "I wish it was only safe to throttle you."

"Is that your child?" said one of the officers.

"Oh, yes — yes," said the young mother, and hastening into the cottage, she placed a chair by the side of the cot, and began to rock it to and fro, singing while she did so, to lull the child to sleep.

"She will keep her word," thought Todd. "I feel confident that she will keep her word, now, with me."

"You look all round the garden, while I take a peep about the house," said the principal officer.

"Oh, I am lost!" moaned Todd. "I am surely lost now! If the house should be searched well, so obvious a place of concealment as a cupboard will not escape them. All is lost now, indeed."

He almost gave up all thought, now, of keeping life or liberty, and he waited only for the fatal moment when the officers should approach and place their hands upon that cupboard door to open it. The child still cried, and the mother sang to it.

"Sleep, sleep, little baby —
Oh, sleep all the day;
The sunshine is hiding,
The birds fly away.
Away, away — far away.
The sunshine is hiding,
The birds fly away — "

"Hilloa! What cupboard is that behind the child's cot?"

"'And when they return
You may open your eyes.'

"Oh, it's where we keep our best crockery. Don't disturb the child — I do think it is sickening with the measles.

"And see how the sunset
Is gilding the skies,
Away, away — far away.
And see how the sunset

Is gilding the skies."

"Have you found him in the garden? I shall be almost out of my wits, now, till my husband comes home. Who is it that you are looking for, and pray what has he done? He would need to be clever, indeed, to come in here without my knowing it; and as for the garden, why, I was hanging out the clothes there for the last half hour, I tell you."

"Oh, he's not here," said the officer. "It would be no bad thing, marm, for any one who could lend a helping hand to find him."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes. You have heard of Todd, the murderer? Well, that's the man we are after, and we have every reason to think that he is somewhere about here, and it is a large reward that is offered for him, I can tell you."

"Ah! I should like to get it."

"Not a doubt of it. Good day, marm. If you should see any suspicious looking fellow about the fields, just give notice of it in some sort of a way, if you can, for you may depend upon it, it will be Todd."

"Oh, yes, I will. How very fractious this little thing is today, to be sure. I hardly ever knew it to be so before."

"Ah, well, they will be so, at times. But I'm off. Mind, now, you get the reward if you see anything of Todd."

"Oh, yes. Trust me for that."

The man left the room. What a reprieve from death that was for Todd! He thought that during all the perils that he had passed through, he had surely never been quite so near to destruction as then; and when he found that he was saved, temporarily, he could hardly hold himself up in the cupboard, and a sensation of faintness came over him.

It was not safe for him yet, by any means, to think of emerging from his place of concealment. Indeed, he felt that the young mother would be the best judge upon that hand, so he did not stir nor speak, and at last he heard the cot with the now sleeping child in it, being gently moved from before the cupboard door. Then it was opened, and Todd, with his face pale and haggard, stepped out into the room.

The young woman only pointed to the door of the little apartment steadily and significantly.

"What do you mean?" said Todd.

"Go," she said. "I have done that which you require of me. Now go."

"To death?"

"No. Your enemies are no longer here. At the sacrifice of truth and of feeling I saved you. It was all you asked of me, and now I tell you to go, and no longer pollute this place by your presence. I know who and what you are, now. You are Sweeney Todd, the murderer."

"Well, and if I am, what then?"

"Nothing — nothing! I ask nothing of you, but that you should leave this house; I have kept my word. I will let the memory of this hour's work sink deeply into my heart, and there remain untold to any one. Not even to my husband will I breathe it. I only ask you to go."

"I am going — I am going."

Todd felt awed by her manner. He cowered before the look that, full of horror, she bent upon him, and he crept towards the cottage door. But the dread that some of his enemies might be lurking about the spot detained him.

"Tell me," he said, "oh! Tell me truly — are they gone?"

"Wait," she said, "and I will see again."

She took the child in her arms, and left the cottage. Todd found, now that the child was no longer in his power as a kind of hostage for the faith of the mother, that he had trusted her too far; but it was too late, now, for him to recede from the position in which he had placed himself, and with all his terror, he had no resource but to calmly — calmly as he could — wait her return.

She came back again in a few moments.

"You can go with safety. They are all away."

"I will trust you, and take your word for it," said Todd. "I thank you for the service you have rendered to me, and I am not ungrateful. Accept of this in remembrance of me, and of this day's adventure."

He took from his pocket a splendid gold watch and laid it upon the table, in the outer room, but with vehemence, the woman cried —

"No — no! Take it up, I will not have it. Take it up, or even now I will dare everything and call for help. I will take nothing from your bloodstained hands. Take up the watch, or I will destroy it."

"As you please," said Todd, as he placed the watch in his pocket again. "I wish not to force it upon you. I am gone."

He went out into the little garden, but he looked about him very nervously indeed, before he trusted himself to walk towards the little white gate that opened upon the high road. Each moment, however, that passed without any one springing upon and attacking him, was a moment of confidence gained. He carried a pistol in his hand, and keeping his eyes keenly around him, he reached the road.

"All is safe," he said. "I do, indeed, think she is right, and that they have given up the chase for me. She has not deceived me, and I may yet escape."

He kept close to the roadside, so that he was very much covered by the hedge, and then, at as fast a pace as he thought he could keep up for any length of time, he ran on.

He had not gone far when he heard the sound of wheels behind him, and he got over a hedge and hid behind it until he could see what sort of vehicle it was that approached. It turned out to be a cart driven by a couple of countrymen, who were talking upon their own affairs in rather loud tones; as they came on, Todd listened intently, and was satisfied that his supposed escape into that neighbourhood was not the subject of their discourse.

CHAPTER CLXX
The Ship Bound for Havre Takes a Passenger

"Hilloa!" cried Todd, as he came out into the middle of the road and confronted the cart with the two men in it. "Hilloa! Which way are you going?"

"One would think you might see that," said one of the men, "by the way the horse's nose points."

"What do you want?" said the other, rather sharply.

"Not to intrude upon you at all, if you don't like it," replied Todd; "but I am going to Gravesend, and if you will help me on a part of the way, I will pay you well for it. I thought it would be good for my constitution to walk, but I find I am older than I thought I was."

"What will you give?" said one of the men, in a dubious tone of voice.

"Name your price," said Todd, "and I will give it. I know you will not be unreasonable with me."

"Will you give half a guinea?" said the other.

"Yes, for I am foot weary."

"Jump up, then, and we will soon take you to Gravesend. You ain't many miles off from it now by the near cuts that we know. Come on."

Todd managed to scramble into the cart, and the man who was driving gave the horse an impulse forward, and away they went at a good pace.

Todd began to feel a little easier in his mind now, for the quick motion of the cart in the direction that he wished to go in was most satisfactory to him. He felt quite delighted in a little time, when one of the men pointing ahead, cried out —

"There's the first houses in Gravesend, if you really want to go there."

"Really," said Todd. "Indeed I do. Can you tell me what vessels are off the Port?"

"Perhaps we can, and perhaps we can't, old fellow; but we will have some talk about that soon. Ha! Ha!"

There was something so peculiar in the laugh of the man, that Todd began to wonder into what hands he had fallen. They, every now and then, too, gave to each other a very significant look, as though there was some secret between them which they would not converse of before him. All this began to make Todd

very uneasy, indeed, and the little amount of felicitation which he had been giving to himself so short a time before, rapidly subsided.

"Am I a prisoner?"

These were the words that occurred to him, but he had no ready means of answering the question. All he could do was to keep upon his guard, and, to tell the truth, well armed and desperate as he was, Todd was no very despicable match for any two men.

Suddenly the man who was driving turned the horse's head down a deep declivity that led towards the river, to the right of the road.

The country they were in was all of chalk, and this narrow road, or rather lane, at right angles with the high road, was evidently a cutting through the chalk foundation for the sake of a ready passage from the side of the Thames to the high road.

A more picturesque spot could not well have been conceived. The small amount of loam upon the surface of the chalk, bore a brilliant vegetation; and upon the tall rugged sides of the deep cutting, wherever a small portion of earth had lodged, tall weeds had grown up, while on each side of the lane, close to the base of the chalky heights, there was a mass of weeds and tall creeping plants, and here and there a young tree, which lent a beautifully verdant aspect to the place.

Every step that the horse now went, conducted the cart and its occupants deeper and deeper into the cutting, until, at last, the sky overhead looked only like a thin streak of light, and the gloom of a premature twilight was about the place.

"Halt!" cried the man who was not driving, and the horse was stopped in the gloomiest portion of the lane. Todd turned ghastly pale, and kept his hand plunged in his breast upon one of his pistols.

"What have you come down here for?" he said. "Why do you come to a stop in such a place as this?"

"We will soon let you know," said the man who had not been driving, knitting his brows. "No doubt, you thought you had nailed us nicely, my fine fellow."

"Nailed you?"

"Yes. You need not put on such an innocent look, I can tell you. We are pretty good judges in these matters, and it's quite sufficient for me to tell you that we know you."

"Know me?"

"Yes, to be sure. Did you think we were taken in by any such nonsense as your being tired, and so on? — No. We know you, I say, and this hour is your last. You have placed yourself in our power, and we will take good care of you now. There is a well in this lane which keeps secrets capitally."

Todd drew his pistol, and held it against the breast of this man.

"Attempt any violence," he said, "and I fire!"

"Oh, indeed! You are well prepared, are you? I must say that, for an exciseman, you are a bold fellow."

"A what?"

"An exciseman. You know well you have been on the lookout for us for the last week; so it is of no use denying it. You thought you nabbed us, when you got into our cart."



Todd's Adventure with the Smugglers.

Todd lowered his pistol.

"This is a foolish enough mistake," he said, "I am no more an exciseman than I am commander-in-chief of the forces. What could have put such a thing into your heads?"

"Say you so?" cried the other. "But how will you make us believe it? That's the question."

"Well," said Todd, putting on a very candid look, "I don't know how a man is to set about proving that he is not an exciseman. I only know that I am not. The real truth is, that I am in debt, and being pressed by my creditors, have thought proper to get out of their way; and so I want to make the best of my way to

Gravesend, that is all. I fancy, by your anger at the idea of my being an exciseman, that you are smugglers; and if so, I can only say that, with all my heart, you may go on smuggling with the greatest success until the day of judgment, before I would interfere with you in the matter."

"Dare we believe him?" said one of the men to the other.

"I hardly know," replied the other; "and yet it would be rather a sad thing to take a man's life, when it might turn out that he was not what we took him for."

"How on earth am I to convince you?" said Todd.

"Where do you want to go to?"

"I want to get on board some vessel, I don't care what, so that it is bound to some continental port. My object, I tell you, is to get away, and that is all."

"Would the Port of Havre in France suit you?"

"Perfectly well."

The two men now whispered together for a few moments, and then, one of them, turning to Todd, said: —

"The fact is that we are somewhat connected with a vessel bound for Havre, and it will sail tonight. If you are really what you pretend, and truly want to leave England, you can come with us, and we will give you a passage; but we expect to be paid for it."

"Nothing can be more reasonable," said Todd; "I will pay you a liberal price, and as I wish to go on board as soon as I can, you may feel yourself perfectly easy regarding your suspicions of my being an exciseman, by keeping me in your company, and placing me on board your own vessel as quickly as you can."

"Hang it, that's fair enough," cried one of them. "Come on, then, and let us get to the Lively William as soon as we can. It's rather a mercy we did not knock you on the head, though, at once."

"I am very much obliged," said Todd.

"Oh, don't mention it. I always myself, mind, defer anything of that sort till the last. It's a very rough and ugly way of settling matters, at the best; but when you can't reasonably, you know, do anything else, why, you must, and there's an end of it."

"Exactly," said Todd. "I perceive that you are quite a philosopher in such transactions. So now that we have a better understanding together, the sooner we get on board this Lively William you talk of, the better."

"Not a doubt of that. Come up."

The horse's head was turned up the lane again, and in a very few moments the high road was gained, and they went on at a rapid trot for Gravesend. The town was soon reached — that town what is all dirt in winter, and chalk dust in summer — and the two men, by the manner in which they kept their eyes upon Todd while they passed several throngs of people, showed that it was a very difficult thing indeed to get rid of suspicion when once it took possession of them.

After, however, getting right through the town, and finding that Todd did not attempt to give the least alarm, but, on the contrary, shrunk from observation as much as he could, their confidence in him was complete, and they really believed him to be what he pretended to be.

Whether, if those men had really known who and what he was, they would have altered their views with regard to him, is a matter difficult to give an opinion upon; but as it was, they had no scruples whatever, provided he would pay them a good price for his passage to Havre.

"Now," said one of them, "we know that you have not deceived us, and that it is all right, we don't mind telling you that we are the captain and owner of the Lively William, and that we are in the regular smuggling trade, between the French ports and this country. We don't make a bad thing of it, one way and another."

"I am glad to hear it," said Todd.

"Ah, you view this sort of thing in a Christian like spirit, we see; and if you have no objection to a drop of as pure champagne brandy as ever you tasted, provided you have tasted some of the best, you can have a drop."

"I should like it much," said Todd.

"Just look out ahead, then, and fix your eyes on that old tree yonder, while we get it."

Todd did not care to know what mode of hiding spirits the two men had in their cart; so he did as they required of him, and fixed his eyes upon the old tree. After he had kept his eyes upon that object for some few minutes, they called out to him —

"All's right."

Todd looked round, and found one of the men with a small bladder of spirits, and a little horn drinking cup.

"Here," he said, "you can give us your opinion of this."

Todd tossed off the contents of the cup.

“Excellent!” he cried. “Excellent! That, indeed, is brandy. I do not think that such is to be got in London.”

“Scarcely,” said the man, as he helped himself, and then handed the bladder and the cup to his companion; “but we are going to put up our horse and cart now, and if you will be so good as to look at the old tree again, we will send the brandy away.”

“Certainly,” said Todd.

The brandy was soon, in some mysterious manner, disposed of, and then the cart was stopped at the door of a little country looking inn, the landlord of which seemed to have a perfect understanding with the two men belonging to the Lively William.

“Now,” said one of them to Todd, “as you have no objection to go on board at once, we will put you there.”

“Objection?” cried Todd. “My objection is to remain on land. I beg that you will let me feel that I am on the deck of your vessel, as quickly as possible.”

“That will do. This way.”

They led him down a narrow lane with tall hedges upon each side, and then across a straggling mangy looking field or two, such as are to be found on the banks of the Thames, and on the northern coasts of some portions of England, the Isle of Wight in particular, and then they came at once to the bank of the river.

A boatman hailed them, and upon their making signs to him that his services were required, he pulled in to the shore; and Todd, with his two new friends, were in a few moments going through the water to the vessel.

The Lively William did not look particularly lively. It was a slatternly looking craft, and its black, dingy hull presented anything but an inviting appearance. The genius of dirt and neglect seemed to have taken possession of the vessel, and the nearer Todd got to it, the less he liked it; but still it was a means of his escaping, and had it been ten times a more uncomfortable looking abode than it was, he would have gladly gone on board it.

“Here we are!” cried one of the men.

The boat touched the side of the ship, and in another moment, Todd was upon her deck.