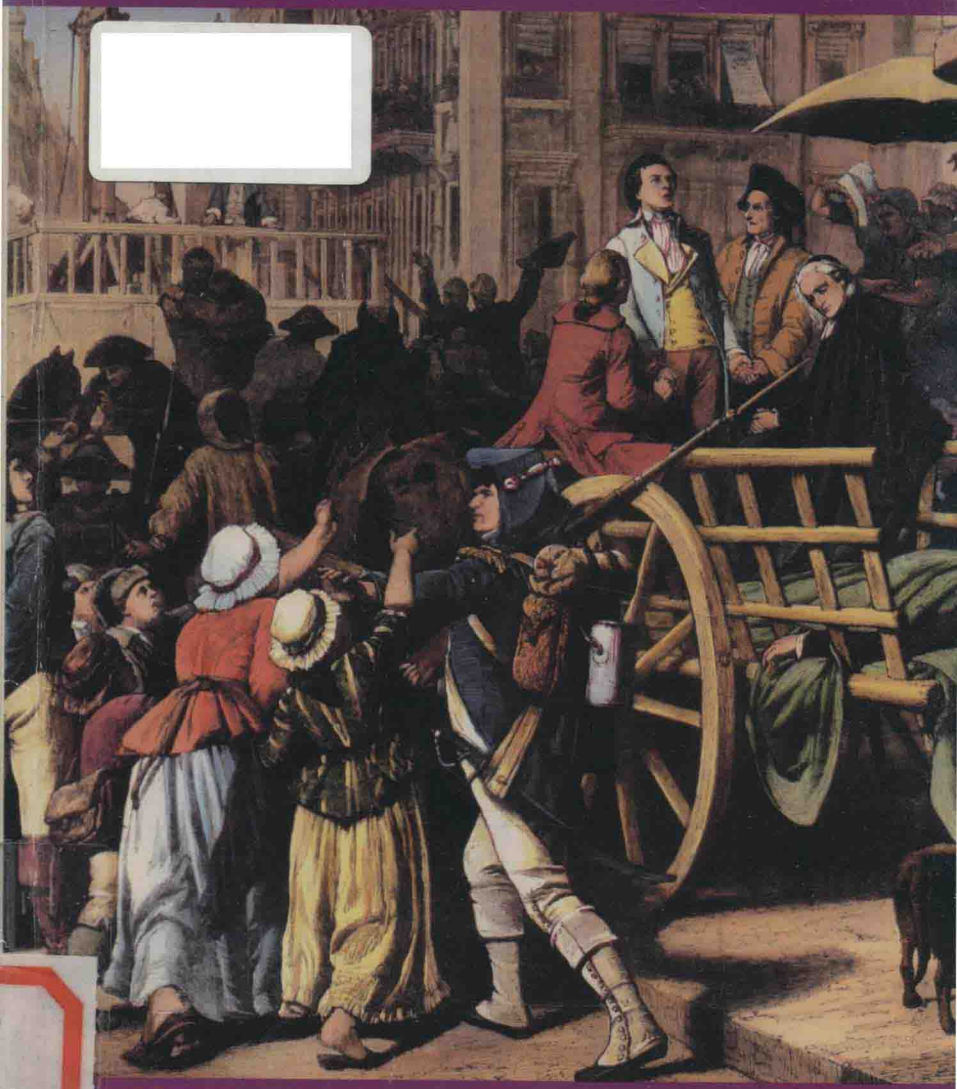


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**CHARLES DICKENS**



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# *A Tale of Two Cities*

CHARLES DICKENS

Retold by David Wharry  
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*A Tale of Two Cities*





*On a foggy Friday night in late November 1775, Mr Jarvis Lorry walked up Shooter's Hill beside the Dover mail coach.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Mail

On a foggy Friday night in late November 1775, Mr Jarvis Lorry walked up Shooter's Hill beside the Dover mail coach. The fog was so thick he could not even see the horses, only hear the driver's whip as they struggled up the long slope. Beside him, the other two passengers walked silently on in their muddy boots and heavy coats, their collars turned up around their ears.

Everyone was afraid. The guard riding behind the coach, a hand on one of six loaded guns, suspected the passengers as much as the darkness around him. The passengers suspected one another, the coachman, the guard. Everyone suspected everybody else of being a robber.

'Wo-ho!' cried the coachman. 'One more pull now!' And one final effort dragged the coach to the top.

As the guard was getting down to open the door for the passengers, the coachman cried, 'Tsst! Joe!'

'What do you hear Tom?'

Everyone listened, their hearts beating almost loud enough to be heard.

'A horse coming,' whispered the guard. 'Someone riding fast.' He climbed quickly up to his place and grabbed a gun.

The sound of the horse came closer, quickly.

'You there!' the guard cried out. 'Stop, or I shall fire!' They heard the horse stop, and a man's voice call from the fog, 'Is that the Dover mail?'

'Never you mind what it is!' shouted the guard. 'Who are you?'

'If it is the Dover mail I want to see a passenger, Mr Jarvis Lorry.'

'I am he, and I know this messenger,' Mr Lorry said to the guard immediately. 'Is that you, Jerry?' he shouted.

'Yes, sir. I have a message for you. From Tellson's Bank.'

A horse and rider came out of the fog.

'If you have a gun, keep your hand away from it!' warned the guard.

The rider handed Mr Lorry a small piece of paper. He opened it in the light of the coach lamp and read it – first to himself, then aloud: "'Wait at Dover for Mademoiselle.'" He thought for a moment, then said, 'Jerry say that my answer is, RECALLED TO LIFE.'

'Recalled to life,' repeated Jerry. 'That's a strange answer, sir.'

'Take that message back to Tellson's, Jerry. Go now. Good night.'

Mr Lorry climbed into the coach where the other two passengers, their watches and money hidden in their boots, were pretending to be asleep.

Jerry Cruncher rode back to London, stopping in beer-houses along the way, while Mr Lorry travelled on along the road to Dover. As the banker sat half-asleep watching the night shadows rush past outside the coach window, the same thought came back to him again and again: 'Eighteen years! To be buried alive for eighteen years!'

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Preparation

The next morning, Mr Lorry was the only passenger to get out of the damp and dirty coach when it arrived at the Royal George Hotel in Dover. The other two had got out at different destinations along the way.

Wrapped from head to foot in his muddy travelling clothes, he was shown to his room and told there would be a boat to Calais the next day. Later, he came downstairs for breakfast in a plain, well-kept brown suit.

Mr Lorry listened to the sound of his pocket watch as he sat **staring** into the dining-room fire. He was a quiet, neat, stiff-looking gentleman of sixty. His plain, uninteresting face was as it nearly always was – empty of expression. When breakfast arrived he asked for a room to be prepared for a young lady who would be arriving from London.

In the afternoon, he went for a walk along the windy sea shore. The air was clear enough to see the French coast. After dinner, as he was pouring his last glass of wine, he heard the sound of wheels outside. A few minutes later, he was told that Miss Manette had arrived and would be happy to see him. Mr Lorry adjusted his odd little **wig** and followed the waiter to her room.

A golden-haired girl of not more than seventeen stood waiting for him by the fire, her hat still in her hand. Her blue eyes met his in the candlelight and, for one moment, Mr Lorry remembered a child he had held in his arms on a journey across the Channel, many years ago.

‘Please take a seat, sir,’ Lucie Manette said in a clear and pleasant young voice, with a slight foreign accent. Mr Lorry kissed her hand and sat down.

‘I received a letter from the bank, sir, telling me there had been a discovery concerning the property of my poor dead father.’ Mr Lorry moved uncomfortably in his chair. ‘I was told to go to Paris and meet a man from the bank there. He would explain the details.’

‘That man is me. Yes, I . . .’ He paused. ‘It is very difficult to begin, miss.’

Thoughtfully, she raised her eyes to his. ‘Are you *really* a stranger to me sir? I have a feeling . . .’

‘Miss Manette, I am a businessman . . . I have no time for feelings. Please, think of me only as a . . . talking machine – truly, I am not much else.’

‘Please tell me then, sir.’

‘Miss, there has been no new discovery of money or property – Doctor Manette left all he owned in my care at

Tellson's. As you know, we have managed it for you ever since he – and then your mother died.'

'It was *you* who brought me to England!' she cried, taking him by the wrists.

'It was I, miss. I was managing Tellson's Bank in Paris at the time.'

'Please tell me what has been discovered, sir!'

'Miss Manette, your father has been – been found. He is alive. I am afraid he is greatly changed, almost a wreck. He has been taken to the house of his old servant in Paris, and we are going there – I, to recognize him; you, to bring him back to life.

Lucie Manette spoke slowly, clearly, as though talking in a dream: 'I am going to see his ghost! It will be his ghost – not him!'

Suddenly, a fierce-looking, red-haired, red-faced woman wearing a hat like a huge cheese burst into the room. With one great push of her huge hand she sent Mr Lorry flying against the wall.

'You in brown! Couldn't you tell her what you had to tell her without frightening her to death! Do you call *that* being a banker!'

Recovering, Mr Lorry looked on as Lucie's servant placed the young woman's head on her shoulder. 'I hope, madame –'

'Miss! Miss Pross.'

'I hope, Miss Pross, that you will be accompanying Miss Manette to France.'

'Sir, if I was intended to go across salt water, would I have been born on an island!'

This was a difficult question to answer, and Mr Lorry went downstairs to think about it.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Wine Shop

A large **barrel** of wine had fallen out of a cart and broken in the street outside the wine shop. People dressed in rags had run to it and were drinking from little pools between the stones. The wine, mixed with dirt, ran like blood through their fingers. But the wine was soon gone, and the laughter stopped. Hollow-eyed, broken by sickness and hunger, the people walked slowly away; and the street in Saint Antoine, a poor suburb of Paris, became normal again.

Monsieur Defarge, the owner of the wine shop, had been in the street when the barrel had broken. 'Poor animals!' he had thought sadly, 'Most of them know only the taste of black bread and death.'

Ernest Defarge, a strong, dark-haired man of thirty, went into the wine shop. As always, Madame Defarge was sitting knitting behind the counter. She was about her husband's age, with a strong, hard face. Her cold dark eyes never seemed to look at anything in particular, but nothing escaped their attention.

'The people from the market broke a barrel,' said Defarge.

'It is not our affair. Let them bring another,' she said expressionlessly, putting down her knitting. She coughed, deliberately, signalling to him with her eyes — towards Mr Lorry and Lucie Manette, sitting in the corner.

'It must be them,' Defarge said quietly. Three friends of his were playing cards at a table next to the well-dressed couple. He went over to the three men.

'Good day, Jacques,' he said to the first.

'A fine day, Jacques,' the man replied without smiling.

'Hello, Jacques,' Defarge said to the second man.

'How goes it, Jacques,' he answered.

'Jacques,' Defarge said to the third friend. 'The room you

were asking about is on the fifth floor. You may go and visit it without me, if you like.'

The man looked at Lucie and Mr Lorry, then at the others. 'Thank you, Jacques,' he said to Defarge, and all three got up.

As they were leaving Mr Lorry tapped Defarge gently on the shoulder, 'Sir, could I have a few words with you?'

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Shoemaker

Defarge led Mr Lorry and Lucie Manette up dark and dirty stairs behind the wine shop. It got steeper and narrower the higher they went and Mr Lorry stopped twice to rest. The smell of the rubbish everywhere made Lucie feel sick. When they turned the last corner they saw Defarge's friends by a door at the top of the stairs. They were looking at something through a tiny hole in the wall.

'Leave us, my friends,' Defarge shouted. 'We have business here.'

They came quietly down, saying nothing as they passed.

'Who are these men?' asked Mr Lorry.

'They are – of the chosen few.' There was a wild, secret look in Defarge's eyes when he said the last words. He took a key from his pocket.

'Is the door locked, sir?' asked Mr Lorry, surprised.

'He has lived so long locked up,' Defarge replied. 'He would be frightened – who knows what might happen if his door was left open.'

Lucie's face showed such an expression of anxiety, Mr Lorry took her by the hand – she was trembling with terror.

'Courage, miss. The worst part is now – before we open the door. Please, think of the good, the happiness you bring him. Open now, Defarge.'

Defarge turned the key in the lock and slowly opened the door. 'You may go in,' he said quietly.

'I am afraid,' said Lucie, shaking now.

'Of what?' asked Mr Lorry.

'Of him. Of my father.'

'Come now! We must go in!' said Mr Lorry with unusual impatience, a tear shining on his cheek.

Inside, the light was so dim it was difficult to see anything at all. Yet work was being done in there. With his back to them, facing a crack of light from the window, a white-haired old man sat on a low bench making shoes.

'You are still at work, I see,' said Defarge, looking down at the thin figure.

After a long silence, the head raised slightly and a voice spoke, as if from a distance. 'Yes - I am working.' The voice was like the last faint echo of a sound made long ago. A pair of lifeless eyes looked up at the questioner a moment before the face dropped again.

They stood watching the shoemaker for several minutes before Defarge opened the window to let in more light. He stopped working, an unfinished shoe visible now on his lap. He had a hollow face with extremely bright eyes that seemed to shine. His ragged shirt hung loosely around his worn, wasted body. Confused, he raised a hand to shade his eyes from the light.

'You have a visitor,' said Defarge. The shoemaker looked at him blankly as before. 'Tell monsieur what kind of shoe you are working on.'

'It is a lady's shoe,' said the old man mechanically.

'Now,' said Defarge, 'Tell monsieur the name of its maker.'

'One Hundred and Five, North Tower,' was the reply. Then, with a sigh, he began working again, ignoring his visitors.

'Monsieur Manette,' said Mr Lorry, laying a hand on his shoulder. 'Don't you recognize me?' There was no reply.



Tears running down her face, Lucie walked up to him.

The old man's eyes caught sight of her dress and he raised them. When he saw her face he stared at her with sudden fear and confusion. After a while, his lips began to form words, though no sound was heard.

Lucie sat down on the bench beside him and took his hands. He stared at her golden hair, at her hands holding his.

'Is it you?' he whispered. 'No. No, it cannot be. You cannot be my wife. You are too young.'

'Father! Father!' cried Lucie. She went down on her knees in front of him, threw her arms around him, pressed his wasted body to hers.

'You are the jailer's daughter?'

'Father, your pain is over! I have come to take you to peace and rest.'

'What is your name, gentle angel?' whispered the old man, tears appearing in his eyes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Five Years Later

Tellson's Bank in Fleet Street was an old-fashioned place, even in 1780. It was small, dark, and ugly. Curiously, however, its owners were proud of this. They believed that if it was any bigger, less dark, or less ugly, it would no longer be respectable.

It was Jerry Cruncher's job to wait outside Tellson's until he was called inside. Jerry was Tellson's messenger. It was Jerry's young son's job to sit beside his father.

Outside the bank on that windy March morning, young Jerry knew better than to talk to his father. Jerry had been out all night again and was in a very bad mood indeed. Jerry often went out all night and his son often wondered what he did. He certainly did not go fishing, as he pretended.