

A NARROW ESCAPE.

[CONCLUDED.]
You are the man, and I cannot allow you to be hung. Overpower the keeper, take his clothes and leave. Go to the old rookery, No. 1, first floor, and hide. I will wait for you there. God help you, for you must conceal yourself.

Lloyd, with a wildly beating heart, concealed the articles and tried to think. The keeper did not enter the cell, till he brought his tea, and how could he accomplish his purpose then? There would be too many eyes in the prison then, and he might be detected.

"Defeated now with the weapons of deliverance in my hands. No, indeed, Lloyd Fletcher, you think you think according to the prison rules you are not allowed to stay alone to-night. It would be barbarous to leave a fellow without good company his last night on earth," said the turnkey, an hour or two after Mrs. Lancaster's visit.

"You'll have to take your pick between old Fletcher and myself, but I suppose you will take me, had as you hate me, more than you like me." "Why can't I have my wife?" asked Lloyd with a voice full of bitterness. "Oh, wife! all right, but on such occasions, she'll be around in the morning an hour or two; but talk quick—which will you have?"

"What difference do you think it makes to me, you heartless wretch, who watches with my last moments on earth, when my only friend is denied me?"

So it was arranged. The turnkey went to occupy his cell, and Lloyd went to work with his little instrument to file the handcuffs and chain which bound him. It was slow and tedious, but in an hour's time he had the satisfaction of one free hand, and had the power to remove his limbs from the galling, rattling torments which had so firmly held him.

"I must be able to throw these fetters off, or I am lost." So he worked away industriously until the obstinate link was displaced, and he could wear or leave them off at his pleasure. 10 o'clock arrived, and the turnkey had his cell brought to the cell.

"When are you going to turn in, Fletcher? I'm as tired as an East India nigger. Plagued afraid I shan't be much company to-night; better had the priest. You wrote all your letters yesterday, Fletcher, didn't you? and the keeper, I saw, turned over once or twice, and in five minutes was snoring profoundly." "Now is my time," thought Fletcher. "It won't do to wait. Heaven help me."

Not hesitating he stepped from the chains and drew off the torturing handcuffs. It was but the work of a moment to estimate the handcuffs with the mixture, and in less time than it takes me to tell it, Lloyd had stripped the difference in the height, but Lloyd lacked the aldermanic proportions of the jailor. However, he managed that quickly and easily, unlocked the door of the cell, stepped into the corridor, looked it again carefully, withdrew the key, and hurriedly and as possible the dull, heavy tread of the keeper. The jail physician was just leaving the building, and Lloyd walked along after him, as if to see him safely out. Only one subordinate guard, the doctor walked out together, without exciting the slightest suspicion.

He reached the old rookery, donned his attire, which proved to be a soldier's uniform, removed the black cap of the keeper, and substituted a light, curly one, and before 12 o'clock had reached the house of a friend, two or three miles from the city, told his story and was warmly received and promised protection. Lloyd felt sure he had left no clue by which he could be traced to this spot, and almost overcame by his great happiness, he fell on his knees and thanked the God he had previously forewarned for his miraculous escape.

The next morning all was astir early in the prison, but our turnkey did not make his appearance, what could it mean? A key was produced to open the cell door, and the nude, inanimate figure of the fat keeper was presented to their astonished view. In the middle of the cell was the prisoner's wardrobe, all as could spare from the make up of the turnkey's lustrous proportions. A little cold water and fresh air revived him, but he could throw no light on the mysterious disappearance of Fletcher. He had seen nothing, knew nothing, and remembered nothing. Mrs. Fletcher was arrested on suspicion of assisting her husband to escape, but nothing could be proven, and a few days saw her at liberty. She was content that her darling was safe, but could form no idea of the mode, or where he was concealed. However, now that so much was gained, she felt that she could afford to wait for the rest. Large rewards were offered for the prisoner's apprehension; large posters were placed everywhere and the detectives were set to work to ferret out his hiding place, but in vain. When the excitement was at its height, the ante-mortem statement and confession of a dying man were brought before the court, entirely exonerating Lloyd Fletcher from complicity in the murder. The man was Mrs. Lancaster's fosterbrother. He had dragged and beaten poor Fletcher the night of the perpetration of the crime, stolen his pistol and compelled the doctor himself. Mrs. Lancaster had been from the first exceedingly suspicious of him, but proofs were not in her power, she had used every means possible to restore Lloyd his liberty, trying to time and a merciful God for the rest. How well she acted her part and succeeded in her endeavors, the reader is aware. Fletcher was immediately pardoned, and drawn by the excited Londoners to his trial.

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