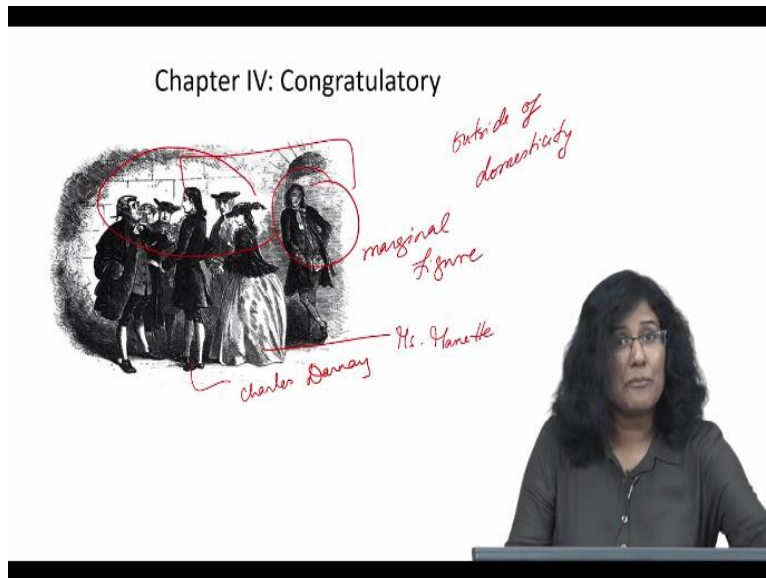


The Nineteenth-Century Novel
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Lecture - 23
Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities Book II: Chapters 4-6

Hello and welcome to week 6 lectures. In today's session, we will be looking at chapters 4 to 6 from book II.

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We will begin with an illustration. We will do a quick analysis of this illustration by Hablot K. Brown. This is the scene which unfolds after Charles Darnay is acquitted, because it cannot be proved beyond doubt that he was indeed the person who was a spy against the British Government. So this picture shows us a set of characters who are central to this novel. We have Miss Manette here, and then we have her father standing next to her.

We have Charles Darnay, we have Stryver here, the solicitor who helped acquit Charles Darnay, we have Mr. Lorry and we have a significant character who is Sydney Carton, who has been central to releasing Charles Darnay from certain death. But what is significant is that even though he is a key figure in this trial scene, in the immediate aftermath we see that he is no longer the center of attention.

The center of attention is literally Charles Darnay around whom everybody crowds. Sydney Carton becomes a marginal figure. In fact, in another significant illustration in the garden of

Miss Manette, we will see a similar parallel in terms of the placement of Sydney Carton who will be just outside the margins of the domesticity of Miss Manette. In other words, we can also see him as, even though he is someone who is in the fringes, he will play an active role in significant moments in preserving and protecting the people whom Miss Manette loves and adores.

So this illustration is highly symbolic in terms of the role that Carton plays. He is outside of domesticity. He is even outside of the normal, respectable group in whose centre we have Darnay and Miss Manette and Dr. Manette and their friends. So even though he is outside, he is also important to its functioning.

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Chapter IV: Congratulatory

- ...it was also in its nature to arise of itself, and to draw a gloom over him, as incomprehensible to those unacquainted with his story as if they had seen the shadow of the actual Bastille thrown upon by a summer sun, when the substance was three hundred miles away.
- Only his daughter had the power of charming this black brooding from his mind. She was the golden thread that united him to a Past beyond his misery, and a Present beyond his misery; and the sound of her voice, the light of her face, the touch of her hand, had a strong beneficial influence with him almost always.

Handwritten annotations on the slide:

- Underline under "three hundred miles away"
- Underline under "Present beyond his misery"
- Circle around "Bastille"
- Circle around "Dr Manette"
- Circle around "his daughter"
- Handwritten notes: "Bastille", "Dr Manette", "his daughter", "the golden thread", "the shadow of the actual Bastille", "the substance", "three hundred miles away", "Present beyond his misery", "sound of her voice", "light of her face", "touch of her hand", "strong beneficial influence with him almost always".

Now will begin with chapter 4 which is titled Congratulatory, it is Congratulatory because Charles Darnay is acquitted and he is offering thanks to those people who helped rescue him from death, and the key figures who helped him out here are Sydney Carton and Mr. Stryver and others. Now what is the impact of the trial scene on Dr. Manette? That is the question, and to that question we have the third person narrator answering not in a direct way but in an indirect way in this set of excerpts that I have on the slide for you.

“It was also in its nature to arise of itself and to draw a gloom over him, as incomprehensible to those unacquainted with his story as if they had seen the shadow of the actual Bastille thrown upon by a summer sun, when the substance was three hundred miles away.” To put it briefly, the impact of the trial scene on Dr. Manette is that he is reverting to his earlier state

of mind, a frame of mind in which he thinks that he is still within the Bastille, that he is still a prisoner.

So he goes back to those days of imprisonment. So that is the impact of the trial scene on Dr. Manette, he is losing his sense of reality. And even though the Bastille is hundreds of miles away, three hundred miles to be precise, because the Bastille is in France not in Britain, for Dr. Manette, it is as if the shadow of the Bastille has fallen on him and he is falling under a kind of gloom and doom.

So the shadow is still having its impact even though the actual structure is miles away. And the immediate trigger for such a gloom is the trial scene in which Dr. Manette is forced to recollect incidents of 5 years ago when he was a passenger. So even though he says that he cannot precisely remember certain details about that journey, he goes back to those times mentally and that has an effect.

So the Bastille is still a powerful force on the doctor. "Only his daughter had the power of charming this black brooding from his mind. She was the golden thread that united him to a past beyond his misery and the present beyond his misery and the sound of her voice, the light of her face, the touch of her hand, had a strong beneficial influence with him almost always." So we need to remember that the Bastille has a detrimental effect on Dr. Manette.

And symbolically all the elements that the Bastille stands for, unfair imprisonment, destruction of domesticity, prolonged isolation, all these factors are the embodiment of the Bastille and that are the symbolic effects of that structure of the French aristocracy. So who is the one who can minimize the impact of the Bastille on Dr. Manette? And that is his daughter. So here we have a set of contrast between the Bastille and the daughter Lucie Manette, and if the Bastille stands for all things evil, his daughter stands for all things good.

And the narrator says that she was the golden thread. This is again a very important figurative concept that we need to keep in mind because it also evokes another contrasting figurative concept of the knitting, the knitting that is done by Madame Defarge. And she knits a terrible thread, a thread that will entangle the lives of several people including the innocents who will be condemned to death once the Reign of Terror unfolds in France.

So we have the golden thread of Lucie contrasted with not only the concept of the Bastille, but also the threads that are woven by Madame Defarge, threads that will you know strengthen and hang and kill the people who are also innocent in the French Country. So she is the golden thread that connects him to the past beyond his misery. So even before the days of the Bastille, Lucie's life had begun.

So if you remember the story distinctly, Dr. Manette was imprisoned when Lucie was not even born. So the pregnant wife had to suffer the misery of losing the husband to the clutches of the Bastille. So that embedded narrative will come into the fore of the readers towards the second half of the novel, but we need to understand that Lucie was conceived even before Dr. Manette went into imprisonment.

So she belonged to a past when Dr. Manette was free, and she also belongs to the present when he is no longer literally miserable in the sense that he is a free man living in Britain. So she is the past and the present which is connected to Dr. Manette's freedom and happiness and all things normal.

And the narrator says that the sound of her voice, her beautiful voice, the light in her face, the touch of her gentle hand had all restorative powers, strong beneficial influence, curative powers that kind of recovered him from the mental agony and imprisonment of being anxious about those days in the Bastille.

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Dr Manette

- His face had become frozen, as it were, in a very curious look at Darnay: an intent look, deepening into a frown of dislike and distrust, not even unmixed with fear. With this strange expression on him this thoughts had wandered away.

Bastille



Despite the restorative influence of Lucie Manette, Dr. Manette when he is reminded of his 18 long years in the French Bastille becomes “frozen as it were, in a very curious look at Darnay: an intent look deepening into a frown of dislike and distrust, not even unmixed with fear. With the strange expression on him, his thoughts had wandered away.” So Darnay is a mysterious figure. He is associated with some kind of secret.

So we need to also remember that secrecy and suspicion and hidden truths are some of the major thematic concerns of the novel, and Darnay is associated with a major mystery in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dr. Manette is curious about Darnay. He is also frightened of Darnay, even though we do not know what exactly are the reasons for Dr. Manette to be scared of Charles Darnay.

Because we all know the Charles Darnay has been very helpful to Dr. Manette and his daughter 5 years ago when they travelled back from France to England. So the attributes that Dr. Manette has with regard to Darnay such as curiosity, dislike and fear is puzzling to the readers and to those around Dr. Manette. And when he looks at Charles Darnay his thoughts also start to wander away.

And that phrase is interesting because they wander towards the Bastille, the structure which is about 300 miles away across the English Channel. So the story of Darnay, the real story which is connected to the past of Dr. Manette will be revealed in the second half of the novel and even though Dr. Manette is unable to clearly understand the connections, understands that Charles Darnay is somehow connected to some of the criminal past which led to his imprisonment in the Bastille.

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Mr Stryver

- “a man of little more than thirty, but looking twenty years older than he was, stout, loud, red, bluff, and free from any drawback of delicacy, had a pushing way of shouldering himself (morally and physically) into companies and conversations, that argued well for his shouldering his way up in life.”

Mr Stryver vs Mr Lorry

So will now look at Mr. Stryver. Mr. Stryver is the advocate who has helped Charles Darnay get rid of the crime of being a spy. So Mr. Stryver saves Charles Darnay from certain death. And how does Mr. Stryver look like? “He is a man of little more than thirty, but looking twenty years older than he was, stout, loud, red, bluff, free from any drawback of delicacy, had a pushing way of shouldering himself (morally and physically) into companies and conversations that argued well for shouldering his way up in life.”

So this is the physical and mental makeup of Mr. Stryver. This excerpt gives a really good look into the structure and nature of the man who has a very interesting name. Stryver is somebody who strives, who constantly struggles to come up, and even though Mr. Stryver is just thirty, he looks twenty years older. He looks about fifty years of age and he is an advocate. He is stout, he is very loud, he is gruff, he is full of bravado.

And he has no sophistication whatsoever, and that is what is referred by the phrase no drawback of delicacy and he pushes his way literally and figuratively, he shoulders his way into, you know, recognition into wealth and lots of career advancement. And the narrator says that he is morally and physically very pushy. He pushes himself not only into the presence of people but also into conversations, and that kind of attitude is rewarded in his advancement in terms of his profession and economic status.

So Stryver is a key character in terms of the secondary set of characters that we have in A Tale of Two Cities, and we can contrast Mr. Stryver with Mr. Lorry, the banker who is very unassuming, who is reserved, who is modest and who is selfless. Mr. Stryver on the other


hand is very selfish and he is out only for himself and he wants to make the best of any situation in terms of his personal and professional advancement.

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Sydney Carton

- "Nobody had made any acknowledgement of Mr. Carton's part in the day's proceedings; nobody had known of it. He was unrobed, and was none the better for it in appearance."

Narrator = shrewd *Mr. Stryver = boasting*



Now what is the position of Sydney Carton in terms of this trial scene? The narrator says that "Nobody had made any acknowledgement of Mr. Carton's part in the day's proceedings; nobody had known of it. He was unrobed, and was none the better for it in appearance." In the trial scene, it was Sydney Carton who actually helped save Charles Darnay by pointing out the resemblance between him and Darnay, and that role is not acknowledged by any of the group members so far, and that is again very interesting and that once again takes us back to that illustration where we saw him being marginalized, being ignored. So even though he plays a central part in saving Darnay, nobody acknowledges it and the narrator makes a mention of that. So the narrator is very shrewd. The third person narrator is a shrewd character.

He knows the preoccupations of the majority of the characters and he is passing judgment on the attitude of the company here. And Sydney Carton is unrobed, he was not wearing the robes of an advocate, and that was not making any kind of impact on his appearance. So whether he is robed or unrobed in the advocate's clothes, he still looks very disreputable. So that is the point the narrator wants to convey to the audience.

So we also have to contrast Sydney Carton with Mr. Stryver, because Stryver is constantly boasting about his prowess unlike Sydney Carton who does not make a mention of it and therefore nobody knows the importance of the role he played in saving Charles Darnay. Of

course, Charles Darnay will later on talk about his gratitude to Sydney Carton. Charles Darnay acknowledges the role that Sydney Carton plays, but that is kind of insignificant because the rest of the group does not seem to acknowledge the role of Sydney Carton.

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Sydney Carton

- "I am a disappointed drudge, sir. I care for no man on earth, and no man on earth cares for me."
- "A good reason for talking to a man, that shows you what you have fallen away from, and what you might have been! Change places with him, and would you have been looked at by those blue eyes as he was, and commiserated by that agitated face as he was? Come on, and have it out in plain words! You hate the fellow!"

*Similarity / duality
France & England
L R*

So we have a conversation happening between Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay while they two have dinner at an Inn after the proceedings of the trial which went successfully for Charles Darnay. And during that dinner Sydney Carton very recklessly, very carelessly talks about himself to Charles Darnay. In fact, Sydney Carton is resentful of Charles Darnay because Lucie Manette is sympathetic towards Darnay and Carton envies that sympathy.

Envies the sympathy that Darnay receives from a very beautiful Lucie Manette. And here he says that "I am a disappointed drudge sir. I care for no man on earth and no man on earth cares for me." He says that I am a completely disappointed wastrel and I have nobody to care for me and I do not care for anybody else.

And he says that "A good reason for talking to a man that shows you what you have fallen away from, and what you might have been! Change places with him and would you have been looked at by those blue eyes as he was and commiserated by that agitated face as he was? Come on and have it out in plain words. You hate the fellow." So this excerpt is a kind of a monologue uttered by Sydney Carton in front of a mirror in that Inn when he is all by himself, and he says that, you know, I hate the fellow. If I had changed places with him, I would have been at the receiving end of all that commiseration, all that agitation that took place in the mind and heart of Lucie Manette.

And he says that, he implies that he is very closely resembling Darnay, and you know, if not for his disappointments in life, he would have been a character like Darnay, and he would have been, you know, sympathized by Lucie Manette. So this set of excerpts is significant because it once again points to the similarity between the two men, the idea of duality, a central concern that is running through the novel.

And it also kind of takes us back to the resemblances that are there between France and England. While the former is on the verge of revolution; England is not going to see any of that revolutionary activities at all. So, you know, even though two countries are similar, one undergoes drastic changes whereas the other is kind of immune to it. So all these concepts are indirectly and symbolically and narratively played out by these central characters.

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Chapter V: The Jackal = Sydney Carton

- It has once been noted at the Bar, that while Mr. Stryver was a glib man, and an unscrupulous, and a ready, and a bold, he had not that faculty of extracting the essence from a heap of statements, which is among the most striking and necessary of the advocate's accomplishment. But a remarkable improvement came upon him as to this.... however late at night he sat carousing with Sydney Carton he always had his points at his finger's ends in the morning.

Now let us look at chapter 5 which is titled The Jackal, and who is the Jackal that is referred to in this chapter? And the answer is that it is Sydney Carton who is referred to as being the Jackal, and we will see why that is shortly. “It has once been noted at the Bar that while Mr. Stryver was a glib man, and an unscrupulous, and a ready, and a bold, he had not that faculty of extracting the essence from a heap of statements which is among the most striking and necessary of the advocate’s accomplishment. But a remarkable improvement came upon him as to this. However, late at night he sat carousing with Sydney Carton, he always had his points at his finger’s ends in the morning.”

One of the primary functions of this excerpt for us as readers is to realize that once again, the narrator is very shrewd because he really knows the position of Sydney Carton in terms of Stryver. And the narrator tells us that Sydney Carton is the cleverer of the two, the other man being Mr. Stryver.

So even though Mr. Stryver is kind of financially well-to-do, even though Mr. Stryver is professionally successful and Carton is not, it is to be understood that he is not the sharper of the two here. In fact, the narrator says that Mr. Stryver though he is glib, though he is smooth, though he has the gift of the gab, he is also unscrupulous, that is something we need to remember, he is quite ruthless too, but he does not have that ability, faculty is the ability, to extract, get the essence from a heap of statements. He is not able to synthesize the major points from a set of ideas in a document and which is essential for the accomplishment of an advocate, which is essential to the success of an advocate's profession. So the point is that Mr. Stryver even though he is unscrupulous, even though he is glib, he is not able to comprehend difficult ideas and synthesize them in order to present it for argument.

But who is the one who can do that, and that person is Sydney Carton. So even though these two men sit together late at night, by the end of the night Sydney Carton always understands the major points of a case, and it is from Sydney Carton that Mr. Stryver is able to gather all the key principles, key ideas about his case and deliver them the next day at the court and become successful.

So that is what the narrator is trying to communicate here, and that is what has happened in the case with Charles Darnay too, because it was the scribbling of Sydney Carter on a piece of paper which he throws at Stryver which Stryver picks up and then uses it to his benefit during the trial scene. So we have proof of Sydney Carton's intervention in the cases of Mr. Stryver. In other words, Sydney Carton is being exploited by Mr. Stryver.

And Sydney Carton knows that he is being exploit, he is aware of that and he does not care about that he is reckless of his personal benefits, because he does not have any kind of family. The lack of domesticity for Carton is very significant as to understanding his marginal presence in A Tale of Two Cities. So we do not know what the origins of Sydney Carton are, who his father or mother is, who his siblings are, why does he come to be alone when the novel opens, so all these details are missing.

There is a kind of a narrative suppression of information regarding Sydney Carton, and that is also useful for the narrative because it can use Sydney Carton as a weapon with which to break the bonds that will tie up the home of Lucie Manette. So the main point about this excerpt on the slide here for you is that Sydney Carton is being used by Mr. Stryver, and that is also the reason for Mr. Stryver's success. Carton is aware of it but he does nothing about it.

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The Lion and the Jackal

- "At last, it began to get about, among such as were interested in the matter, that although Sydney Carton would never be a lion, he was an amazingly good jackal, and that he rendered suit and service to Stryver in that humble capacity."

Diagram annotations:

- modesty (circled in red)
- (SC) = for derry
- Epitaph
- S-C (in a box)

So who is the lion and who is the jackal? The lion is Mr. Stryver and the jackal is Sydney Carton. Sydney Carton is clever, he is the tricky one, he is the smart one, but then he does not exploit his own craftiness for his personal and financial advancement. "At last, it began to get about among such as were interested in the matter that although Sydney Carton would never be a lion, he was an amazingly good jackal, and that he rendered suit and service to Stryver in that humble capacity."

And the third-person narrator once again lays the cards on the table and says that everybody at court, everybody in the circles of the legal business knew that Sydney Carton was the one who was helping Mr. Stryver out. And even though Sydney Carton would never be a lion, would never be at the forefront of his legal profession, he was extremely good jackal, he was an extremely clever person at assisting Mr. Stryver and he rendered brilliant service to that man in his own humble capacity. So even though he is a jackal, he is very modest and this modesty is a character attribute that connects Sydney Carton with Mr. Lorry too.

So even though Mr. Lorry renders a lot of service to Dr. Manette and his family, he does not boast about it just as Sydney Carton also renders a lot of service to the family of Lucie Manette but does not talk about it, unlike Mr. Stryver who is full of bravado and boasting. And one other element that we need to remember about the jackal, about Sydney Carton, is his extraordinary ability to remember things.

So he is also called as memory. That is another epithet that is given to Sydney Carton. He is very good at remembering things, and that is the skill that he also uses in order to profit Mr. Stryver. And this capacity to remember faces and details would also come in handy towards the end of the novel when Sydney Carton will once again come to the rescue of the family of the Manette's.

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Sydney Carton

- "the old seesaw Sydney.. Up one minute and down the next; now in spirits and now in despondency!"
- "yes! The same Sydney, with the same luck. Even then I did exercises for other boys, and seldom did my own."

Handwritten annotations on the slide:

- SC's past (pointing to the second bullet point)
- Mr Stryver - excited (pointing to the first bullet point)
- SC - despair (pointing to the first bullet point)

More on Sydney Carton, because he is a character with whom we are going to sympathize with to a greater extent, by we I am referring to the readers here, because in terms of the novel we do not have a lot of people sympathizing with Sydney Carton except for Lucie Manette. Lucie Manette is one of the characters who really feels that Sydney Carton could have been a better man.

And which is why the lack of a good number of people worrying about Sydney Carton is once again kind of a push, a nudge for the readers to also feel sympathetic towards Sydney Carton. So the first excerpt is by Mr. Stryver. He says that "the old seesaw Sydney, up one minute and down the next; now in spirits and now in despondency." So he says that Sydney Carton has a lot of highs and lows.

He is a man who is at one moment excited and at another moment in the depths of despair, and that seems to sum up the character of Sydney Carton according to Mr. Stryver. And they are talking about the trial scene in the chambers of Mr. Stryver, and Sydney Carton puts another spin on his own character for the benefit of not only Mr. Stryver but also for us. He says that “yes, I am the same Sydney with the same luck. Even then I did exercises for other boys and seldom did my own.”

So here we have a little bit of information about Sydney Carton’s past, and he says that even in the past, I did a lot of work for other boys of the school and I rarely did my own work. So even then he had the habit of offering selfless service to others at the expense of his own personal benefit and advancement.

And that character attribute is continued even to this period when he serves Mr. Stryver. So Sydney Carton here we know that is aware of the kind of work he does for other people and the loss he suffers because of that attitude of his.

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The Vision of Sydney Carton

- Waste forces within him, and a desert all around, this man stood still on his way across the silent terrace, and saw for a moment, lying in the wilderness before him, a mirage of honourable ambition, self-denial, and perseverance. In the fair city of this vision, there were airy galleries from which the loves and graces looked upon him, gardens in which the fruits of life hung ripening, waters of Hope that sparkled in his sight. A moment, and it was gone. Climbing to a high chamber in a well of houses, he threw himself down in his clothes on a neglected bed, and its pillow was wet with wasted tears.

fancy

domestic life

We further see Sydney Carton kind of being aware of his desires in terms of his personal life, and then we also see him being disappointed because he is aware that he is not going to get any of these wish fulfillments in his own life, his desires are not going to be fulfilled. And that, you know, disappointment, the desire and the disappointment is very symbolically communicated in the vision, in the fancy, that Sydney Carton has as he walks at night to his bed, to his lonely bed.

And this is a very important passage in the novel that metaphorically captures Sydney Carton's longings and losses. "Waste forces within him and a desert all around, this man stood still on his way across the silent terrace, and saw for a moment, lying in the wilderness before him, a mirage of honourable ambition, self-denial and perseverance. In the fair city of this vision, there were airy galleries from which the loves and graces looked upon him, gardens in which the fruits of life hung ripening, waters of hope that sparkled in his sight. A moment, and it was gone. Climbing to a high chamber in a well of houses, he threw himself down in his clothes on a neglected bed and its pillow was wet with wasted tears."

So this excerpt comes at the end of a long scene in which Sydney Carton met Darnay and they have a kind of a difficult conversation where Sydney Carton is constantly resentful of Darnay because he is handsome, because he has the sympathies of Lucie Manette, and because he is a well-established and respectable in society, and Sydney Carton is aware that he is not like Darnay.

He is unlike Darnay, and therefore he is, you know, not getting the sympathies of the woman he is interested in, not enough sympathy for her to fall in love. So that is the aspect that we need to remember. And he is kind of depressed by that realization, and he walks home to his lonely neglected bed and he cries himself to sleep. So that is the end of that scene, but that vision is a vision of a longing for a domestic life.

A domestic life that is fertile, in the sense that a domestic life with a wife and children, so that is kind of symbolically hinted in this section of the excerpt where the narrator says that he kind of envisions airy galleries, you know galleries which are full of fresh air in which the loves and graces looked upon him, and in which the fruits of life hung ripening. It is a very fertile scene which is blessed by, you know, Cupid, which is blessed by love, and waters of hope sparkled in his sight.

So this is a very lush scene, lush vision, but this vision disappears in a moment. And before that bit of vision that Sydney Carton sees, he also sees before him a kind of a mirage. A mirage is something that does not stay for long because it is not real, and that mirage is about how honourable ambition, ambition for Sydney Carton, ambition to do well in life; self-denial, refusing oneself the desires of life, and perseverance, hard work, consistent hard work.

So all these are mirages for Sydney Carton, who is sort of debauched by his own confession and by the references that we have from the narrator too. We do not get a full picture of the kind of debauchery that Sydney Carton indulges in, but there is a reference to that by indirect admission in this word self-denial, he longs for self-denial, he longs for discipline, he longs for perseverance, he longs for ambition.

But that does not happen, it is all a mirage and he goes home and, you know, falls asleep in a

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