

VICTORIA SPENCE



FAMOUS BRITISH CRIMINALS

•

**We wish you a pleasant reading! Yours Telegram channel
@ADAPTED_BOOKS (https://t.me/ADAPTED_BOOKS)**

PART ONE

John 'Jack' Sheppard - Housebreaker and escape artist

CHAPTER ONE

A Life of Crime

John Sheppard was a thief and highwayman, but he became a very popular figure in his lifetime because of his extraordinary courage. At least two plays were written about him, and society was fascinated by his life and adventures.

John Sheppard's father was a carpenter in a poor part of London called Spitalfields. He had two sons, John, who was born in 1702, and Thomas. John was always known as Jack. The two brothers both became famous robbers.

Jack was the first of the two brothers to begin a life of crime. He worked for a carpenter in London, but he soon began to spend a lot of time at the Black Lion pub in Drury Lane. It was here that he met a woman called Elizabeth Lyon, but more commonly known among her friends as Edgeworth Bess. Jack fell under her influence and they formed a partnership.

'I can make you rich,' she told him.

'How?' he asked her.

'Listen,' she said. 'You're a carpenter. You work in rich people's houses. That gives you the perfect opportunity to steal valuable objects.'

At first Jack was very successful and no one suspected him of the robberies that were taking place in the houses where he worked. He stole valuable items for Edgeworth Bess and she sold them for him.

Jack also had another woman friend named Maggot, and she persuaded him to rob a local merchant, Mr Bains, who was a trader in valuable cloth. First Jack went to Mr Bains' house and bought some cloth in order to see what the house was like inside. He went home and put the piece of cloth in his trunk. The same night he returned secretly to the house. He broke in and stole money and other property, which he then took to Maggot.

Jack did not go back to his master's home that night, or the next, and his master began to be suspicious of the young man's activities. He decided to open Jack's trunk to see what was inside. He found the piece of cloth that Jack had

bought from Mr Bains. When Jack finally returned home, he realised that his master now had evidence that connected him with Mr Bains. So Jack stole the piece of cloth back from his employer and hid it.

When Jack's master heard about the robbery at Mr Bains' house, he was sure that Jack was involved. He contacted Mr Bains and described the piece of cloth that he had seen in Jack's trunk. Mr Bains knew immediately that Jack was the young man who had bought the cloth, and he too guessed that the purchase of the cloth was a trick to enter his house.

When Jack heard that he was suspected, he pretended to get very angry.

'I haven't stolen anything,' he shouted. 'My mother gave me that piece of cloth!'

'Did she?' Mr Bains said. 'And where did she get it from?'

'Ask her yourself,' Jack said.

'I think I will,' his master replied.

Jack's master sent for the boy's mother and asked her about the cloth.

'My son's telling the truth,' she said. 'I bought the cloth at a market in Spitalfields.'

'Where exactly in the market did you buy it?' the master asked.

'I don't remember,' Jack's mother said.

Jack's master and Mr Bains did not believe what Jack and his mother told them, but they had no direct evidence against Jack for the robbery. Despite his suspicions of him, Jack's master decided to let the boy continue to work for him as an apprentice.

Jack became more and more involved in crime, and he finally became part of a gang led by Jonathan Wild, another famous criminal. He now worked for himself as a carpenter and this meant that he continued to have easy entrance to rich people's houses. In one case he was repairing a house belonging to an elderly gentleman in a rich area of London. He robbed the gentleman of money, jewellery and expensive clothes.

Shortly after this robbery Edgeworth Bess was arrested and sent to a local prison. Jack went to the prison and demanded to see his friend. When the prison officer refused him permission, Jack attacked him and went in.

'You're coming with me,' he told Edgeworth Bess.

'What do you mean?' she asked him. 'I'm a prisoner here. I can't come with you!'

'Yes, you can!' Jack told her with a laugh. 'I knocked the officer out - he won't give us any trouble now!'

He picked up Bess and carried her out of the prison. This episode made him very popular with the criminal world in London, especially with the women.

The brothers, Tom and Jack, worked together, robbing houses and selling the items that they had stolen. They also continued to work with Edgeworth Bess. They broke into the house of a merchant, Mrs Cook, and stole some valuable items. Tom tried to sell them but he was arrested and taken to Newgate prison, where some of London's most notorious criminals were kept. He offered to give evidence against his brother Jack and Edgeworth Bess in order to receive a lighter punishment. The authorities looked everywhere for Jack and Edgeworth Bess, but they could not find them.

One day Jack met a friend of his in the street, a man called James Sykes. Sykes knew that the authorities were looking for Jack, and he made a plan. He hoped to get a lot of money for capturing Jack. He took Jack into a pub and bought him a lot of beer. While Jack was happily drinking, Sykes sent for a constable. The constable arrested Jack and took him to prison. Jack waited until the middle of the night and then made a hole in the roof of the prison and escaped.

Jack's freedom did not last long. He was soon arrested again, and this time he and Edgeworth Bess were taken to another prison. The authorities thought that Jack and Bess were husband and wife, and they allowed them to live together in a room in the prison called Newgate Ward.

A few days after their arrival at the prison, Jack managed to cut off his iron chains. He then made a hole in the prison wall, and removed one of the iron bars from the window. He looked down and saw that it was too far to jump to the ground. So he tied some sheets together, and tied one end around a bar in the window. Then he helped Edgeworth Bess to climb down to the ground, and he quickly followed her. They were now in front of a high prison wall, but they managed to climb over it and escape into the city.

The criminal class of London enjoyed hearing about Jack's adventures and he became a hero to them. One criminal, Charles Grace, asked if he could work with Jack, and Jack agreed.

Charles and Jack made friends with a young man called Anthony Lamb, who worked for a maker of mathematical instruments. They planned to rob a wealthy gentleman who lived in the instrument maker's house. Late one night Lamb opened the door of the house and let Jack and Charles in and they stole a lot of money.

When the robbery was discovered the next morning, Anthony Lamb was very frightened. His master sent for him and asked what had happened.

'I don't know, sir,' Lamb replied.

His master looked at him suspiciously. He saw that the young man's hands were shaking.

'I don't believe you,' he said angrily. 'I think you stole the money, and you'll be hanged for it!'

In the end Lamb confessed his involvement in the crime. He was sent to Newgate prison, tried, and then transported. Thomas Sheppard was also tried for the robbery of Mrs Cook and he was transported as well.

Jack Sheppard then started working with another famous criminal, a man called Blueskin. They sometimes sold the items that they had stolen to a man called William Field. Meanwhile, they hired a stable in which they kept what they had stolen before selling it. Among the other stolen items in the stable was a length of cloth that had been taken from a certain Mr Kneebone. It was stealing this piece of cloth that led to Jack's next arrest. One day Jack and Blueskin asked William Field to go to their stable and look at the items they had, so that he could find buyers for them. Field, who was a coward but an imaginative criminal, did more than that. He broke into the stable and stole everything. Then he went to Jonathan Wild, knowing his influence in the criminal world, and told him that Jack was working with Blueskin.

Jack and Blueskin were arrested soon after and sent to Newgate prison, where they were tried for their robberies, and Jack was sentenced to death for the theft of the cloth belonging to Mr Kneebone.

CHAPTER TWO

Great Escapes

An order for the execution of Jack Sheppard arrived at Newgate prison on Monday 30 August 1724. Once again Jack showed his extraordinary courage. There was a place in the prison where friends could come to talk to the prisoners. The visitors and the prisoners were separated by a hole in the wall that had bars in it. Jack loosened one of the bars. When some women friends came to visit him, he broke the bar off the wall completely and the women pulled him through the hole. He was a free man once again.

Jack went to see a friend of his called Page, and they went into the country for a week. On their return to London they passed a watchmaker's shop. They were surprised to see that the shop was open, but that there was only a boy guarding it. Jack immediately broke the shop window and pulled out some valuable watches.

Jack's friends now knew that he was back in London, and they warned him that the authorities were looking everywhere for him. They eventually found where he was hiding and took him back to Newgate prison. This time they were determined to stop him escaping.

'You've been very lucky in the past,' one of the officers told him, 'but you're not going to escape from us again. We'll make sure it's impossible!'

They put iron chains on his legs and handcuffs on his wrists. The chains on his legs were attached to a ring in the floor of his prison cell.

His adventures had by now made Jack famous with all social classes, and many important people came to visit him. Some of his visitors gave him money. 'Who knows if he'll try to escape again,' they thought.

Sheppard found a nail in the room, which he used to open the lock that attached his chain to the ring in the floor. Then he used the same nail to open his handcuffs. He could not remove the chains, but he pulled them as high up his legs as he could.

His next move was to climb the chimney in the room, but his way was blocked by an iron bar. He then worked with his hands to free the iron bar. He climbed back up the chimney and made his way into the room above. No one had used this room for many years and the door was locked, but it did not take Sheppard long to break it. He then went into the prison chapel and climbed onto the roof of the prison. He looked down, and saw that the nearest building was a long way below him. If he jumped, it would be very dangerous. He went back to his original cell and took the blanket from the bed. Then he went back onto the roof. He tied one end of the blanket to the roof of the prison, and then climbed down to the neighbouring house.

It was midnight by now, and Sheppard was exhausted after his escape. He walked to the edge of the city and found a stable where he slept for some hours. It was raining when he woke up and he was cold and hungry. He bought some food from a little shop nearby and returned to the stable. Next he tried to remove the chains from his legs by hitting them with a stone. Two long, miserable days passed. Finally, a shoemaker passed by the stable and Sheppard asked him to help remove the chains, offering to pay the man twenty shillings. The shoemaker agreed, and by five o'clock that afternoon Sheppard was able to walk freely.

He tore his clothes to make himself look like a beggar and walked back to London. He stayed in a poor tavern in the city and talked to the landlady about the adventures of Jack Sheppard.

'I hope he escapes again,' the woman said. 'He's a brave young man!'

'So do I,' Jack replied. 'He might do it, too!'

Jack then walked around the streets, where he heard two ballad singers singing about his adventures.

A few nights later he broke into a shop in Drury Lane and stole some fine clothes, a sword, rings, watches and other items. He put on the stolen clothes and went to find his old friends. He ate in taverns with his friends, and he even

visited his mother to tell her that he was free once more. He celebrated his new freedom by drinking a lot of wine and brandy. At midnight, the boy who worked in the tavern where Jack Sheppard was entertaining his friends recognised who he was. The boy called the authorities and they arrested Sheppard and took him back to Newgate.

Up until the end Jack Sheppard hoped to escape his death at Tyburn. He hid a sharp knife in his pocket on the journey to the place of execution, but an officer discovered it and took it away from him. He had another plan for survival. 'After they hang me,' he told his friends, 'you must put me into a warm bed and open a vein in my arm. I'm sure this will help me recover from the hanging.'

He behaved with courage and dignity at the execution, and confessed his crimes. He was executed on 21 November 1724.

PART TWO

John Gow - Captain of famous gang of pirates

CHAPTER ONE

The Life of a Pirate

John Gow, the man who became known as the 'Orkney Pirate', was born in 1698 and grew up in the North of Scotland, on one of the Orkney Islands, where he became a sailor.

He was very good at his profession and soon became third-in-command of a ship sailing for Santa Cruz. The crew of the ship were very unhappy with their conditions on board, and complained particularly about the food. The captain did not take their complaints seriously at first, but he soon changed his mind. He realised that the crew were preparing to take over control of the ship, and called the chief mate.

'I think we may have some trouble with the men,' the captain explained. 'I want you to put some pistols in the cabin.'

'Yes, sir,' the chief mate replied. Two members of the crew heard the conversation and they told John Gow about the captain's preparations. Gow, who had always wanted to become a pirate, thought about what to do.

'If you take control of the ship, I'll help you,' Gow told the men. But I want to be the new captain!'

Gow was excited. It looked as if his secret desire to be a pirate was really going to happen!

That night a group of rebel sailors attacked the senior officers of the ship, murdering the doctor, the chief mate and then the captain. They elected John Gow the new captain of the ship.

Not all of the crew had been involved in the mutiny, and the innocent men were now hiding, frightened that they might be killed too. 'Nothing will happen to you if you continue to obey orders as you did before the mutiny, but now I'll give the orders!' John Gow told the men. The sailors agreed.

The rebels decided to change the name of the ship from the George Galley to the Revenge. They left for Spain and Portugal, where they hoped to steal a large quantity of wine. During the journey they discovered a British fishing ship, which they decided to attack and capture. They sailed very close to the ship and Gow shouted his commands to the other captain.

'We're pirates and we're going to capture your ship,' he shouted. 'It's useless to resist us. If you try, we'll kill all of you!'

'We won't fight,' the other captain shouted back. 'Come and take what you want.'

They had no use for the cargo or the ship, so they sank the ship and kept its captain and four of his men on the Revenge. They then attacked a Scottish fishing ship. Once again they sank the ship and took the men onto the Revenge.

By now they did not have much drinking water, so they decided to go to the Portuguese island of Madeira. They anchored some distance away from the harbour and made a plan. Seven men left for the harbour in a small boat. Their instructions were to capture a ship and bring it out of the harbour. If they could not do this, they had to steal wine and water and bring it back to the Revenge. This attempt failed, however, and they decided to leave Madeira.

They sailed about ten miles along the coast until they reached a small town, Port Santa. Gow sent some men to the town with a present of fish for the governor. The governor treated them very politely and visited the Revenge as a guest. Gow and the rebels entertained the governor and his friends very well at first. Later, however, when the boat they had sent to the island for food and drink came back without any, Gow threatened the governor and his friends.

'We want food and wine,' he told the governor and his friends. 'If you don't get it for us immediately, we'll kill you!'

The governor was very surprised and frightened.

'I'll make sure you get food and wine,' he said. 'There's no need to kill anyone.'

The pirates then left for the coast of Spain, where they found a British ship carrying slaves. They captured the ship and put on board all the men they had taken from other captured ships.

Then they took all the food and drink from the ship and allowed it to continue on its way.

They next captured a French ship, which had a cargo of wine, oil and fruit.

The pirates stole the goods and gave this ship to the Scottish captain whose fishing ship they had sunk, and he took his men on board with him.

Gow was delighted with his crew.

'Well done, men!' he cried. 'If we go on like this, we'll all be rich men!'

The pirates cheered their captain.

Soon they saw another French ship approaching. It was a large ship and had thirty-two guns, so Gow called his crew together to discuss tactics. He told them it was too dangerous to risk attacking a ship with so many guns. All the crew agreed with him except lieutenant Williams, who was a violent, dangerous man.

'You're not brave enough to be in command of a pirate ship,' Williams told him. 'We should attack this ship, capture it, and throw all its men into the sea!'

Gow looked angrily at the lieutenant.

'I say that it's too dangerous to attack that ship,' he replied. 'And I won't throw prisoners into the sea - there's been too much violence already.'

Williams took out his pistol and pointed it at Gow, but it did not fire. Two pirates immediately shot Williams, injuring him seriously. Williams jumped into the hold and threatened to blow the ship up, but some of the pirates fought him and tied him up, then put him with the French prisoners.

Their next capture was another British ship. Again they stole all the food and drink from the ship and then put their prisoners on board the captured ship. They also put Williams on board, and instructed the captain of the ship to hand Williams over to the British authorities. Williams knew that if he was taken back to England, he would be executed.

'Don't send me back to England,' he asked Gow very humbly, 'you know what will happen to me there. Throw me into the sea if you like, but don't send me back to England!'

Gow did not say a word to Williams but some of the pirates began to laugh cruelly at him.

'They'll hang you,' they told him. 'Have a good voyage to the gallows.'

CHAPTER TWO

Captured

The pirates' next problem was where to go.

'North America, that's the place for us,' some of them suggested. 'We'll be safe there, and we can find all the things we want.'

Gow, however, was against this. He wanted to go back home. 'We'll go to the Orkney Islands,' he told the crew. 'I know the place well, and we can easily sell what we've captured and live comfortably off the profits. Anyway,' he

continued, 'we need to repair the ship as well. We can only do that in a northern port.

Eventually the crew accepted his decision, and the ship sailed for the Orkney Islands.

When they arrived at one of the islands, Gow told his crew how to behave when they went ashore. 'You must say that we were sailing from Cadiz to Stockholm but that bad winds drove the ship too far north. You must also tell the local people that you want to repair the ship, and that if they help you, you'll pay them very well.'

But Gow's luck began to go against him; the sailors on board the ship who had not wanted to join the mutiny saw their opportunity. When one of the ship's boats went to the island, a sailor escaped from the pirates and went in search of the local sheriff.

'The Revenge is really a pirate ship,' he explained. 'I had to stay on board because they threatened to kill me.'

'You did the right thing to come here and tell me,' the sheriff replied.

Then the sheriff ordered his men to make preparations to capture the ship.

Another ten sailors who had been forced to join the mutiny stole the ship's boat and sailed to the mainland of Scotland. They were arrested when they arrived in Edinburgh and put in prison because the authorities thought they were pirates.

Despite the loss of these members of his crew, Gow did not move the ship. He decided to stay in the bay and to rob the gentlemen and ladies who lived on the island.

When they had finished, they sailed to a neighbouring island called Calf Sound. Gow wanted to rob the house of a gentleman who lived there, a man called Fea, who Gow had been at school with. Gow brought the Revenge too close to the rocks when he anchored the ship, and he sent a letter to Mr Fea asking for a boat so that he could pull his ship away from the rocks. Mr Fea was suspicious of the sailors, because he knew they had robbed a lady on one of the small islands nearby. He ordered his servants to sink his own boat so that Gow and his men could not use it.

That evening five of Gow's men went to Mr Fea's house. They were carrying weapons, and they threatened to kill Mr Fea if he did not help them.

'Our captain, John Gow, says you must give us a boat to leave the island, or we'll kill you this instant!' said one of the men.

'If you want me to help you, you'll have to be nicer than that,' said Mr Fea. 'Let's go to the tavern for a drink, and we can discuss things.'

Before they left for the tavern, Mr Fea secretly instructed his servants to

sink the boats they had come in.

'These men are very dangerous. They're pirates, and I'm going to arrest them if I can. I want you to sink their boats, then come back to me immediately.'

After a while one of his servants arrived at the tavern and asked to speak to him for a moment outside. The servant explained that they had followed his orders about the pirates' boats. Mr Fea ordered six servants to hide behind some trees with their weapons. He said that he would walk back that way either with the ship's officer alone, or with all five pirates. His men must be prepared to attack the pirates and capture them.

Mr Fea went back into the tavern and asked the officer to come with him to inspect his boat. The officer agreed, and they left the tavern together. When they passed the hedge where Mr Fea's men were hiding, they ran out and captured the pirate. They tied him up and left one of the six servants in charge of him.

Then Mr Fea and his five remaining servants went back to the tavern. They ran through the two doors, showing their weapons. 'Surrender!' they shouted.

The pirates had no choice, and they too became prisoners.

The next day the wind blew the Revenge onto the rocks of the island. Gow sent a message to Mr Fea, telling him that he was offering 1,000 pounds for help in getting the ship away from the island. He also sent a sailor to the island with a present of a bottle of brandy for Mr Fea. Mr Fea, however, was determined to capture all the pirates and send them to prison.

'I'll give you a boat,' Mr Fea offered, 'but you'll have to send the ship's carpenter with two or three men to repair it.'

Gow sent the men, and Mr Fea immediately captured them. Then he sent Gow a message saying that all the pirates had to come and take the boat, as his men were working on it and getting it ready for the pirates' escape. Once again John Gow instructed his crew to go to the island, and this time he came with them. Mr Fea's men were able to capture them all.

All twenty-eight pirates were sent to Edinburgh, and then to Marshalsea prison in London, where they found their former partner, the cruel lieutenant Williams. Twelve of them were condemned to death, including John Gow, but five of them were found not guilty because they had been forced to join the rebellion. John Gow's days as a pirate were finally over. He was sent to Newgate prison and tried at the Old Bailey.

A strange thing happened during John Gow's execution on 11 August 1729. The officials tied the rope around his neck and pushed him off the cart. He hung in the air for a moment, struggling terribly. Then suddenly the rope broke and he fell to the ground. He was in agony. The officials took hold of him and tied the rope around his neck again. Then they put him back on the cart and pushed him

off once more. This time the rope did not break and in a few moments the famous pirate was dead. His body was hung in chains by the River Thames as a warning to other pirates.

PART THREE

Jonatan Wild - Criminal genius

CHAPTER ONE

Crime Pays

Jonathan Wild was the eighteenth century's most famous criminal. He was born in Staffordshire in the North of England in 1682, and when he was fifteen his father sent him to work for a buckle maker in Birmingham; He worked there for seven years, and then moved to Wolverhampton where he married and set up a business on his own. He and his wife had a son, and for two years they seemed to live fairly happily together.

Wild, however, found his life in Wolverhampton too boring, and he decided to move to London, leaving his wife and son behind. Things did not go well for him in the big city, however, and he soon fell into debt. As he was unable to pay his debts, he was arrested and sent to prison. He remained a prisoner for more than four years. Later, when he wrote about his criminal life, he said that it was the experience of mixing with criminals in Wood Street prison that made him choose crime as a career.

While he was in prison Wild made many friends among the other prisoners, and formed a relationship with a woman called Mary Milliner. When they were released from prison, Wild and Milliner lived together as husband and wife, and they used her money or their money from illegal practices to open a tavern in Cock Alley. It played an important part in Wild's criminal career, and became a legendary place in the history of crime.

The usual customers of the tavern were criminals, and they soon found that Wild was a sympathetic and interested listener. They told him about the robberies they had recently committed, and they revealed their plans for future crimes. This gave Wild enormous power over them: if Wild told the authorities about the crimes, they might arrest them. Instead of doing this, however, Wild helped the criminals by hiding stolen property in his house and selling it for them.

It was not difficult for Wild to sell the stolen articles because at the time it was not a crime to receive or sell stolen property. Parliament soon changed the law, however, and a new crime of receiving stolen property came into existence. The punishment for this offence was transportation for fifteen years.

Wild was determined to continue his profitable business with the criminals, but the new law worried him: he did not want to be arrested for receiving stolen property. So he invited the criminals to a meeting in his tavern.

'I can't take the goods you steal anymore,' he explained. 'It's too dangerous. But I have a suggestion that will make us all rich.'

The criminals were very excited. 'You won't make much money if you try to sell the goods to other receivers of stolen property. Bring everything to me,' he continued, 'and I'll arrange to return all the goods to their owners in exchange for some money.'

The criminals were pleased with Wild's plan and they decided to do as he suggested. Wild found several places around London to keep the stolen goods that the criminals gave him.

The new plan worked very well. When a criminal came to him with an item that he had stolen, Wild went to the person who had been robbed. He explained that he had a friend, an honest trader, who had bought the item and wanted to return it because he guessed that it had been stolen. Wild suggested that the owner should pay the honest trader a fee for the goods. Many people were so pleased to have the chance of getting their property back that they willingly paid half the value of the property as the fee to Wild's trader friend. This fee, of course, was then divided between Wild and the criminal.

Wild did not receive any money directly from the owners of the stolen property, who only paid the fee to his non-existent trader. There was no law against this type of business, and for a considerable time Wild was very successful and became very rich. He even opened an office where people who had been robbed could come and ask his help in getting their property back.

Wild charged everyone who came to the office a small fee for his advice. He then asked for a full description of the goods that had been taken, and how much the owners were prepared to pay to recover the goods.

'All you have to do is describe the stolen goods and tell me how much you're willing to pay for their recovery, and I'll make investigations into your case,' Wild told the client. 'I'll do the rest.'

The client then returned to Wild's office to find out how the investigation was proceeding.

'Unfortunately, on this occasion I haven't been able to recover your property,' Wild began. 'I've heard through a contact that the thieves are determined to sell the property for more money than you've offered to recover the object. However, if you wanted to offer more money, maybe they'd reconsider.'

This tactic was so successful that most of the owners increased their offer

for the return of their goods.

Wild's interviews with the victims of crime allowed him to find out how truthful the thieves were with him. The thieves were frightened of Wild's power over them, and most of them told him the truth about their crimes.

Wild's imagination was now so involved in the planning of crimes that he even invented some new forms of crime. He realised that there were a lot of articles that had no real value, except to the owners themselves. 'The things I want you to steal are books of accounts, watches and rings,' he told his thieves. 'All of these are personal items that are important to their owners, and I'm sure they'll pay very high fees in order to recover them.'

CHAPTER TWO

The Thief-taker

Wild's reputation with the thieves was by now firmly established. Nearly all of them were afraid of him and so they obeyed him. He always paid them what he had promised, and they knew that he would always help them if they were arrested. There were some thieves, however, who resented his power in the criminal world and they refused to work for him. In these cases he used to send for the thief concerned, with a message guaranteeing the thief's safety. He then tried to persuade the thief to change his attitude and to work for him. If the man refused, he ended the interview with a sinister threat.

'Remember what I told you: you can come here perfectly safely, and leave here perfectly safely, and I'll keep my promise.

But the next time you see me, you'll see your worst enemy!'

One of the ways that Wild helped his criminal friends who were unlucky enough to be arrested was very clever. He visited them in prison and suggested that they could escape punishment if they offered 'evidence'. A criminal who told the court about more important crimes committed by other people could be given his freedom as a reward for helping the justice system. The 'evidence' that Wild gave his friends always concerned criminals who had refused to work for him.

He also helped his colleagues when they went to prison by making sure that witnesses against them did not appear in court on the day of the trial. He did this by threatening the witnesses so that they were too frightened to come to court. If there were no witnesses against the criminals, the judge had to let them go because there was no evidence.

Jonathan Wild was often asked how it was possible for him to recover so much stolen property if he was not really working with the thieves themselves. His reply to this question was always the same.

'I know many thieves, and when I hear about a particular crime, I make enquiries about it. I leave a message for the criminals, telling them that they'll receive the reward if they leave the goods in a certain place. I also promise them that no questions about the crime will be asked. I don't commit a crime myself, because I don't talk to the thieves personally, and I don't receive the stolen property myself.'

Wild was a very dangerous enemy to the criminals who refused to work for him, as the following story shows. One evening in March 1716, a young gentleman called Knap and his mother were walking back from the opera together. They were attacked by five men. His mother shouted out for help, but one of the five men shot her dead.

An account of the terrible murder appeared in the newspapers and a substantial reward was offered for the discovery of the murderer. Wild read the descriptions of the men in the paper, and when he recognised who they were, he decided to find them and give them up to the authorities. He hoped to be rewarded as a thief-catcher.

Wild heard that some of the gang were drinking in a tavern.

He went to there with his servant Abraham and found one of the gang members, and took him to prison. Wild then heard that another enemy, a man called Aires, was at a tavern in Smithfield. Once again Wild and Abraham went to get him. The man who had been described as Aires was really Thomas Thurland, a member of the gang that had killed Knap's mother. Thurland had two pistols but as he was surprised by the appearance of Abraham and Wild, he had no chance to use them. They took Thurland into custody as well, along with another member of the gang, a certain Edward Darvel, who was captured the following night.

Soon afterwards the authorities were looking for yet another criminal, Isaac Rag, for a burglary. Wild and his men found Rag and delivered him over to the authorities. Rag tried to save himself by giving 'evidence' of other crimes and criminals. He told the magistrate about twenty-two other accomplices and a vast number of crimes. The court accepted him as a witness for the crown.

The other gang members were tried at the Old Bailey. The charges included the attack on Mr Knap and the murder of Mrs Knap. They were found guilty and all three were executed at Tyburn on 8 June 1716.

Wild, however, was still determined to find the remaining member of the gang, Timothy Dun. Dun was hiding with his wife at home, but he became bored and decided to send her to ask Jonathan Wild if he was now safe from the authorities. Dun's wife came to Wild's office to talk to him, but she did not trust him completely. Afterwards she went home a long, complicated way to avoid

being followed by one of Wild's men. But this is exactly what happened: she was followed.

After finding out where he lived, Wild, Abraham and two other men went to the house. Dun tried to escape through a window and Abraham fired a shot that hit Dun in the arm. He fell out of the window, then another of Wild's men shot him in the face. He was captured and taken to Newgate and executed at Tyburn soon after.

In this way Jonathan Wild succeeded in capturing all the members of the gang involved in the murder of Mrs Knap, and removed his enemies without committing a single murder.

CHAPTER THREE

Stolen Property

Wild by now had so much stolen property in London that he decided to sell some of it. He bought a ship and transported the goods to Bruges, Ghent and Brussels. Here they were sold in exchange for wine, brandy and other items that were then smuggled secretly into England. This scheme was Very successful for about two years until the captain of the boat Johnson, and his assistant had an argument. The assistant told the authorities about Johnson's illegal activities, and the ship was captured and the captain was arrested in a tavern. Johnson immediately sent for Jonathan Wild.

When he arrived Wild realised that he had to do something quickly if he wanted to save his friend. He poured a glass of beer over a large man who was sitting with some friends. This made the man very angry.

'What did you do that for?' he shouted at Wild.

'You and your friends are cowards!' Wild shouted back. 'Come outside and fight me - all of you!'

The man and his friends stood up. One of them threw a chair at Wild but it missed him, and hit another group of men who were sitting at a table. They stood up as well and everyone began fighting.

'Now's your chance,' Wild whispered urgently to Johnson. 'Get out now!'

Johnson took Wild's advice and ran out of the tavern as fast as he could.

The officers reacted too slowly. They saw their prisoner escape, but they could not do anything about it. They knew, however, that Jonathan Wild was responsible for the riot and they wanted their revenge for what he had done.

The authorities began searching for Jonathan Wild, and a number of charges were prepared against him. His good luck was about to come to an end.

Mr Jones, the high constable of Holborn, issued a warrant for the arrest of

Wild. When the authorities discovered where he was, they arrested him and took him to Newgate prison. Mr Jones produced a long list of crimes that he said Jonathan Wild had committed, including two crimes which were punishable by death.

On 15 May 1725 Wild was tried for the theft of fifty yards of lace from the house of Mrs Streatham. During the trial it emerged that Jonathan Wild had organised the theft of the lace, but that he had not gone into the house himself: he had sent his men into the house to steal the lace. They had delivered it to him in the street outside the house. Wild's defence lawyer argued that Wild was not guilty of the offence.

'The charge explicitly states that my client stole the lace in the house,' the lawyer argued. 'But the evidence shows that Mr Wild didn't steal the lace in the house because he was outside in the street. Therefore my client isn't guilty of the crime.'

'You're right,' the judge agreed. 'The charge against your client isn't accurate.'

The jury listened to the judge's words carefully and they found Jonathan Wild not guilty of the crime.

Parliament now passed a new law. The new law said that if people had secret dealings with criminals, and took money for recovering stolen property from their criminal contacts, they should be treated as if they had committed the crimes themselves.

The second charge brought against Jonathan Wild was based on this new law. It concerned the same crime as before, the theft of the lace from Mrs Streatham. She gave evidence that after the lace was stolen, she went to Wild's office to ask for his help in recovering it. He told her that he would investigate the crime for her. She said that she would be prepared to pay twenty-five guineas for the recovery of her property. Shortly afterwards Jonathan Wild was arrested and imprisoned in Newgate. Mrs Streatham said that Wild wrote to her from prison. 'Bring me ten guineas, and your property will be returned to you,' he wrote. She went to the prison to see Wild and found another man with him. Wild told her to give the other man the ten guineas. She gave him the money and he left. He returned soon afterwards with a box containing the stolen lace.

The judge decided that the new law applied to Jonathan Wild. He said that it was clear that Wild had secret dealings with thieves and that he took money for returning stolen property to its owners. The jury found Jonathan Wild guilty of the crime, and he was condemned to death.

Wild tried to escape the consequences of his crimes by arguing that he had done society a service by returning stolen property to the people from whom it

had been taken. He wanted some of the important and influential people who had paid him for his services to organise a royal pardon for him. These hopes, however, were in vain; it was clear that there was no hope for Wild. He became desperate and tried to poison himself before the day of the execution, but he did not succeed. Jonathan Wild was taken to Tyburn to be executed on 24 May 1725. His notoriety as a criminal was so great that people threw stones at him on his last journey. The executioner told him that he could have a reasonable period to prepare himself for the execution. Jonathan Wild sat in the prison cart for a considerable time. This made the crowd frustrated and angry.

'Hang him!' they shouted at the executioner. 'Hang him now, or we'll hang you!'

The executioner was afraid and performed his duty immediately, and the career of one of the most successful eighteenth-century criminals came to an end.

PART FOUR

Richard 'Dick' Turpin - Gentleman, Highwayman and horse thief

CHAPTER ONE

The Essex Gang

Richard Turpin, more commonly known as Dick Turpin, was the son of an Essex farmer. He was brutal and cruel even as a young man, and he seemed destined for a life of crime.

Turpin eventually became a butcher, and he married soon afterwards. He began stealing his neighbours' farm animals, which he used to sell in his shop. His crimes were discovered and an order for his arrest was prepared, but he ran away before the authorities came to his house and joined a gang of smugglers in another part of Essex. The gang then moved to London, where they robbed people's houses.

Their strategy worked like this. One of the gang used to knock on the door of a house, and when someone opened it, the rest of the gang ran in and stole what they could find. Their first victim was an old man who had a shop. They robbed him but they were not violent with him.

They carried out a series of such robberies, and Dick Turpin was increasingly cruel to his victims. He held one old woman over a fire until she told the gang where her money was hidden.

On 11 January 1735 the gang robbed a rich farmer, Mr Saunders, in Kent. They rushed into his house, where they found Mr Saunders with his wife and friends playing cards.

'Everybody stay very quiet!' Turpin ordered. 'If you do what we tell you, no one will be hurt.'

Mr Saunders and the rest of the people in the house quickly gave the gang their money and valuable possessions.

Their house robberies continued in this way for a considerable time. Then, on 4 February 1735, they decided to rob a certain Mr Lawrence, who lived in Edgware. The gang arrived at the house just as Mr Lawrence was going in. They took hold of him and told him to instruct the servant boy to open the front door of the house. The boy was so frightened that he did nothing. Another servant opened the door, imagining that nothing was wrong, and the gang rushed in with their prisoner, Mr Lawrence. They looked through the house for items of value, but were not satisfied with what they found. They said they would murder Mr Lawrence if he did not tell them where his valuable possessions were hidden. Finally, one of the gang treated a female servant very cruelly, and they left the house, leaving everyone there tied up.

The authorities offered a reward of 50 pounds for information about the gang, but this produced no results. They continued as before, entering houses and threatening and robbing the owners.

One day they robbed another farmer, Mr Francis. They found two of Mr Francis' servants working outside the house. They captured them and tied them up. When they went to the house and discovered that Mr Francis was just about to go in himself, they captured him as well and tied him up together with his two servants. Then they rushed into the house where they found Mrs Francis, her daughter, and a female servant. They attacked the three women very violently before leaving the house with all the valuables they could find.

The authorities now increased the reward to 100 pounds for information about the members of the gang. As a result of this, two gang members were arrested and hanged, and the remaining members decided that it was now too dangerous to continue working together.

Dick Turpin realised that it was too dangerous to remain in the area and he escaped to the country. It was time to change his career; he had decided to become a highwayman.

CHAPTER TWO

King and Horses

One day Turpin was riding towards Cambridge when he saw another traveller ahead of him on the road. He seemed like a rich man, and Turpin decided to rob him. He rode up to him and took out two pistols, pointed them at

him and demanded his money. The other traveller was himself a highwayman, King, who recognised Turpin immediately. King laughed at Turpin's demand for money.

'What,' he asked him, 'dog eat dog? I know who you are, Richard Turpin.'

Turpin smiled. He wanted to know what King was going to say next.

'We should work together,' King told him. 'We could be partners. What do you think?'

'All right,' Turpin agreed. 'Maybe a partnership isn't such a bad idea. Let's try it.'

The two men began a series of highway robberies, and they became known in and outside London for their exploits. On one occasion, they robbed a gentleman on the road and then allowed him to buy back the watch they had just taken. Turpin was also known to be a gentleman to the ladies he and King robbed, and if they were young and beautiful, he complimented them on their beauty when he took their possessions, saying:

'It's a pity to take things from such beautiful ladies.'

King and Turpin made a hiding-place for themselves in Epping Forest, where they could sleep and keep their horses.

One day disaster struck for Turpin. A certain Mr Thompson, who worked in Epping Forest, had seen the hiding-place, and he guessed who the two mysterious men were. When he heard that the authorities were offering a reward of 100 pounds for information about Turpin and King, he decided to arrest them. Mr Thompson approached their hiding-place with a friend. Turpin saw them coming and went out to meet them. He thought they were poachers.

'There aren't any rabbits near here,' he told them.

'That's true,' Mr Thompson's friend replied, 'but there's a Turpin.' He pointed his gun at Turpin and told him to surrender.

'Very well, gentlemen,' Turpin replied in a friendly way. 'There's no chance for me. I surrender.'

As he was talking, however, Turpin began to walk backwards very slowly. Then he quickly reached down, picked up his own gun and shot Mr Thompson's friend. Mr Thompson ran away into the forest. He told the authorities about the murder, and they issued a reward of 200 pounds for the arrest of Richard Turpin.

Turpin and King now decided to work separately. Turpin decided that Epping Forest was a dangerous place, and he left the area.

He sent a message to his wife to meet him in a tavern. When he arrived at the tavern he saw a butcher there. This man knew who he was, and he remembered that Dick Turpin owed him five pounds.

'Now, Dick,' he said, 'I know you've got a lot of money these days. Give me

the five pounds you owe me.'

'My wife is in the next room,' Turpin told the butcher 'She'll give you the money.'

The butcher now began telling the other people in the tavern who Dick Turpin was. He said that they should arrest him Turpin escaped through a window and rode away.

Turpin and King joined up again, and they took a third partner into their business, a man called Potter. One day, riding towards London, Turpin's horse was tired and when he saw another traveller on the road, he decided to take his horse. The owner of the horse was called Mr Major, and the theft took place in Epping Forest near a tavern called The Green Man.

Mr Major immediately told the landlord of The Green Man about the theft of his horse. He also advertised for information about the thieves and his horse. The landlord of The Green Man soon received information that a horse very similar to the one that had been stolen could be found at the Red Lion tavern in Whitechapel, London.

The landlord of The Green Man went to the tavern and waited to see if someone arrived to collect the horse. When King's brother arrived at the tavern he was immediately arrested. At first he said that the horse belonged to him, but it was soon proved that he was lying, as the whip he carried in his hand had the name 'Major' written on it. The landlord then told King's brother that he would only be freed if he told them where his employers were. He said that a man was waiting for the horse in Red Lion Street. The landlord of The Green Man and his friends went there and saw the man that had been described to them.

The man, who was Turpin's partner, King, saw the crowd of people coming towards him and took out his pistol. He tried to fire at the crowd but his pistol did not work. He called out desperately to Turpin.

'Fire, Dick, fire or they'll take us!'

Turpin fired his pistol but the bullet hit King.

'You've killed me, Dick,' King cried out to him.

Turpin rode away as fast as he could from the scene.

King lived for a week after being shot by Turpin, and he gave the authorities information about where they might be able to find Turpin himself.

Turpin knew now that the authorities were looking for him everywhere, and he rode from one place to another. First he went to the east, to Lincolnshire, where he stole some horses. He was caught and arrested but managed to escape.

Next he went further north to Yorkshire, where he used another name. He pretended to be a gentleman, and frequently went hunting with the upper classes. He supported himself by stealing horses in Lincolnshire and selling them in

Yorkshire.

Turpin then made a very small mistake that cost him his life. When he was out hunting with his friends one day, he shot a cockerel that belonged to his landlord.

One of the huntsmen, Mr Hall, told him that he had made a mistake to shoot the cockerel.

'If you stay here,' Turpin replied coldly, 'I'll shoot you as well.'

Mr Hall was very angry at Turpin's behaviour. He told the landlord what Turpin had done, and the authorities arrested him.

The magistrates began to collect information about this mysterious man who had appeared among them. They learned that he travelled frequently to Lincolnshire and always came back with money and horses. They began to suspect that he was a highwayman.

Turpin insisted that his real name was Palmer, and that he had been a butcher in Lincolnshire. He said that he had lost his business and had decided to come and live in Yorkshire. The magistrates made enquiries and discovered that there had been a butcher in Lincolnshire called Palmer. This man was a sheep thief who had escaped from the authorities there, who were looking for him. When he had been in prison in York Castle for about four months, Turpin wrote a letter to his brother in Essex. He signed the letter 'John Palmer'. He asked his brother to help him, but his brother did not read the letter. He did not want to pay the postage for receiving it. The letter was then sent back to the post office in Essex. By chance, the schoolmaster in Essex who had taught Dick Turpin saw the letter in the post office. He recognised his old pupil's writing immediately. He took the letter to the magistrate and explained that the writer of the letter was not John Palmer but Richard Turpin.

Turpin was now tried and sentenced to death for his crimes. He behaved very cheerfully after receiving his sentence and joked about the execution ahead of him.

He bought some fine clothes shortly before the day of the execution. He also paid five poor men to be his mourners and to follow the cart taking him to the execution.

He behaved with great courage on the day of the execution, 10 April 1739. He waved at the crowd who had come to see him die and he spoke for half an hour with the executioner before throwing himself down from the execution ladder. The career of the famous highwayman had come to an end at last.

- THE END -

**Even more cool books like this one on our Telegram channel
@ADAPTED_BOOKS (https://t.me/ADAPTED_BOOKS)**