SWEENEY TODD

THE BARBER *of* FLEET-STREET.

(Original Title: The String of Pearls)

VOL. II

Freshly typeset with the original woodcut illustrations

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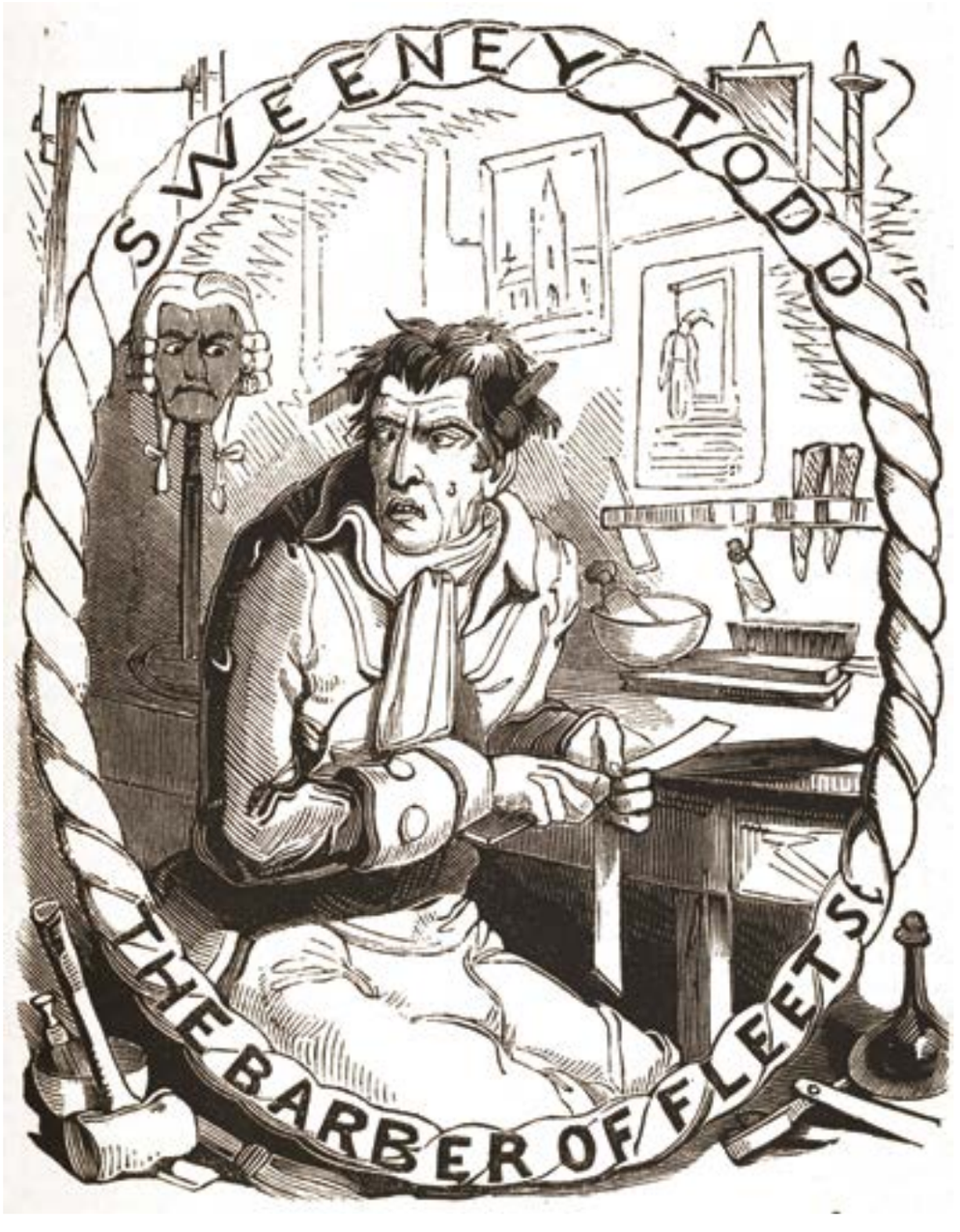

[FROM A RARE OLD PAINTING BY READING, IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM]

SWEENEY TODD,

THE BARBER OF FLEET-STREET.

(Original Title: The String of Pearls)

VOL. II

By

JAMES MALCOLM RYMER
With George MacFarren and Thomas Preskett Prest

Edited and Annotated by Finn J.D. John

Pulp-Lit
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THE

STRING OF PEARLS;

or,

THE BARBER OF FLEET-STREET.

A DOMESTIC ROMANCE — VOL. II.

"Mad?" cried Sweeney Todd, as he leant far over the table so as to bring his face quite close to the man's. "Mad! not at all. What you feel now is part of your death-pang. You are dying — I have poisoned you. Do you hear that? You have watched me, and I have in return poisoned you. Do you understand that?" *(See Page 24)*

CHAPTER LXXXV.

SIR RICHARD BLUNT MAKES PLANS.

JOHANNA HAD HAD A LONG TIME to herself in Todd's shop now. When first he left upon that expedition of murder, she had almost been afraid to stir, for she had feared he might momentarily return; but as his stay became longer and longer protracted, she plucked up courage.

She began to look about her.

"As yet," she said to herself, "what has been done towards arriving at a solution of the mysteries of this dreadful place?"

The more she thought, the more she felt compelled to answer this inquiry in an unsatisfactory manner. What had been done?

The only thing that could be said to be settled, was the fact that Todd was guilty, and that Mrs. Lovett was his accomplice. That he, by some diabolical means, murdered people who came into his shop to be shaved, was a fact, incontestable; but how he did the deed, still remained a mystery.

The care which Todd always bestowed for the purpose of concealing the manner in which he committed the murder, had hitherto been successful. No one but himself, and probably Mrs. Lovett, knew exactly how he did the deed.

It has been of course sufficiently observed that he never attempted anything amiss when two people were in the shop. That he always made it a point to get rid of Johanna upon occasions when he thought he had a chance of making a victim; and that in fact he had, by the very fact that Sir Richard Blunt and his officers had in various disguises followed people into his shop, been for some time prevented from the commission of his usual murders.

Now without in the smallest degree disguising what he did know, it is quite clear that Sir Richard Blunt up to that time did not know how Todd did the deeds of blood for which his shop was to become famous, and himself infamous.

That people went in and never came out again, was about the extent of what was really known.

The authorities, including Sir Richard Blunt, were extremely anxious to know exactly how these murders were committed, and hence they waited with the hope, that something would occur to throw a light upon that part of the subject, before they apprehended Todd.

At any moment, of course, he could have been seized, and he little suspected that he was upon such a mine.

If anything, however, could be said to expedite the arrest of Todd, it would certainly be what had taken place at the colonel's house.

Now, to all appearance, when the colonel came home so close upon the events that had happened in his absence, and had so very nearly been fatal to both Minna Gray and Tobias, Todd had made his escape.

A rapid, but effective search of his, the colonel's, house, sufficed to prove that there he was not.

The appearance of Tobias, with blood gushing from his mouth, was sufficiently alarming, and it was under the impression that he was dying from the rupture of a blood-vessel, that the colonel wrote the note to Sir Richard Blunt, which was intercepted by Sweeney Todd himself.

Upon the arrival, however, of the surgeon, who was immediately sent for, it was soon ascertained that the blood-vessel which had given way in poor Tobias, was not on the lungs, and that the danger arising from it was by no means great, provided he were kept quiet and properly attended to.

Minna Gray received this information with deep thankfulness, and the colonel, upon hearing it, immediately sought Sir Richard to consult with him upon the subject in its now altered state, for the idea that Tobias was dying had made him, the colonel, view the affair much more passionately than prudently.

By dint of some trouble, the colonel found Sir Richard Blunt, and then to his no small surprise, for he had known his groom long, and thought he could thoroughly depend upon him, he found that the magistrate had received no note at all upon the subject, so that of course no steps had been taken.

Upon hearing the affair detailed to him, Sir Richard Blunt said—

"I regret this much, as it will put Todd in a fright and expedite his departure."

"But was he not going by the Hamburg packet before day-dawn? At any rate, I understood you that by the manner in which you had dogged him, you had thoroughly ascertained that fact?"

"I had, but had taken steps to prevent him."

"You would arrest him to-night?"

"No, I do not think it advisable to arrest him just yet. The fact is, I do not know all that I want to know; but in order to stop him from leaving his shop to-night, I have caused the Hamburg captain-owners, to write to him, since he had taken a passage, telling him that the ships' stores would not be ready until to-morrow, when at one hour before sunrise he would sail."

"Then you want to keep him in his shop another day?"

"I do. I hope and expect that during that day, something may occur to clear up the mystery that still attaches to the mode in which he commits his murders."

"It may so."

"I think I can take measures by running some little personal risk to make it do so; but something must be hit upon to calm his mind, regarding this affair at your house now, for he will expect nothing but instant arrest on its account."

"What can I do?"

"If you will be guided by me you will write Todd a letter, threatening him that if there is any more interference with Tobias, you will prosecute him, but that you will, if you hear no more of him at your house, say nothing of the past. You need be under no fear that he will derive any future advantage from such a promise, as any charge against him connected with poor Tobias will sink into insignificance, compared with other offences."

"True! true!"

"Such a letter, couched with the one concerning the non-departure of the ship, may keep him in his shop over to-morrow."

"And then—"

"Then he sleeps in Newgate, from which building he steps on to the scaffold."

"But has he not sent many trunks and packages to the ship?"

"Yes, and I have as regularly removed them all to the police-office at Bow-street. We have already some thousands of pounds' worth of property of the most costly description."

"But Johanna? What is to become of her?"

"You may depend upon it that Todd will pursue the same course with her that he did with Tobias. He will give her a trifle of money, and tell her to get a night's lodging out; and in that case she knows where to come to be quite safe and comfortable. But if such should not be the case, my protecting arm is over her; I think I can almost defy Todd to do her any injury."

"Think you so?"

"Yes, I have made such arrangements that if she were missed only for ten minutes, Todd's house would be searched from top to bottom. I would not, for this right hand, that any harm should come to her."

"Nor I—nor I."

"Be at ease regarding her, colonel."

"I know how fully we may trust to you, and therefore I will be at ease regarding her; and I will at once write the letter to Todd you suggest to me."

"Do so. His fears upon your account must be calmed down."

THE COLONEL ACCORDINGLY WROTE the necessary note to Todd. Of course, neither he nor Sir Richard Blunt knew that Todd had another reason for wishing to be off that night, which consisted in his great unwillingness to meet Mrs. Lovett in the morning; for it will be recollected that he had an appoint-

ment with that lady upon money matters at an early hour.

The reader is now fully aware of how matters stand, and will be able to comprehend easily the remarkable events which rapidly ensued upon this state of things, and therefore we can at once return to Todd.

We left him upon his door-step.

It was never Todd's custom to walk at once into his house as any one else would do upon their arrival, whose —

"Conscience was not redolent of guilt!"

— but he would peep and pry about, and linger like a moth fluttering around a candle, or a rat smelling at some tempting morsel, which might be connected with some artfully contrived trap, before he entered.

He wanted sadly to get a peep at what Charley was doing.

Now, poor Johanna, fortunately at that moment, was only sitting before the little miserable fire, holding her face in her hands, and deeply thinking of the once happy past. She had brought out from beneath the counter the sleeve of a sailor's jacket, which she had found upon her former examination of the shop, and after sprinkling it with some tears, for she fully believed it must have belonged to Mark Ingestrie, she had hidden it again.

And now as she sat in that house of murder all alone, she was picturing to herself every tone and look of her lover when he had first told her that he loved her before, as she might have said in the words of the old song —

He loved me, and he sped away
Far o'er the raging sea,
To seek the gems of other lands,
And bring them all to me.

At that moment, with all external objects hidden from her perception she could almost fancy she could hear his voice as he had said to her — "My darling, I shall come back rich and prosperous, and we shall be happy."

Alas! how sadly had that dream ended. He who had escaped the perils of the deep — he who had successfully battled with the tempest, and all the perils by sea and by land incidental to the life he had embarked in, had returned miserably to perish, almost within hearing of her for whom he had adventured so much.

The thought was maddening!

"And I live!" she said; "I can live after that! Oh, Mark — Mark — I did not love you well enough, or I could not have existed so long after the horrible certainty of your fate has been revealed to me. They may say what they will to try to make me calmer and happier, but I know that he is Todd's victim."

After this she sat for a time in a kind of stupor, and it was during that interval that Todd arrived home.

There was no light in the shop but what at times came from a little flickering flame, that would splutter into a moment's brief existence in the fire; but Todd, as he glared through the upper portion of the half-glass door at a spot where he knew the blind did not prevent him, could just see Johanna thus sitting.

"Humph!" he said. "The boy is quiet enough, and probably, after all, may suspect nothing; although I don't at all like his manner at times; yet it is safer to kill him before I go. It is absolute security. He shall help me to arrange everything to set the house on fire, and then when I have completed all my arrangements, it will be easy to knock him on the head."

With this he opened the door.

Johanna started.

"Well," said Todd, "well, any one been?"

"Only a man to be shaved, sir. I told him you would be home soon, but he could not wait, so he left."

"Let him leave and get shaved at the devil!" said Todd. "You are sure no one has been here peeping and prying, and asking questions which you would be quite delighted to answer, eh?"

"Peeping and prying, sir?"

"Yes, peeping and prying. You know the meaning of that. Don't put on a look of surprise at me. It won't do. I known what you boys are. Curse you all! Yes, I know what you are."

Johanna made no answer.

Todd took off his hat, and shook the rain from it violently. Then in a voice that made Johanna start again, he cried —

"Light the lamp, idiot!"

It was quite clear that the occurrences at the colonel's had not improved Todd's temper at all, and that upon very little pretext for it, he would have committed some act of violence, of which Johanna might be the victim. Anything short of that she could endure, but she had made up her mind that if even he so much as laid his hand upon her, her power of further patience would be gone, and she would be compelled to adopt the means of summoning aid which had been pointed out to her by Sir Richard Blunt — namely, by casting something through the window into the street.

She lit the shop-lamp as quickly as she could.

"A lazy life you lead," said Todd. "A lazy life, indeed. Well, well," he added, softening his tone, "it don't matter — I shall polish you off for all that, Charley. What a pretty boy you are."

"Sir?"

"I say what a pretty boy you are. Why, you must have been your mamma's pet, that you must. I was. Ha! ha! Look at me, now. I was fondled and kissed once, and called a pretty boy. Ha!"

Johanna shuddered.

"Yes," added Todd, as he wiped himself down with a soiled towel, "yes, my mother used to make quite a pet of me. I often used to wish I was strong enough to throttle her! Ha! ha! That I did!"

"Throttle her, sir?"

"Yes," added Todd, fiercely. "What the devil did she bring me into the world for her own gratifications, unless she had plenty of money to give me that I might enjoy myself in it?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know? Who the devil supposed you did know? Answer me that, you imp! Well, well, Charley, you and I won't quarrel about such matters. Come, my boy, I want you to be of use to me to-night."

"To-night, sir?"

"Yes, to-night. Is it broad daylight? Is the sun shining? Is there no such thing as night, under cover of which black deeds are done? Curse you! why do you ask if to-night is the time for action?"

"I will do your bidding, sir."

"Yes; and — Ah! who is this?"

"Is this here keg of turpentine for you?" said a man, with it upon his shoulder. "Mr. Todd's this is, ain't it?"

"Yes — yes. Put it down, my good fellow. You ought to have something to drink."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

"But you must pay for it yourself. There is a public-house opposite."

The man went away swearing; and scarcely had he crossed the threshold, when a letter was brought by a lad, and handed to Todd. Before he could ask any questions, the lad was gone.

Todd held the letter in his hand, and glared at the direction. It was to him, sure enough, and written in a very clerk-like hand, too. Before he could open it, some one hit the door a blow upon the outside, and it swung open.

"Is this Todd's, the barber?"

"Yes," said Johanna.

"Then give him that letter, little chap, will you?"

"Stop!" cried Todd. "Stop. Where do you come from, and who are you? Stop, you rascal. Will you stop? Confound you, I wish I had a razor at your throat."

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

TODD RECEIVES TWO EXTRAORDINARY LETTERS, AND ACTS UPON THEM.

TODD LOOKED THE PICTURE of amazement.

"Two letters!" he muttered, "two letters to me, who seldom receive any? To me who have no acquaintances — no relations? Bah! It must be some mistake, or perhaps, after all, some infernal nonsense about the parish."

He tore open the last received one, and read as follows: —

COLONEL JEFFERY informs SWEENEY TODD that, although from a variety of reasons he may not think proper to prosecute him for his recent outrage at his house, he will, upon a repetition of such conduct, at once hand him over to the police.

Todd's countenance, during the perusal of this brief note, betrayed a variety of emotions; and when he had concluded it, he let it drop from his hands, and knitting his brows, he muttered —

"What does this mean?"

That there was — that there must be something much more than met the eye in this boasted clemency of the colonel towards him, he felt quite convinced; but what it was, he was puzzled to think for a time. At length, brightening up, he said —

"Yes, I have it. It is Tobias — it is Tobias. He cannot rid himself from the idea that I have some mysterious power of injuring his mother; and perhaps, after all, he may have made no disclosures to the colonel injurious to me."

Comforted by this wide supposition, Todd picked up the letter again, and put it in his pocket carefully.

"It is as well," he said, "for I shall not now be hurried. No, I shall not be at all hurried now, which I might have been. — Charley."

"Yes, sir."

"Trim the lamp."

Johanna did so; and while the process was going on, Todd opened the other letter, it was as follows: —

SIR, —

We beg to inform you that our Hamburg vessel, in which you have done us the favour to take passage, will not sail until to-morrow night at four, God willing, and that consequently there will be no occasion for your coming on board earlier.

— We are, sir,
Your obedient servants,
BROWN, BUGGINS, MUGGS, and SCREAMER.

TO MR. S. TODD.

Todd ground his teeth together in a horrible manner. He dashed the letter to the floor, and stamped upon it.

"Curse Brown and Buggins!" he cried. "I only wish I could dash out Muggs and Screamer's brains with Brown and Buggins's skulls. Confound them and their ships. May they all go to the bottom when I am out of them, and be smashed and d—d!"

Johanna was amazed at this sudden torrent of wrath. She could not imagine what had produced it, for Todd had read the letter in a muttering tone, that effectually prevented her from hearing any of it.

Suddenly he rose and rushed into the back room, and bolted the door upon himself. He went to think what was best to be done.

When he was alone he read both the letters again, and then he burst out into such a torrent of wrath against the ship-owners, that it was a mercy Johanna's ears were spared the dreadful words that came from his lips.

Suddenly he saw a postscript at the foot of the ship-owner's letter, which he had at first overlooked.

P. S. — The ship is removed to Crimmins's Wharf, but will be at her old moorings at time mentioned above.

"D—n Crimmins and his wharf, too!" cried Todd.

He flung himself into a chair, and sat for a time profoundly still. During that period he tried to make up his mind as to what it would be best for him, under the circumstances, to do. Many plans floated through his imagination. He could not for a long time bring himself to believe that the letter of the colonel's was anything but a feint to throw him off his guard in some way.

At length he got into a calmer frame of mind.

"Shall I leave at once, or stay till to-morrow night; that is the question?"

He argued this with himself, pro- and con-.

If he left he would have to secrete himself somewhere all the following day, and the fact of his having left would make an active search safe to be instituted for him, which would possibly be successful. Besides, how was he to conveniently set fire to his house, unless he was off on the moment that the flames burst forth?

Then if he stayed he had Mrs. Lovett to encounter, but that was all; and surely he could put her off for a few hours? Surely she, of all people in the world, was not to run to a police-office and destroy both him and herself, just because she did not get some money at ten o'clock that he had promised to hand to her.

"She shall be put off," he said, suddenly, "and I will stay over to-morrow. I am safer here than anywhere else, of that I feel assured. If there are any suspicious whisperings about me at all, they will grow to loud clamours the moment I am gone, and then they may reach the ears of these ship-owners, and they may say at once, 'Why we have such a man with a passage taken in one of our Hamburg ships.' Let them say that when the ship is some twenty hours gone with me on board, and I don't care; but with me on land, and the ship only to sail, instead of having actually sailed, it is quite a different matter."

He rose from his seat. His mind was made up. He had not quite decided what he should say to Mrs. Lovett, but he had decided upon staying.

"Charley will live another day," he muttered; "but to-morrow night he dies, and his body will be consumed with this house, and, I hope, a good part of Fleet-street. It will not be prudent to get him to assist now in disposing the combustibles to fire the house. He might speak of it before to-morrow night."

Todd came out into the shop.

"Charley, my boy!" — How kindly he spoke!

"I am here, sir."

"You must not mind what I say when I am vexed. Many things happen to put me out of the way. Sometimes people that I have done I don't know how much for, turn out to be very ungrateful, and then I get chafed, you see, Charley."

"Yes, sir, no doubt."

"But, after I have retired to the parlour and prayed a little, my mind soon recovers its usual religious tone, and its wonted serenity; and for the sake of the Almighty, who, you know, is good to us all, Charley, I forgive all that is done to me, and pray for the wicked."

Johanna shuddered. This hypocrisy sounded awful to her.

"Never go to rest, Charley, without saying your prayers. There's threepence for you. You can get yourself a bed in the neighbourhood for that amount somewhere, I daresay. I am very sorry I cannot accommodate you here, Charley. Now go away, and let me have you here by seven in the morning; and mind, above all things, cultivate a religious spirit, and do unto your neighbours as you would that your neighbours should do unto you."

Johanna could not reply.

"Here is a tract that you can read before you go to sleep, if they allow you a candle, when you get a-bed. It is entitled 'Groans of Grace; or, The Sinner Sifted,' a most godly production, from a pious bookseller in Paternoster-row, Charley."

"Yes," Johanna just managed to say.

"Now you may go."

She darted from the shop.

"Hilloa! hilloa! Stop — stop, Charley! Stop — stop, will you? Confound you, stop! The infernal shutters are not up. Do you hear? I forgot them."

Todd rushed to his door. He looked right and left, and over the way, and, in fact, everywhere, but no Charley was to be seen. The fact is, that Johanna, the moment she felt herself released from the shop, had darted over the way, and into the fruiterers, where she had found so friendly a welcome before, and all this was done in such a moment, that she was housed before Todd could get his shop-door open.

"Welcome!" said a voice.

She found it proceeded from the fruiterer's daughter, who had behaved so kindly to her.

Johanna burst into tears.

"What has happened? — what has happened?" cried the young girl.

"Nothing, now," said Johanna. "But I cannot keep up longer than when I am in that shop. As soon as I am fairly out of the presence of that dreadful man, I feel ready to faint."

"Be of good cheer," said a deep-toned voice.

She looked up, and saw Sir Richard Blunt.

"You here, sir?"

"Yes, Johanna. I have been now for some time watching Todd's shop from our friend's first-floor window. I saw you dart across the road, and for the moment feared something had gone wrong. Did Todd get two letters?"

"He did."

"They will, I hope, keep him quiet until another night. Dare you go back again, Johanna, to that place?"

"Yes, if it be necessary; but he has told me to sleep out, and the gust of pleasure I felt at the permission, almost, I fear, betrayed me."

"He came to the door and looked furiously after you, but he did not see which way you had come. You were over here like a flash of light."

"He would have had me back again, then? — What could that be for?"

"At all events, you shall not go until the morning, and not then, unless after a night's rest here, you feel that you can do so with a good heart."

"Oh yes, I will fulfill my mission."

"Todd is putting up his shutters," said the fruiterer, as he came in from his front shop.

"Ah, then the secret is out," said Sir Richard Blunt. "That is what he wanted you back for, Johanna. He had forgotten at the moment all about the shutters, you may depend. I am glad he spared you the trouble, at any rate. I do not like you to perform any service for such a rank villain as he is."

"It would not have been for him, sir."

"For who, then?"

"For the dead. I feel that I am bound to bring to justice the murderer of Mark Ingestrie. When I was here last, sir, you strove to comfort me, by making me feel a sort of hope that he was not dead, but I cannot think that — I would that I could, but indeed I cannot, sir."

"Do not be too sure, Johanna."

"Nay, look at that."

She laid before the magistrate the sleeve of the jacket that she had found at Todd's, and which fancy, for she certainly had no proof that way tending, told her had belonged to Mark Ingestrie.

"What is this?"

"Look at it, sir. My heart tells me it was his!"

"And so you suppose there was never but one sailor's jacket with ivory buttons on the wrist in the world, and never any one who wore one, but Mark Ingestrie?"

"Nay, the place in which it was found brings conviction."

"Not at all. Do you forget there was such a person as Thornhill in the world, Johanna?"

"No; but why will every one persist in fancying Thornhill and Ingestrie to be two persons, when I am convinced they were but one? Let who will identify this as part of Thornhill's apparel, and I will weep for Mark."

"I cannot just now shake this supposition."

"You never will."

"If I live I will, Johanna, I give you my word for so much. Pray who is the best to judge of such things? You, a young girl who have seen little or nothing of the world, and whose natural apprehension is rendered obscure by the conflict of your affections, or I whose business it is to come to an accurate conclusion of such matters? I repeat my conviction, that Thornhill was not Mark Ingestrie."

"Oh, if I could think so!"

"You will."

"You have no doubt, sir, but Thornhill perished by the hand of Todd?"

"None whatever."

Johanna looked deeply affected.

"Come," added Sir Richard, "you want both rest and refreshment, and you can have both here at this house. To-morrow I hope will end all your trials, my dear girl, and I shall live, I trust, to see you smile as you ought to smile, and to be as happy as only a very dim recollection of the past will make you."

"Ah, no — never happy."

"You must love some one. You must recover, and in the cares and joys of a new existence, you must only look back upon what has passed, as though you pondered upon the phantasma of some fearful dream; and when you see all around you smiling — "

"It will be cruel for them to smile, sir; and it is now cruel of you to speak

to me of loving another, when you know my affections are with Ingestrie, in that world to which he has gone before me, but to which I look forward to as the place of our happy meeting, where we shall part again no more."

"Well, I thought I could find you a lover that would be to your mind when all these affairs were over."

"Sir?"

"Nay, be not offended. You know I am your sincere friend."

"I know you are, and that is what makes it so grievous to me to hear you talk in such a strain, sir."

"Then I will say no more."

"I thank you, Sir Richard; and I will forget what you have said, because I will recollect nothing from you, or committed with you, but kindness and consideration."

Sir Richard smiled slightly for a moment, as he turned aside and spoke to his friend the fruiterer for some minutes in a low tone. The young girl who had before behaved with such kindness to Johanna, took her by the hand, and led her up-stairs.

"Come," she said, "you shall tell me all you have suffered opposite since we parted last, and I will speak to you of him whom you love."

"You are too good to me."

WHILE ALL THIS WAS GOING ON so close to him, Todd, with many oaths and execrations, was putting up his own shutters, which he did with a violence that nearly knocked the front of the window in. When he had finished, he walked into his house, and closing the door, he said, in a low tone —

"I must make up my mind what to say to Mrs. Lovett in the morning. I am afraid she will be hard to pacify."

At this moment a man peered out from the inn gateway opposite, and said to himself —

"Now begins my watch. I dare say now Mrs. Lovett has some particular reason for watching this barber, though she did not tell me. However, a guinea for one night's work is not bad pay."

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

MR. LUPIN MEDDLES WITH OTHER FOLKS' AFFAIRS.

"BROTHER OAKLEY, IS SISTER OAKLEY within?"

This rather cool speech — cool considering all the circumstances — was uttered by no other than the Reverend Mr. Lupin to Mr. Oakley, who was working in his shop on the morning after Johanna had gone upon her perilous enterprise to Todd's.

Mr. Oakley looked up with surprise upon his features.

"What?" he said.

"Is sister Oakley within, brother?"

"Don't call me brother, you canting hypocrite. How do you make out any such relationship, I should like to know?"

"Are we not all brothers in the Lord?"

"Pho! Go along."

"Nay, brother Oakley, my coming to you upon this day hath, in good truth, a meaning."

As he said these words, the countenance of the pious man had upon it a malignant expression, and there was a twinkle about his eyes, which said as plainly as possible, "And that meaning is mischief!" Old Oakley looked at him for some few seconds, and then he said —

"Hark you, Mr. Lupin, you have already meddled too much in my affairs, and I desire now that you will be so good as to leave them alone."

"Humph! brother Oakley, what I have to say, concerns thee to hear, but I would rather say it to thy wife, who is a sister in the faith, and assuredly one of the elect, than I would say it to you, who will assuredly go to a warm place below for your want of faith; so I say again, is sister Oakley within?"

"If you mean my wife," replied the old spectacle-maker, "I am sorry to say that nobody knows less of her going out and coming home than I do."

"Truly, she frequents the Tabernacle of the Lord, called Ebenezer*, where we all put up a hearty and moving prayer for you."

"Nobody asks you. I believe you are a set of rascals."

"How pleasant this is."

**There actually was a Congregationalist church called Ebenezer Chapel in nearby Hammersmith, founded in 1784.*

"What is pleasant?"

"To be nailed. How charming it is for the friends of Satan to call the Saints hard names. Brother Oakley, you are lost, indeed."

"If you call me brother again, you shall be lost, Mr. Lupin. I tell you once for all, I don't know anything of my wife's going out or coming home, and I don't want to see you in my shop any more. If it were not for one person in this world, and that one an angel, if ever one lived upon the earth, I should not care how soon my head was laid low."

"Humph! brother Oakley! Humph!"

Oakley caught up a file to throw at the head of the hypocrite, but there was such an expression of triumph upon his face, that the heart of the old spectacle-maker sunk within him as he thought to himself, "This man brings ill news, or he would never look as he does." The file dropped from his hands, and pushing his spectacles up to the top of his head, he glared at Lupin as he said —

"Speak — speak! What have you to say?"

"Humph!"

"Speak man, if you be a man!"

"Humph, brother Oakley; you have a daughter — Johanna?"

"Yes, yes!" cried old Oakley. "My heart told me that it was of my child this wretch came to speak. Tell me all instantly. Speak — what of my dear Johanna? I will wrest the truth from you. Has anything happened — is she well? Speak — speak!"

Mr. Oakley sprang upon the preacher, and seizing him by the throat, forced him back until he fell upon an old chest in the shop that was full of tools and the lid of which giving way with Lupin's weight and the sudden concussion with which he came upon it, precipitated him into the box among a number of pointed implements, the effect of which may be better imagined than described, as the newspapers say.

"Murder! murder!" screamed the preacher.

"Now you rascal!" cried old Oakley. "Say what you have got to say, and at once, too."

"Murder!" again gasped Lupin. "Brother Oakley, spare my life."

"I will not spare it if you are not quite explicit as regards what you have hinted of my child. Speak at once. Tell me what you have to say?"

"Let me get up. Oh, be merciful, and let me get up."

"No. You can stay very well where you are. Be quiet and speak freely, in which case no harm will come to you."

"Did you say, be quiet, brother Oakley? Truly you would be anything but quiet in my situation. What induces you to keep all your tools in this chest with the points uppermost?"

"You are trying to prevaricate now," said Oakley, suddenly snatching from the wall of his shop an antique sword, that had hung there as a sort of ornament,

not entirely inconsistent with his trade. "You are trying to prevaricate with me now, and I must and will have your life. Prepare for the worst. You have now aroused feelings that cannot be so easily quelled again. Your last hour has come!"

The sight of the sword awakened the most lively feelings of terror in the mind of the preacher. He gave a howl of dismay, and made the most frantic efforts to get up out of the tool-chest; but that was no easy matter, particularly as old Oakley flourished the antique sword in dangerous proximity to his nose. At length, lifting up his hands in the most supplicating manner, he cried —

"Mercy — mercy, and I will tell."

"Go on, then. Quick."

"Yes — yes. Oh, dear! Yes. I was sojourning in this ungodly city, and taking my way, deep in thought, upon the wickedness of the world, the greater portion of the inhabitants of which will assuredly go down below, where there is howling and —"

"You rascal, I'll make you howl if you do not come to the point quickly."

A flourish of the sword, so close to the face of Mr. Lupin that he really believed for the moment it had taken the end of his nose off, admonished him that the patience of Mr. Oakley was nearly exhausted, and in a whining tone, he added —

"Truly, I was in the street called Fleet-street; when as I was crossing the way, a young lad nearly upset me into the kennel. He did not see me, but I saw him. Truly, brother Oakley, I saw the face of that — that individual."

"Well, what is that to me? I ask you what is he to me? Go on."

"Oh, oh, oh! Don't say I have not prepared you for the worst. Oh, oh, oh! Now, brother Oakley, I will tell you, even although it provoke an abundance of wrath. That boy — that individual who nearly overthrew me, one of the elect as I am, into the kennel, had the face of your daughter, Johanna."

The spectacle-maker looked confused, as well he might.

"The face of my daughter, Johanna?" he said. "What do you mean? Is all this cock-and-a-bull story about some boy in the street, who happened in your eyes to bear a resemblance to my child?"

"Humph! Aye, truly. Humph! so striking a resemblance, that sitting here, even as I am upon the points of many instruments of steel and of iron, I aver that that boy was Johanna Oakley."

Oakley staggered back, and the antique sword dropped from his hand, a proceeding which Mr. Lupin profited sufficiently by to scramble out of the tool-chest, and make towards the door. In another moment he would have left the shop, for he had done all the mischief he could, by telling the anxious father such a tale, but suddenly Oakley snatched the sword from the floor again, and rushing after Mr. Lupin, he caught him by the skirts at the very nick of time, and dragged him into the shop again. Holding then the sword to his throat, he said —

"Scoundrel! How dare you come and tell me such a thing? Your life, your worthless life, ought to pay the penalty of such an odious falsehood."

"No, no!" cried Lupin falling upon his knees, for he saw the sword uplifted. "No! What if it be true? What if it be true?"

The old man's hands shook, and the point of the sword which had been in most dreadful proximity to Mr. Lupin's throat, was gradually lowered until it touched the floor.

"Tell me again — tell me again!" gasped Oakley.

The preacher saw that his danger was over, and rising, he took a handkerchief from his pocket, and began deliberately to dust his knees, as he said in a low snuffling voice —

"Truly, you are a vessel of wrath, brother Oakley."

"Stop!" cried Oakley. "I have told you before not to call me brother: I have no fellowship or brotherhood with you. Do not tempt me to more violence by the use of that word."

"Let it be as you please," said Lupin, "but as regards the maiden, who for a surety is fair to look upon, although all flesh is grass, and beauty waneth after a season —"

"I want none of your canting reflections. To your tale. When and where was it that you saw my child?"

"In the street called Fleet, as I and all of us are sinners. She wore nether garments suitable and conformable unto a boy, but not to a girl, as the way of the world goeth; and yet she looked comely, did the maiden — aye, very comely. I was moved to see her truly. Her eyes there was no mistaking, and her lips — Aye, it was the maiden; but after sitting in the kennel for one moment into which I fell, and getting up again amid the laughter of the ungodly bystanders, I found that she was gone."

"And so you have come on to me with this monstrous tale?"

"Monstrous tail?" said Mr. Lupin, turning round as though he expected to find such an appendage flourishing behind him. "I am not aware —"

The old spectacle-maker staggered into a seat, and holding his hands clasped before him for a few moments, he strove to think calmly of what had been told to him.

The preacher was not slow in taking advantage of this condition into which Mr. Oakley fell, to protect himself against any further danger from the sword. He picked up that weapon from the floor, and not finding any place readily in the shop where he might effectually hide it, he held it behind his back, and finally thrust the long blade of it between his coat and his waistcoat, where he thought it was to be sure wonderfully well hidden. He did not calculate that the point projected above his coat-collar and his head some six inches or so, presenting a very singular appearance indeed.

He then waited for Oakley to speak, for to tell the truth, the curiosity of

Lupin was strongly excited concerning Johanna, as well as his sense of enjoyment, tickled by the distress of the father whom he considered his enemy.

After this he waited patiently enough to see what course the afflicted man would pursue, and, indeed, the whole conduct of Lupin was most convincing of the fact, that he entertained no doubt whatever as to the identity of the supposed boy he had seen in Fleet-street. The time at which he had seen Johanna, must have been when she ran over the road from Todd's shop, and took refuge in the fruiterer's.

Well, then, poor Mr. Oakley was trying to think. He was trying to convince himself that it could not possibly have been Johanna who had been seen by the preacher; but then there was still present to his mind, the impression that had been made upon it by the singular manner in which she had bidden him *adieu* upon the last occasion of his seeing her. He remembered how she had come back, after leaving the shop with her young friend, Arabella Wilmot, and how then, with a burst of feeling, she had taken of him a second farewell.

No wonder then that, by combining that with the information Lupin had brought, the father found enough to shudder at; and he did shudder.

Mr. Lupin watched him attentively.

Suddenly rising, with a face pale as death itself, Oakley advanced to Lupin, and laying his hand upon his breast, he said to him —

"Man, I suspect that there is much hypocrisy in your nature. It may be unjust to do so — it may be that I am doing you a wrong, but yet I do think in my heart that you are one of those who adopt the garb and the language of piety for the selfish purposes of human nature. And yet you must have some feeling: at the bottom of even such a heart as yours, there must be some touch of humanity; and by that I conjure you to say if you have told the truth to me in this matter concerning my child."

"I have," said Lupin.

"If you have not, I will say nothing to you, I will be guilty of no attempt at revengeful violence. Only tell me so, and you shall go in peace."

"What I have told you of the maiden is true," said Lupin. "I saw her — with these eyes I saw her."

The spectacle-maker slipped off his working apron and the black sleeves he wore over his coat to protect it from the dust and other destructive matters incidental to his work-bench, and then he snatched his hat from a peg upon which it hung in the shop.

"Come," he said. "Come. You and I will walk together to the house, where I was told Johanna was to be; and if I do not find her there, I will thank you for the information you have given to me. I will not stop to inquire what were your motives in giving it, but I will thank you for it. Come. Come with me."

"Truly I will come with you," said Lupin, "for I am curious — that is to

say, I am in a religious point of view, anxious to know what has become of the maiden, who was so fair to look upon always, although she had not a godly spirit."

Oakley locked up his shop, and put the key in his pocket. Then taking the preacher by the arm, he set off at a fast pace for the house of Arabella Wilmot.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

TODD ASTONISHES MRS. LOVETT'S SPY.

We return to Todd. After he had put up his own shutters, and properly secured his doors for the night, he lit the lamp in his parlour, and glancing curiously around him, he muttered —

"Yes. This will assuredly be the last night here. How I hate the look of anything, and how eagerly I shall banish from my mind all kind of remembrance of this place when I am in another land, as I shall be shortly. Let me see: I will embrace the Catholic religion, and I will be most devout. The regularity of my religious exercises shall do much for me. Indeed, I do not think I could have remained so long in London, if I had not had the prudence to be regular at the church. It is true that of late I have neglected all that, but then I am going soon, and it does not matter."

Todd sat down, and looked over the memoranda of things he had to do that he had made. He felt tolerably satisfied with the condition of affairs. That Colonel Jeffery and that others suspected him, he could not doubt; but he felt quite confident that he should be far off, before those suspicions repaired into anything dangerous to him.

He still clung to the idea that they knew nothing, or else they would arrest him; and while such did not ensue, he considered himself as in a tolerably safe position.

He then set about the preparations for firing his house. We need not follow him through those preparations. We need not state how he soaked clothes in turpentine and oil, and how he placed them in such positions, combined with small packages of gunpowder, and lumps of rosin, that if a torch were to be applied at the lower part of the house, the whole would be in a few moments in a blaze. Suffice it to say, that Todd worked hard for the next two hours, and that by the time they had gone, he had got everything ready for the perpetration of that last crime which he intended to commit,

before he crossed the threshold of his house upon the following night, to leave it for ever.

More than once during these two hours he drank brandy. The ardent spirit had become necessary to the existence of Todd now; and when he took a draught at the conclusion of his labours, he smiled grimly as he said —

"Charley Green will have quite a funeral of flame. He shall die, and his body shall be consumed in the blazing fragments of this house, and it will go hard but this side of Fleet-street suffers. Oh, if the flames would only spread to the old church, I should rejoice much at that, and they may do so. — Yes, they may do so. Ha! ha! I shall be remembered in London."

As he spoke, a dull heavy sort of sound at the outer door of his house came upon his ears. It was as though something heavy had been thrown against it. With fear expressed upon every feature of his face, Todd listened for a repetition of the sound.

It did not come again.

Todd began to breathe a little more freely, and yet he kept asking himself — "What was it?" — and the utmost powers of his imagination could return him no feasible answer to the interesting inquiry.

But nothing was more easy than to go to the door and see if any one was there, or if anything had happened to it. Should he open it for such a purpose? Should he unbar and unbolt at the risk of he knew not what? No: he would, from the first floor balcony, and there was a frail one, reconnoitre the street. He should then be easily able to see if there were any danger.

He had no sooner made this determination, than he carried it out, by ascending the dark blackened staircase, conducting to the upper part of his house, that staircase which was now so completely covered by combustible materials.

At every few steps he took he listened attentively. He thought there might yet be a repetition of the sound; but no — all was still; and by the time he reached his first floor, he was in some sort recovered from his first fright. That was something. He left his light upon the stair-head, for he had no wish to point himself out to the chance passengers in Fleet-street, or perhaps to some enemy, by going into that room with a light in his hand. No, Todd was much too acute for that; so carefully closing the door, so that no ray of light got in from the staircase, he crept to the window.

The shutters had to be unfastened, for Todd's house was always carefully closed up like the Duke of Wellington's at the present day. He very quickly unclosed one of the long-disused windows, and opening it gently, looked out over the edge of the little crazy balcony into the street.

Something big and black was against his door.

The more Todd bent his gaze upon this object, the more a kind of undefined terror took possession of him, and the more puzzled he was to give a

name to the dark mass that had been laid upon his threshold. There was no lamp very near his house, or else, miserable as was the light from those old oil apologies-for-illuminators, some few rays might have fallen upon the dark mass, and told Todd what it was.

But no — all was dark and dubious, and he strained his eyes in vain to penetrate the mystery.

"I must go down," he said; "I must open the door. Yes, I cannot live and not know what this is. I must open the door, however reluctantly, and ascertain precisely. Ah!"

While Todd was talking, and still keeping his eyes fixed upon the mysterious object at his door, he saw suddenly in the midst of it a bright luminous spark, as if something connected with it was of a red heat, and slowly smouldering on fire.

If he was before puzzled to account for the phenomenon of a dark object, without shape or form, lying propped up against his door, he was now more than ever confounded, and his imagination started some of the most improbable conjectures in the world, to account for the appearance.

He thought that it must be some combustible, which, in the course of a few moments, would go off with a stunning report, and blow his street-door to atoms; but then again, what could be the object of such a thing?

The more he considered the affair from above, the more he was puzzled and terrified; so at last, with a feeling of desperation, he ran down stairs and began to unfasten the street-door. He did not pause in his work until he had flung it open, and then the mystery was explained.

A man, half asleep, with a lighted pipe in his mouth, rolled backwards into the shop; and as he did so, with the dreamy half-consciousness that he was upon some sort of duty, he said —

"I'll watch him, Mrs. Lovett. He shan't get away without your knowing of it, ma'am."

Todd understood the man's errand in a moment. Of course he had been employed to watch him by Mrs. Lovett, who had a slight idea that he might not be forthcoming for the promised morning settlement. Todd seized the man by the collar, and dragging him fairly into the shop, closed the door again.

"Ah!" he said, "a good joke."

"What's a joke, sir?" said the man. "What's a joke? Murder! Where am I? — where am I? Help!"

"Hush!" said Todd. "Hush! It's of no consequence. I know all about it, man. Mrs. Lovett employed you to watch me. She was a little jealous, but we have made it all right now, and she asked me, if I saw you, to pay you and give you a glass of something, beside."

"Did she, sir?"

SWEENEY TODD PREPARES COMBUSTIBLES TO FIRE HIS HOUSE.

"To be sure she did; so come in, and you can tell her when you see her in the morning, that you had of me a glass of as good liquor as could be found in London. By-the-bye, what am I to pay you?"

"A guinea, sir."

"Exactly. It was a guinea, of course. This way, my friend, this way. Don't fall over the shaving-chair, I beg of you. You can't hurt it, for it is a fixture; but you might hurt yourself, and that is of more importance to you, you know. While we do live in this world, if it be for ever so short a time, we may as well live comfortably."

Talking away thus all suspicion from the man, who was not one of the

brightest of geniuses in the world, Todd led the way to the parlour — that fatal parlour which had been the last scene of more than one mortal life.

He closed the door, and then in quite a good-humoured way, he pointed to the seat, saying —

"Rest yourself, my friend — rest yourself, while I get out the bottle. And so it is one guinea that I am to give you, eh?"

"Yes, sir; and all I can say is that I am very glad to hear that you and Mrs. Lovett have made matters all right again. Very glad, indeed, sir, I may say. In course, I shouldn't have took the liberty of sitting down by your door, sir, if she had not told me to watch the house and let her know, if so, be as you come out of it, or if I saw any packages moving. She didn't say anything to me what it was for; but a guinea is just as well earned easy as not, you see, sir!"

"Certainly, my friend, certainly. Drink that."

The man tossed off the glass of something that Todd gave him, and then he licked his lips, as he said —

"What is it, sir? It's strong, but I can't say, for my part, that I like the flavour of it much."

"Not like it?"

"Not much, sir."

"Why it's a most expensive foreign liquor that is, and by all the best judges in the kingdom is, never found fault with. Very few persons, indeed, have tasted it; but of those few, not one has come to me to say, Mr. Todd — "

"Good God!" said the man, as he clasped his head with both of his hands. "Good God, how strange I feel. I must be going mad!"

"Mad!" cried Todd, as he leant far over the table so as to bring his face quite close to the man's. "Mad! not at all. What you feel now is part of your death-pang. You are dying — I have poisoned you. Do you hear that? You have watched me, and I have in return poisoned you. Do you understand that?"

The dying man made an ineffectual effort to rise from the chair, but he could not. With a gasping sob he let his head sink upon his breast — he was dead!

"They perish," said Todd, "one by one; they who oppose me, perish, and so shall they all. Ha! so shall they all; and she who set this fool on to his destruction shall feel, yet, the pang of death, and know that she owes it to me! Yes, Mrs. Lovett, yes."

He closed his arms over his breast, and looked at the body for some moments in silence; and then, with a sneer upon his lips, he added —

"No, Mrs. Lovett, you did not show your judgment in this matter. Had you wished to watch me, you should have done it yourself, and not employed this poor weak wretch who has paid the price of his folly. Go — go!"

He struck the chair from under the dead man with his foot, and the corpse

TODD POISONS MRS. LOVETT'S SPY AND TELLS HIM OF IT.

that had partially been supported by it and the table, fell to the floor. Another kick sent it under the large table, and then, as another of Todd's victims had once done, it disappeared.

"To-morrow night, by this time," said Todd, musingly, "where shall I be!"

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

MR. OAKLEY IS IN DESPAIR AT THE LOSS OF JOHANNA.

THE ANXIETY OF POOR MR. OAKLEY increased each moment as he and the preacher neared the house of Arabella Wilmot's friends. We regret to say that Mr. Lupin did enjoy the mental agony of the father; but it was in his nature so to do, and we must take poor humanity as we find it.

It must be recollected that Mr. Lupin had, through Johanna, suffered great malefactions. The treatment he had received at the hands of Big Ben, although most richly deserved, had been on account of Johanna, and as regarded the old spectacle-maker himself, he had always occupied an antagonistic position as regarded Mr. Lupin.

No wonder then, we say, that human nature, particularly in its evangelical variety, was not proof against the fascination of a little revenge. Now, Mr. Lupin felt so sure that he had made no mistake, but that it was no other than the fair Johanna whom he had seen in what he called the unseemly apparel, that he did not feel inclined to draw back for a moment in the matter. Curiosity, as well as a natural (to him) feeling of malignity, urged him to stick by the father in order that he might know the result of inquiries that he, Lupin, had no opportunity or excuse for making, but which Mr. Oakley might institute with the most perfect and unquestionable profundity.

As we have before had occasion to remark, the distance between Oakley's shop and the residence of the friends of Arabella was but short, so that, at the speed which the excited feelings of the fond father induced him to adopt, he soon stood upon the threshold of the residence, beneath the roof of which he hoped, notwithstanding the news so confidently brought by Lupin, to find his much-loved, idolized child.

"You shall see," he said to Lupin, catching his breath as he spoke; "you shall see how very wrong you are."

"Humph!" said Lupin.

"You shall see," continued poor Oakley, still dallying with the knocker; "you shall see what an error you have made, and how impossible it is that my child — my good and kind Johanna — could be the person you saw in Fleet-street."

"Ah!" said Lupin.

Mr. Oakley knocked at the door, and, as one of the family had seen him

through the blinds of the parlour-window, he was at once admitted, and kindly received by those who knew him and his worth well. He asked, in an odd gasping manner, that Mr. Lupin might have permission to come in, which was readily granted; and with a solemn air, shaking his head at the vanities he saw in the shape of some profane statuary in the hall, the preacher followed Oakley to the dining-room.

It was an aunt of Arabella's to whom they were introduced, and, with a smile, she said —

"Really, Mr. Oakley, a visit from you is such a rarity that we ought not to know how to make enough of you when you do come. Why, it must have been Christmas twelvemonths since you were last beneath this roof. Don't you remember when your dear, good, pretty Johanna won all hearts?"

"Yes, yes," said Oakley, glancing triumphantly at Lupin. "My dear child, whom all the world loves — God bless her! — She is pure, and good, and faultless as an angel."

"That, Mr. Oakley," said the lady, "I believe she is. We are as fond of her here, and always as glad to see her, as though she belonged to us. Indeed, we quite envy you such a treasure as she is."

Tears gushed into the grateful father's eyes, as he heard his child — his own Johanna — she who reigned all alone in his heart, and yet filled it so completely — so spoken of. How glad he was that there was some one besides himself present to hear all that, although that one was an enemy! With what a triumphant glance he looked around him.

"Humph!" said Lupin.

That humph recalled Oakley to the business of his visit, and yet how hot and parched his lips got, when he would have framed the all-important question, "Is my child here?" — and how he shook, and gasped for breath a moment before he could speak.

At length, he found courage — not to ask if Johanna was there. No — no. He felt that he dared not doubt that. It would have been madness to doubt it, sheer insanity. So he put the question indirectly, and he contrived to say —

"I hope the two girls are quite well, quite — quite — well."

"Two girls!" said the aunt. "Two girls!"

"Yes," gasped Oakley. "Johanna and Arabella, you know — your Arabella, and my Johanna — my child."

"You ought to know, Mr. Oakley, considering that they are at your house, you know. I hope that neither of them have been at all indisposed? Surely that is not the case, and this is not your strange way of breaking it to us, Mr. Oakley?"

The bereaved father — yes, at that moment he felt that he was a bereaved father — clutched the arms of the chair upon which he sat, and his face turned of a ghastly paleness. He made an inarticulate effort to speak, but could only produce a strange gurgling noise.

"Gracious Heavens! he is ill," cried Arabella's aunt.

"No, madam," said Lupin. "He is only convinced."

"Convinced of what?"

"Of what he himself will tell you, madam."

"Help! help!" cried Oakley. "Help! My child — my Johanna — my beautiful child. Mercy — help. Give her to my arms again. Oh, no — no — no, she could not leave me thus. It is false — it is some desperate juggle! My child — my child, come once again to these arms. — God — God help me!"

Arabella's aunt rose in the greatest alarm, and rung the bell so sharply, that it brought everybody that was in the house to that room, and Mr. Lupin, when he saw what a congregation there was, rose up and said in a snuffling voice —

"Is there any objection to a prayer?"

"The greatest at present, sir," said Arabella's aunt. "Sir, there is a time for all things. The state of poor Mr. Oakley, now claims all our care. If you are his friend —"

At these words, Oakley appeared to shake off much of the prostrating effects of the first dreadful conviction, that what Lupin had told him was true, and he said —

"No — no, he is no friend — he is a bitter enemy. The enemy of my peace, and of my dear child. I am calmer now, and I demand — I implore, that that man be made to leave this house."

"Brother Oakley," said Lupin, "you brought me here."

"And I now command you hence. Begone, villain, begone; go and exult over the heart-broken father's grief; go and tell the tale where you will. You cannot move me now — go — go — go."

"Truly I will go presently, but first of all, I say to you, brother Oakley, hardened sinner as you are, repent. Down upon your knees all of you, and join me in prayer, that the unbelievers may roll upon billows of burning brimstone, and that —"

"Come," said a man, who happened to be in the house upon some domestic errand, "Mrs. Wilmot says you are to go, and go you shall. Come, be off — I know who you are. You are the rascal that married the widow in Moorfields, but who, they say, has another wife in Liverpool. If you don't go, I shall give you in charge for bigamy, and the widow says she will spend her last penny in prosecuting you."

To meet any one half so well informed about his affairs, would have been a terrible blow to Mr. Lupin; but when he found that this man, who was a kind of jobbing cabinet-maker, knew so much, his great goggle eyes opened to an alarming width, and he made a movement towards the door. Still, he did not like to go without saying something.

"Flee, ye wretches," he said, "from the wrath to come! You will all go into the bottomless pit, you will, and I shall rejoice at it; and sing many songs of

MR. LUPIN UNMASKED.

joy over you. Scoffers and mockers, I leave you all to your fate. The devil will have you all, and that is a great comfort and gratification to the elect and to the saints."

With this, Mr. Lupin made a precipitate retreat, having achieved about as little in the way of satisfying his curiosity as could very well be conceived.

It was a relief — a great relief to Mr. Oakley to be rid of such a witness to his feelings as Lupin; and when he had fairly gone, and the outer door was closed upon him, the spectacle-maker, with clasped hands, and countenance

expressive of the greatest possible amount of mental agony, spoke —

"Dismiss all but ourselves, madam," he said. "There's that to say which may be said to you alone, but which it would break my heart to say to many."

The room was soon clear, and then Oakley continued in a low faltering voice to make those inquiries, each answer to which was so fatal to his peace of mind.

"Madam," he said, "is not my child — my Johanna — here staying on a visit with Arabella?"

"No, no — certainly not."

This was so frightfully conclusive, that it was some few moments before he could go on; but when he did, he said —

"Is Arabella in the house?"

"That, Mr. Oakley," replied the aunt, "is a question I cannot answer you at the moment; but rest and compose yourself for a few moments, and I will ascertain myself if she be in or out, and if the latter, when she was last seen."

"I am much beholden to you, madam. I am a poor old man, much broken in spirit, and with but one strong tie to bind me to a world which has nearly done with me. That tie is the love of my dear child, Johanna. Alas! if that be broken, I am all adrift, and at the mercy of the winds and waves of evil fortune; and the sooner I close my eyes in the long sleep of death, the better for me and all who feel for me."

"Nay, Mr. Oakley, I look upon it as a thing almost criminal to despair. There is one maxim which I have learnt in my experience of life, and which I am sure you must have had abundant opportunities of learning likewise. It is, 'Never to trust to appearances.'"

The old man looked at her with a saddened aspect. It was quite evident his feelings had been too strongly acted upon to make any philosophy available to him; and when she left the room to make the inquiries concerning Arabella, he wrung his hands, and wept.

"Yes," he said, "yes, I am indeed alone now — a wreck — a straw upon the ocean of society. The sooner I drift in the grave now, the better for me, and all who pity the old man. Oh, Johanna — Johanna. My child — my beautiful, why did you not wait until I was dead before you left me? Then I should have slept calmly, and known nothing; but now my days and nights will be dreams of horror."

The door opened and the aunt re-appeared.

"Arabella is not within," she said, "and has not been seen for some hours now. When last seen her manner was evidently perturbed. But now, Mr. Oakley, sit down by me and tell me as clearly and as distinctly, all you know and all you fear. There are few evils in this world but there are some remedies for, and you shall have my true and calm opinion if you will tell me all."

It is something astonishing, and yet one of the most ordinary of mental

phenomena, to note what a power a cool and clear intellect will exert over one that is distracted and full of woe and clamorous grief. Mr. Oakley did sit down by the side of Arabella's aunt, and he told her all that happened the girl of which, of course, was the real or supposed appearance of Johanna in Fleet-street, in male attire. The collateral circumstances, such as the hurried and half frantic farewell of him in the shop by Johanna, and the misrepresentation by Arabella, that she (Johanna) was going to stop there, evidently made a deep impression upon the aunt. Her countenance changed visibly, as she said faintly —

"God help us all."

"Lost! lost," cried Oakley. "Yes, you — even you, hopeful as you were, and hopeful as you would fain have made me — even you, now that you know all, feel that she is lost. God, indeed, only can help me now."

"No, Mr. Oakley," said the aunt, rallying, "I will not yet trust to appearances, although I own that they are bad. I will come to no conclusion until I have seen Arabella, and got the truth from her. It is quite clear that there is some secret between the two young creatures. It is quite clear that there is something going on that we know nothing of, and to speculate upon which may only involve us in an inextricable labyrinth of conjectures. I say, there is some secret, but it may not be a guilty one."

"Not — not guilty?"

"No, Mr. Oakley, there are many degrees of indiscretion to pass through ere the gulf of guilt is reached at last. I have faith in Arabella — I have faith in Johanna; and even now, admitting for a moment the truth of what that man whom you brought with you here, reports, Johanna may only have to be blamed for folly."

"Do — do you think he did so see her?"

"I doubt it much."

"Mother," said a lad of fifteen, coming hastily into the room. "Mother I —"

He paused upon seeing Mr. Oakley there, and stammered out some apology —

"He had only come to tell his mother that a whole suit of his clothes were missing from his room and that he could find them nowhere, and he could not make it out; and one of his hats was gone too, and a pair of shoes, and —"

Old Oakley fell back in his chair with a groan.

"She has them," he said. "She has them. My child, whom I shall never see again, has them."*

**The extreme reaction of Mr. Oakley to hearing of Johanna's disguise seems excessive to modern readers. Londoners reading the story might also have been a little puzzled by it; although cross-dressing was a little scandalous and transgressive, it wouldn't seem likely to rise to this level. Most likely the implication is that Mr. Oakley is assuming Johanna has disguised herself so that she can sign onto some sailing ship as a cabin boy.*

CHAPTER XC.

MORNING IN FLEET-STREET AGAIN.

ANOTHER DAY HAS DAWNED upon the great city — another sun has risen upon the iniquities of hosts of men, but upon no amount of cold-blooded, hardened, pitiless criminality that could come near to that of Sweeney Todd. No, he certainly held the position of being in London, then, the worst of the worst.

But who shall take upon himself now to say that in this pest-ridden, loyalty-mad, abuse-loving city of London, there are not some who are more than even Sweeney Todd's equals? Who shall say that hidden scenes of guilt and horror are not transacting all around us, that would, in their black iniquity, far transcend anything that Sweeney Todd has done or dreamt of doing? Let the imagination run riot in its fanciful conjectures of what human nature is capable of, and in London there shall be found those who will reduce to practice the worst frenzied deeds that can be conceived.

Yes, the dawn of another day had come, and Todd had made all his preparations. Nothing was wanting, but the match that was to set Fleet-street, he fondly hoped, in a blaze. His own house, he felt quite certain, could not escape. It would be a charred mass long before any effectual means could be procured to check the devastation of the flames, and then as the good ship spread its swelling sails to the wind to bear him to another shore, he should be lighted upon his way by the glare of the great fire in Fleet-street, that no one would be able to guess the origin of.

So he told himself.

Short-sighted mortals that we are! How little Todd, with all his cleverness — all his far-seeing thrift and fancy — dreamt of the volcano upon which he stood. How little he for one moment imagined it was possible that the sword of justice hung over him by so slender a thread. How he would have glared at any one who might have told him that he only moved about by sufferance; and yet such was the fact.

Sir Richard Blunt could put his hand upon him at any moment, and say, "Todd, you are my prisoner. To Newgate — to Newgate, from whence only you will emerge to your trial, and to the scaffold!"

No, Todd, good easy soul, had not the slightest idea of his real position upon that morning.

He waited rather impatiently for the arrival of Johanna to take down the shutters, and she urged upon Sir Richard Blunt and her friends at the fruiterer's, the propriety of her going and doing that morning piece of work; but they would not hear of it. She at length used an argument which made Sir Richard adopt another course than keeping her at the fruiterer's until Todd should get out of all patience and open his shop himself.

"It is possible," she said, "that I may be subjected to ill-usage if I am not there; and then being compelled to call for aid as I might, you would feel that you were forced to take Todd into custody before the time at which you have resolved so to do."

"That is true," said Sir Richard; and then, after some little consideration, he added, "I have a plan that will save you both ways. You shall be in time, and yet you shall not take down Todd's shutters."

They could none of them conceive at the moment how Sir Richard intended to manage this; but they quickly saw that it was easy enough. Opening just a little way one of the windows of the first floor at the fruiterer's, he blew a whistle that he had suspended round his neck by a small chain. In the course of a few moments, Crotchet walked into the shop.

"Governor here?" he said. "I heard him a chirping for me just now — didn't I?"

"Yes, Crotchet," said the fruiterer, who knew him quite well. "Step up-stairs; you will find him there."

Crotchet was soon in the presence of Sir Richard, and Johanna, and the fruiterer's daughter. He made a rough sort of salute to the whole party, and then remarked again that he had heard the governor a chirping, he rather thought.

"Yes, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "you're quite right. You know this young lady here?" — indicating Johanna.

"Reether!" said Crotchet.

"Well, then, you will seem to be passing Todd's shop when she commences taking down the shutters; and, seeing that they are too heavy for such a mere boy, you good-naturedly take them down for him — you understand? It is the last time that they will be taken down for Todd, I think."

"All's right," said Crotchet; "I understands — it's as good as done. Lord! what a scrouge there will be at the hanging o' that barber, to be sure, unless he manages to cheat the gallows; and I takes notice in my hexperieace as them 'ere wery bad 'uns seldom does try that 'ere game on, with all their bounce."

"Now, Miss Oakley," said Sir Richard Blunt, "I think, then, your time has come; and, as Crotchet will take down the shutters, you may as well go over at once. I think you thoroughly understand what you have to do — and if Todd asks you where you lodged, you had better say that the servants here offered to let you sleep by the kitchen fire, and you accepted the offer — for he may

be watching for you now, and see you come out of this house, for all we know to the contrary. And now remember, without any reference to my plans or what I would rather do, if you feel yourself, or fancy you feel yourself in the least danger, take the means I have pointed out to you of summoning aid, and aid will come to you."

"I will," said Johanna.

"Heaven speed you, then! This will be the last day, I think, of the career of that bold bad man. I intend to make such an effort to get under his house to-day, as I hope and expect will enable me to come at the grand secret, namely, of how he disposes of his victims so quickly — for that there is some wonderful jugglery in it, I am certain."

Johanna took a kind leave of the fruiterer's daughter, who had lavished upon her all those attentions which, in Johanna's position, became so precious from one of her own sex; and then, assuming a careless manner, with her hat put on in a boyish slovenly sort of way, she boldly crossed the road to Sweeney Todd's.

He had been watching through a hole in the upper part of one of the shutters. In a moment all sorts of ugly suspicions took possession of his mind. What could Charley Green, his errand-boy from Oxford, who knew no one, and was unknown to all London, doing at a tradesman's house in Fleet-street at such an hour in the morning? How came he to know the people of that house? How came he to dream of going there?

Todd was boiling with anger and curiosity when he opened the door and admitted Johanna, a thing that he was unmindful enough to do before she knocked for admission, which alone would have been amply sufficient to point out to her that she had been watched from some peep-hole in the house.

He stretched out his hand and dragged her in. He controlled his temper sufficiently to enable him to gratify his curiosity. He made quite certain that Charley Green would tell him some story of where he had been, which should not convict the fruiterer. By the light of a miserable candle that Todd had burning in the dark closed shop, he glared at Johanna.

"Well — well," he said. "A good night's rest, Charley?"

"Tolerable, sir!"

"Humph! ha! And did you find a place to sleep at cheaply and decently, my good lad, eh?"

"I was very fortunate indeed, sir."

"Oh, you were very fortunate indeed?"

"Yes, sir. I am, through being country bred I suppose, fond of fruit, so when I left you last night, I bought an apple at a shop opposite."

"Oh, at Mr. a — a —"

"I don't know the name, sir," said Johanna, "but I can run out and ascertain, I dare say."

Todd gave a low sort of growl. He did not know if he were being foiled by innocence or by art. With an impatient gesture, he added —

"Never mind the apples, I wish to know where you slept, Charley, that I may judge if it was a proper place, there are so many wicked people in London."

"Are there, sir?"

"Bah! Go on. Where did you sleep?"

"Well, sir, as there was a kind tempered-looking servant in the fruiterer's shop, I thought she might be able to tell me of some place where I could lodge, and when she had heard my story —"

"Story — story? What story?"

"How destitute I was, sir, and how kind you had been to employ me without a character, and how happy and contented I was in your service, sir. So when she had heard all that, she said, 'It is too late for you to go lodging-hunting to-night. There is an old bench in our kitchen, and if you like you may sleep on that.'"

Todd gave a growl.

"And so you slept there?"

"Yes, sir."

He paced the shop for some few moments in deep thought, knitting his brows and trying to make something out of what he had heard, contrary to what it seemed; but Johanna's story was too straightforward and simple for him to find any flaw in it, and after a few moments he felt compelled to admit to himself that it must be the truth. Turning to her with something of the amount of amiability one might expect from a bear, he said —

"Open the shop!"

"Yes, sir, directly."

Johanna propped the door wide open, and then having, by the dim light of the miserable candle, found a screw which fastened a bar across the shutters, she speedily released it, and then went into the street. At that moment Crotchet came along, whistling in so thoroughly careless a manner, that even Johanna thought he had forgotten his instructions and was about to pass the shop. She had her hand upon the bar when he stopped, saying, in an off-handed manner —

"Why little 'un, them 'ere shutters is too much for you, I'll give you a helping hand. Lor' bless you, don't say anything about it. It ain't no sort o' trouble to me my little chap. Here goes."

Mr. Crotchet began opening Todd's shop with such a fury and a vengeance, that the clatter and the speed with which the operation was being accomplished, brought Todd out of the parlour to see what on earth Charley was about. When he saw Crotchet coming in with three shutters in his arms at once, he could scarcely believe his eyes, and he roared out —

"What's this? Who are you?"

"Easy — easy," said Crotchet. "Don't get in the way old gentleman. Easy. There now!"

Crotchet managed to give Todd such a rap on the side of the head with the shutters, that a thousand lights danced in his eyes, and he writhed with pain.

"Well, I never," said Crotchet, "I hope I haven't hurt you, old man? You see I was a passing, and seed as these here shutters was rather a bit top-heavy for your little son here, and I thought I'd give him a helping hand. To be sure he didn't want me to, but you see I would, and perhaps as your old head is getting better, you wouldn't mind a pint of beer, old gentleman?"

"You atrocious villain," yelled Todd, "I'll cut your throat. I'll polish you off. I'll — I'll — would you like to be shaved?"

"I've had a scrape already," said Crotchet, "and if you won't stand the beer, why you won't, and there's no bones broke arter all. Good morning, old Grampus. Good morning my little chap, I wishes you good luck; and if I am passing again, I don't mind lending you a helping hand, though the governor is about one o' the ugliest, nastiest tempered brutes, I ever came near in all my life."

Crotchet went away whistling with great composure.

CHAPTER XCI.

MR. TODD'S FIRST CUSTOMERS.

TODD SEIZED JOHANNA BY THE ARM, and dragged her into the shop. He locked the door, and then confronting her, he said —

"How kind it was of your friend, to take down the shutters for you, Charley Green."

"My friend, sir?"

"Yes, your friend who declined being shaved, you know, because you told him last night that he had better go to some other shop."

"Really, sir," said Johanna, "I don't know what you mean."

"Come, come, Charley, confess that you do know some one in London, as well as you know me. Confess, now, that people are so fond of interfering in other folks' affairs, that you have been set on to watch me. I shall not be at all angry, indeed, I shall not, I assure you. Not the least; only tell me the truth. That is all I ask of you, my boy, and you will find that it is no bad thing to make a friend of Sweeney Todd."

"If I had, sir, anything to confess," replied Johanna, "except that at times I do feel that I wish I had not run away from my mother-in-law at Oxford, I should soon tell it all to you."

"And so that is all, Charley?"

"All at present, sir."

"What a good lad. What an exemplary lad. Light the shop fire, if you please, Charley. Humph! I am wrong," muttered Todd to himself; "but yet I will cut his throat before I leave to-night. It will be safer and more satisfactory to do so, and besides, he has given me some uneasiness, and I hate him for his quiet gentle ways. I hate everybody. I would cut the throats of all the world if I could. — Light the fire quickly, you young hound, will you?"

Johanna trembled. She felt that anything but a blow from Todd she could put up with, but in her pocket she kept a jagged piece of flint stone, which would go through the window in a moment; and she felt that through she must throw it, if he only so much as raised his hand against her.

The fire blazed up, and Todd at that moment had no further excuse for abusing Charley. With a sulky growl, he said —

"You can call me out if any one comes," and then he retired to his back parlour, closing and locking the door as usual.

The morning felt rather raw, and Johanna was glad to warm her hands at the fire in the shop, which soon burnt brightly; but she did not venture upon keeping up a bright blaze for long. Todd's mode of managing the fire, was always to keep a dry turf smouldering upon the top of it, from which ample heat enough was emitted to keep the shaving-pot upon the simmer. She now placed upon the fire one of those turfs, a small pile of which were always ready in the corner of the shop.

She had scarcely done so, when the shop door opened, and a man walked in.

"Is Mr. Todd in, my little man?" he said.

"Yes, sir. Do you wish to see him?" Johanna wished, if it were possible, to discourage visitors, but the man sat down at once in the shaving chair, and placed his hat upon the floor, adding as he did so —

"Yes, a right down good shave I want. As good as if St. Dunstan himself wanted one."

The manner in which the man pronounced the words St. Dunstan was so marked that Johanna felt convinced at once he was a friend, and she felt quite a gush of pleasure at the thought that Sir Richard Blunt had such a continual supervising eye upon her safety.

She felt that she must not look at this man otherwise than as a stranger. She felt that the least word of recognition might be fatal both to him and to her. She knew that Todd had some small orifice through which from his parlour he peeped into the shop, and that his eye was now upon her she did not doubt.

"I will call Mr. Todd, sir," she said in a moment. "He is close at hand."

"Thank you," replied the man. "I sit here as comfortable as St. Dunstan."

"Yes," said Johanna, as she heard the watch-word of safety and friendship once more uttered by that man who was in truth one of Sir Richard's most confidential and trustworthy officers.

She at once now proceeded to the door of the parlour, and tapped at it until Todd opened it, and popped his head out with a grim smile.

"Oh, Charley my dear," he said, "does a gentleman want me?"

"Yes, sir."

"A-hem! Good morning, sir," added Todd, as he advanced, tying on his apron. "A shave, I presume, sir? A close shave, sir? I do think of all the luxuries in life, sir, a good close shave — what I call a regular polish off, sir — is one of the greatest in a small way. Charley, ain't it near breakfast time, my good lad?"

"Yes, sir," said Johanna. "I daresay it is."

"Very good. The hot-water. Thank you my dear — you will take two pence from the till, Charley, and get yourself somewhere about the market a — Well now?"

A thin man in a cloak made his appearance at the door of the shop, and taking off his hat, made a bow, as he said —

"I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to the pious Mr. Todd?"

"My name is Todd, sir. What is it?"

"I am truly delighted," said the tall thin man sitting down upon the nearest seat, and placing his hat upon his knees. "I am truly delighted to see you. Pray go on shaving that gentleman, as I shall be some time."

"Some time about what?" almost screamed Todd.

"Finding the tract, from which I purpose reading to you a few extracts upon the all-important subject of the election of grace, and the insufficiency of works." *

Todd stropped a razor, and glared at the intruder, who, fitting on his nose with great precision a pair of blue spectacles, began rummaging in his hat.

"Humph! this is it. No — this is not it. Well, I thought I had it here, and so I have. This is — no. This is an imaginary and highly religious discourse upon saints, and St. Dunstan in particular."

Johanna knew in a moment that this other man was a friend likewise. He, too, had pronounced the words St. Dunstan in a peculiar manner.

Todd suddenly became quite calm.

"Sir," he said, "I take it as a very particular favour, indeed, that you should have called here upon such an errand, and I only beg that you will not hurry

* *The doctrine of salvation through the grace of God alone (as opposed to that and the doing of good works) was, and still is, a major point of doctrine among more evangelical denominations of Protestant Christianity.*

yourself in the least; I can go on shaving this gentleman, and perhaps when he is gone, you will permit me the honour of operating upon you?"

"With great pleasure," replied the man. "Dear me, where can the tract be? Is this it? No — this is about the pious milkmaid, who always put up a prayer for the milking-pail, to prevent the cow from kicking it over. Dear me, where can it be? Oh, is this it? No — this is the story of the pious barber's boy, who, when he had an opportunity, went over the way and found his father there! Dear me, where can it be?"

Johanna started.

"The barber's boy," she thought, "who went over the way and found his father there? Those words are for me."

She was now in quite a fever of anxiety to leave the shop, for she did not doubt but that by some means her father had heard of her position, and she felt that then nothing but the actual sight of her in perfect health and safety would satisfy him. But she dared not show the anxiety she felt. She bent over the fire, and affected to be stirring the turf.

"You can go and get your breakfast, Charley," said Todd.

"Thank you, sir."

Johanna would not betray any haste, but she shook with agitation as she neared the door; and then she recollected that she had not taken the twopence from the till as she had been told to do, and that the circumstance of not doing so might create suspicion.

She crept back and possessed herself of the pence. Todd watched her with the eyes of a demon.

"Are you going, my dear Charley?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

She left the shop, and then her first impulse would have induced her to hurry over the road to the fruiterer's shop, but her eyes fell upon the figure of Sir Richard Blunt standing in the fruiterer's doorway. He moved his hand signifying that she should go towards the market, and she did so. He quickly followed her.

She did not look behind her, until she was quite in the old Fleet-market; and then, just as she looked round, Sir Richard Blunt touched her arm.

"You understood my message?" he said.

"Yes. My father."

"Exactly. It is concerning him. It appears that some busy-body, a man I understand named Lupin, has seen you in your present disguise, and informed him of it."

"I know the man. He is one of those saintly hypocrites, who make religion the cloak for their vices."

"Yes, there are not a few of them," said Sir Richard. "They revel in vice, and daily try to make the Almighty an accomplice in their offences against

society. Well, then, Johanna, this man has tortured your father with an account of your being in this disguise."

"It would torture him."

"Naturally, without he knew all the reasons for it; but it appears that he went to the house of Miss Wilmot, and after some trouble saw her, when she, finding that he knew quite enough to make him wretched, and not enough to explain your position, frankly told him all, and brought him to me."

"It was the best."

"Most decidedly it was, and I need only say that he is anxiously waiting to see you, at our friend the fruiterer's house; but as it would not do for you to go direct from Todd's door to there, I have intercepted you, you see, to take you by a safer route."

"How good, and kind, and considerate you are to me," said Johanna, as she looked up in the face of the magistrate, while tears started to her eyes. "Without you how miserably I must have failed in this adventure. Todd would no doubt before this have discovered me, and taken my life."

"Don't say a word about that," replied Sir Richard. "Recollect that after all it was my duty to protect you; and if I have been a little more anxious than usual in the performance of that duty, it is because I admire your heroic constancy and courage, and hope to see you happy yet."

"Alas! the sun of my happiness has set for ever. I can only now pray to Heaven, that it will endow me with patience to bear its decrees with serenity."

"Well," added Sir Richard, "we will say no more upon that subject, just now. Come with me, and I will take you to your father by a safer way than just crossing the road from Todd's shop to the fruiterer's."

He led her down a court in Bridge-street, and thence through a complete labyrinth of passages, some of which still exist at the back of Fleet-street, and some of which have been swept away, until they reached a door in a dingy-looking wall, at which he paused.

"This is the back of the fruiterer's house," he said, "and I dare say some one is waiting for me."

He tapped three times distinctly at the door, and then it was opened immediately by the fruiterer's daughter, who with a smile clasped Johanna in her arms.

"Welcome," she said. "Welcome once again."

"Ah, my dear friend," said Johanna, "I shall learn to bless the circumstances, commencing in affliction as they did, that have brought me acquainted with such kind hearts."

They all three now crossed a little paved yard, and were soon in the fruiterer's house.

"Where is my dear father?" said Johanna. "Where is he?"

"This way," said the young girl, who took so great an interest in the fate

of Johanna. "This way, dear. He is in our room up stairs, and will be no less delighted to see you, then you will be delighted to see him."

"I am sure of that," said Johanna.

She ran up the stairs with more speed that the fruiterer's daughter could make, and in another moment was in her father's arms.

CHAPTER XCII.

MR. OAKLEY'S ANXIETIES MUCH DIMINISH.

FOR SOME FEW MOMENTS AFTER THIS MEETING, neither Mr. Oakley nor Johanna could speak. At length the old spectacle-maker was just able to say—

"Great God, I thank thee, that once again I hold my darling to my heart."

"Father—father," said Johanna. "Did you think for one moment that I could have left you?"

"No my dear, no; but I was bewildered by all I heard. I was half mad I think until I was told all; and now we will go home, my pretty darling, at once, and we will have no secrets from each other. Dear heart, what a pretty boy you make to be sure. But come—come. I am in an agony until I have you home again."

"Father, listen to me."

"Yes my child—my darling. Yes."

"If it had not been for Sir Richard Blunt I should now have been with the dead, and you and I would never have met again, but in another world, father. I owe him, therefore, you will say, some gratitude."

"Some gratitude, my darling? We owe him a world of gratitude. Alas, we shall never be able to repay him, but we will pray that he may be as happy as his noble heart deserves, my dear. God bless him!"

"And, father, we will do any little thing he asks of us."

"We will fly to obey his commands, my dear, in all things. Night or day, he will only have to speak to us, and what he says shall be our law."

"Then, father, he asks of me, for the cause of public justice, that I should go back to Todd's, and wear this dress for the remainder only of to-day. Can we refuse him?"

"Alas! Alas!" said the old man, "more trouble—more anxiety—more danger."

"No, father. No danger. He will watch over me, and I have faith that Heaven is with me."

"Can I part with you again?"

"Yes, for such an object. Do not, father, say no to me, for you may say, and I will obey you; but with your own free consent, let me go now, and do the bidding of the great and the good man who has saved me to once more rest upon your breast, and kiss your cheek."

The old man shook for a moment, and then he said —

"Go, go, my child. Go, and take with you my blessing, and the blessing of God, for surely that must be yours; but, oh! be careful. Remember, my darling, that upon your safety hangs my life; for if I were to hear that anything had happened to you, it would kill me. I have nothing now but you in the world to live for."

"Oh, father, you do not mean to tell me that my mother is no more?"

"No, my dear. No. — Ask me nothing now. You shall know all at another time. Only tell me when I shall see you again."

"At sunset," said Sir Richard Blunt, as he stepped into the room at this moment. "At sunset, I hope, Mr. Oakley; and in the meantime be assured of her perfect safety. I offer my life as security for hers, and would not hesitate to sacrifice it for her."

The manner of the magistrate was such that no one could for one moment doubt that he spoke the genuine sentiments at his heart; and such words, coming from such a quarter, it may be well supposed were calculated to produce a great impression.

"I am satisfied," said Mr. Oakley. "I should be more than an unreasonable man if I were not fully convinced now of the safety of Johanna."

When she had got her father to say this much, Johanna was anxious to be off, and she signified as much to Sir Richard Blunt, who fully acquiesced in the propriety of the measure, for already her absence had been quite long enough from the shop, and Todd might not be in the best of humours at her return.

After one more embrace, Johanna tore herself from her father's arms, and followed the magistrate from the fruiterer's house, by the same route which had conducted her to it.

On their way, he explained to her some little matters of which she was in ignorance, or at least concerning which she could only conjecture.

"Both the persons, whom you left in Todd's shop," he said, "belong to my force; and the one only went for the protection of the other, as I, of course, surmised that you would be at once sent out of the way upon some real or mock errand, to give Todd opportunity of committing a murder. My great object is to find out precisely how he does the deed; and the man who came in to be shaved was to make what observations of the place he could during the cere-

SIR RICHARD GIVES JOHANNA PISTOLS FOR HER PROTECTION.

mony, while the other distracted Todd's attention."

"I understand," said Johanna. "I of course knew that they were friends when they mentioned the watchword of St. Dunstan to me."

"Exactly. I gave them instructions to seize the very first opportunity of letting you hear the watch-word. Are there any large cupboards in the shop?"

"Yes. There is one of great size."

"Would it, do you think, hold two men?"

"Oh, yes. Perchance you, who are tall, might have to stoop a little; but with

that exception as to height, there is most ample space."

"That will do then. I cannot tell you, of course, the exact hour; but be it when it may, the moment Todd leaves the shop to day to go upon any business out of doors, two persons from me will come to hide themselves in that cupboard."

"They will use the watch-word?"

"Yes, certainly; and you will so dispose any movable article in the shop, as to take away any idea that the cupboard had been visited, or in the slightest degree interfered with."

"That I can easily do."

"Well, here we are, then, in Fleet-street again; and mind all this that I have planned has nothing to do with your proceedings to call for assistance, if any special or unforeseen danger should occur to you."

Johanna, upon this, showed him the jagged stone she had in her pocket, to cast through the window.

"Yes, that would do," said Sir Richard; "but I would gladly supply you with arms. Do you think you could manage a pistol, if you had one?"

"Yes. I have often looked at some fire-arms that my father had in his shop to sell once, and I have seen them used."

"I am glad of that," continued Sir Richard. "Here are two very small pistols loaded. They may be thoroughly depended upon in a room; but they would not carry any distance, in consequence of the shortness of the barrel. If, however, you should be in any sudden and extreme danger from Todd, anywhere else than in the shop, or there, if you are pushed for time, one of these fired in his face will be tolerably effective. You can keep them both in your pocket."

The magistrate, as he spoke, handed to Johanna a pair of very small, but exquisitely made pistols, encircled with silver mounting, and she carefully concealed them, feeling still more secure from any treachery upon the part of Todd, now that she held his life as much, if not more, in her hands, than he held hers in his.

She shook her kind friend warmly by the hand, and then hastened to the barber's shop.

As she got near to it, she saw the tall thin man who had so perplexed Todd about the religious tract, come out, and Todd followed him to the door, looking after him with such an expression of deadly malice, that Johanna could not but pause a moment to look at him.

He suddenly turned his eyes towards her, and saw her. He beckoned with his finger, and she entered the shop.

"Well, Charley," he said, with quite an affectation of good humour. "You are a good lad."

"I am glad you think so, sir," she replied, seeing that Todd paused for an answer.

"I cannot but think so. I shall have to look over some accounts in the parlour this morning, and if anybody — any female, I mean — comes for me, say I have gone to the city, and that, after that, I said I would call in Bell Yard before I came home. You well remember that, Bell Yard. Be vigilant and discreet, and you shall have the reward that I have all along intended for you, and which you should not miss upon any account."

"I am much beholden to you, sir. But if any one should come to be shaved while you are in the parlour, what shall I say to them?"

"You can say I have gone to the Temple to dress Mr. Block's new wig, if you like, so that you got rid of them, for I must not be disturbed on any consideration."

"Very well, sir."

"Put another turf on the fire, Charley, and make yourself quite comfortable."

What inconsistent amenity this was upon the part of Todd. It seemed as though he had turned over a new leaf completely, and intended to put an end to all suspicions, if he had any, of Charley Green; and after that — after that, Todd still preserved his kind intention of cutting his throat with one of the razors.

"The very best thing you can do with people," muttered Todd to himself, as he went into the parlour, "is to cut their throats as soon as they cease to be useful to you, for from that moment, if you do not put them out of the way, they are almost certain to be mischievous to you."

What a pleasant lot of maxims Todd had, and what a beautiful system of moral philosophy his was, to be sure!

One thing was quite evident, and that was that he fully expected and dreaded the visit of Mrs. Lovett upon money matters. It will be recollected that ten o'clock was named as about the hour when that lady was to bring in her little account in the partnership affair of Todd, Lovett, & Co.; and as he (Todd) had for once in his life been fairly bothered to make any further excuses to so pertinacious a creditor as Mrs. Lovett, he had hit upon the plan of trying to put her off during the day by one means or another, and at night he would, at an earlier hour than he had before intended, be off and away.

Everything was in readiness, and he considered Mrs. Lovett his only hindrance — a danger he scarcely thought her — for, at the very worst, he could not conceive that even her passion would be sufficient to induce her to sacrifice herself, for the sake of revenge upon him.

His house was prepared so that a match would at any moment suffice to give the touch that would set it in a blaze; and then, as he said — "Who shall say where the conflagration among the old well-dried wooden houses of Fleet-street may reach to?"

His passage in the Hamburgh ship was secure — the fearful proceeds of

his life of rapine and murder were in her hold. How uncommonly safe Todd thought himself, and how well he considered he had managed his affairs.

Short-sighted mortals that we are! How often we mistake the shifting morass of difficulty for the *terra firma* of prosperity, and how often do we weep for those events, which, in themselves and their results, form the ground-work of the happiness of a life! Truly we are —

"Such things as air is made of."

If Todd now for one moment could have imagined that his plunder, which he believed was so safe on board the Hamburgh ship, was actually, on the contrary, at the office of Sir Richard Blunt, in Craven-street, what would have been his sensations? Would he have laughed and sniggered over the bumper of brandy he was holding to his lips in his parlour? No, indeed.

If he could but have guessed that the ship in which he had intended to embark, was then twenty-four hours on her route, and battling with the surging waves of the German Ocean, how would he have felt!

Strange to say, he never had felt so confident of success and triumph as upon that day. He could have said with Romeo in Mantua —

*"My bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne,"**

— while, like Romeo, he was on the eve of a blow that at once was to topple to the dust the very structure of all his hopes. He of course fully expected a visit from Mrs. Lovett, but he did hope that she would take an answer from Charley, and go away again. If she did not he trusted to the inspiration of the moment to be able to say something to her which might have the effect of producing that which he wanted only — namely, delay.

CHAPTER XCIII.

SIR RICHARD BLUNT'S SUBTERRANEAN EXPEDITION.

WHILE TODD IS THUS WAITING ANXIOUSLY for the arrival of his old ally in iniquity, but who now he considered to be his most deadly foe, and his worst possible hindrance to carry out his deeply — by far too deeply — laid schemes,

** Act V Scene I. These were the words spoken by Romeo after waking up from a "dream" that Juliet had come and found him dead.*

we shall have time to take a peep at some proceedings of Sir Richard Blunt's, which are rather entertaining, and decidedly important.

Johanna had not been long gone from the fruiterer's shop, before Sir Richard said to the fruiterer —

"If you are ready we will go now to the church at once. I have left quite a sufficient guard over the safety of Miss Oakley, and besides this affair will not take us I daresay above a couple of hours."

"Not so long I think," replied the fruiterer. "I am quite ready, and no doubt your men are in the church by this time. They are apt to be punctual."

"They would not suit me for long if they were not," replied Sir Richard. "Punctuality is the one grand principle which is the hinge of all my business, and the secret of by far the larger portion of my success."

They walked rapidly up Fleet-street together, until they came opposite to St. Dunstan's Church, and then they crossed the road and tapped lightly at a little wicket in the great door of the building. The wicket was immediately opened by a man who touched his hat to Sir Richard.

"All right?" asked the magistrate, "and every one here?"

"Yes, sir. Every one."

"That will do then. Be sure you fasten the door in the inside, so that that troublesome beadle, if he should be smitten with a desire to visit the church, cannot get in; and if he should come and be troublesome, take him into custody at once, and shut him him up anywhere that may keep him out of harm's way for the next twelve hours or so."

"Yes, sir."

This man, whose business it evidently was to stay by the door, carefully fastened it, and Sir Richard Blunt with his friend from Fleet-street advanced into the body of the church. He had not gone far before a pew opened, and six persons came out. One of these was a well-dressed elderly man, who said, as the magistrate approached him —

"I have made all the necessary observations, Sir Richard, and am quite easy and confident that I can direct your men how to excavate directly to Todd's house."

"Thank you Sir Christopher," said the magistrate. "I am very much indebted to you for the trouble you have taken in this affair, which I think is now near its climax."

"I hope so, Sir Richard. This way if you please."

The whole party now proceeded to the same slab of stone which the magistrate had had before removed, for the purpose of making his inquiries below the surface of the earth. The slab was standing on its edge against a column of the nearest aisle, and the deep dark opening to the vaults was before them.

"There is but little foul air," said Sir Christopher. "The stone has been off they tell me many hours. Shall I go first, or will you, Sir Richard?"

"Allow me," said the magistrate; "should there be any risks, it is my duty first to encounter them."

"As you please, Sir Richard. As you please, sir. I willingly give place to you, because I know, if there be any difficulty how much better calculated you are than any one here to overcome it."

The magistrate made a slight bow to the compliment, and then taking a link in his hand, he descended the stairs leading to the vaults of St. Dunstan's.

It will be well recollected that he had been in those vaults before, and that he had made certain discoveries, which to a vast extent implicated Mrs. Lovett in the crimes of Sweeney Todd; but his object upon this present visit was of a different character. In plain language, this was an attempt to ascertain if there were any underground modes of communication between Todd's house, and the vaults of old St. Dunstan's church.

That there were some such subterraneous passages had become, after the most mature consideration, a firm conviction upon the mind of Sir Richard Blunt, and hence he had resolved upon such an exploration of the spot as should confirm or dispel the idea for ever.

Those whom he had with him, were all persons upon whom he could thoroughly depend; and the ancient architect, who had given his services, was to point out the exact direction in which to proceed.

Upon reaching the foot of the stone steps, instead of traversing the passage that led in the direction of Bell Yard, which he had formerly done, Sir Richard turned directly the other way, saying as he did so —

"This, I presume, will be our direction?"

"We shall see in a moment," said the architect. "I have taken the bearings so exactly, that I can point out to you the precise course."

He forced into the ground to a sufficient depth to make it stand steady, his walking stick, and then removing a little gold cap from the top of it, he disclosed a small compass, which after some oscillations, steadied itself.

"Then," said Sir Christopher, "through that wall would lead in a direct line to Todd's house."

"This will assist us," said Sir Richard. "We will, before we actually begin excavating, endeavour to find some of the vaults which may run in that direction, and so perhaps save ourselves an immense amount of labour."

"Very good," said Sir Christopher Wren, "I can at any time give you, from any place, the exact bearing of Todd's house, for I have it fixed in my mind, and can read it off from the compass plate in a moment."

They now at once made their way into the vaults, and by dint of keeping to the right hand, they avoided going much out of their course. These vaults were of great extent, and although some of them, owing to being full of the dead, had been bricked up, yet they were very easily opened, and in many cases a direct thoroughfare for considerable distances was affected.

Ever and anon the compass was appealed to, and showed them that they were approaching Todd's house.

One of the party, a well-dressed gentlemanly-looking man, now stepped forward, and said to Sir Richard —

"Here, according to the plans of the church, the vaults end."

"Then we can get no further?"

"Not an inch, Sir Richard."

"Then here commences in reality our mission, which is to try to discover some communication between the lower part of the house occupied by Sweeney Todd, and these vaults. Let us each use our utmost discrimination to affect that object."

He lighted for himself a small lantern, and commenced a rigorous search of the walls, but for some few minutes could find nothing to excite the least suspicion. At length he paused at one portion of one of the vaults, where a kind of wooden tomb had been erected close to the wall. A large piece of dirty oak was placed upright against the earth work.

"If there be any mode of leaving this vault, but the one we have entered," he said, "it is here."

At these words, so significant as they were of some discovery having been made by Sir Richard, all those who were with him made their way to that spot, and from their several lanterns, a glare of light was thrown upon the wooden monument.

"This," said the person who had before spoken of the plan of the vaults, "this is the monument of a Sir Giles Horseman, who was killed by accident and interred here about twenty-two years ago. It was a very unusual thing to make any such erection in a vault, but his widow wished it, and the authorities saw no good reason for interfering."

The monument had evidently consisted of an oaken kind of square ornamental tomb affixed to the wall, and extending out about six feet into the vault. That portion of it which did so extend into the vault had fallen in, but the piece of oak which had been originally affixed to the wall there remained.

"What leads you to suppose, Sir Richard," said the architect, "that this place will show us anything?"

"This," said the magistrate, as he picked up from amid the rubbish of the broken monument, a nearly new glove of thick leather. "How did this get here?"

The glove was passed from hand to hand, and duly examined. No one owned it, and the only remark that could be made upon it was, that it was of an immense size.

"Then," said Sir Richard Blunt, "since it belongs to none of us, I give it as my opinion that it belongs to Sweeney Todd, and has fallen from his hand in this place."

"It must be so," said the fruiterer. "I know of no hand in the City of London that such a glove would fit but his."

"But how came he here?" said Sir Christopher. "That is the question. How could he get here."

"We shall see," said the magistrate. "Lend me that small iron crow-bar, Jenkins."

The crow-bar was handed to Sir Richard Blunt, and at one touch with it down come the piece of oak that was against the wall. That was conclusive, for, instead of the solid wall beyond it, there was a deep crevice or opening just sufficient to enable one person to go through it.

"This is the place," said the magistrate.

There was a death-like silence among all present. Every ear was on the stretch, and every eye was fixed upon the narrow opening in the wall of the vault. It would almost seem as though every one expected Sweeney Todd to appear with one of his victims on his back that he had just, to use his own expressive phraseology, succeeded in polishing off.

Sir Christopher stuck up his compass again, and it was his voice that first broke the stillness.

"The route is direct," he said.

"To Todd's house?" asked Sir Richard.

"Yes, direct."

"Then all we have got to do is to follow it. It is an enterprise perhaps attended with some danger, and certainly with much horror, I think. Now, I do not ask any one to follow me, but go I will."

"I will follow you, Sir Richard," said the fruiterer. "I reside in Fleet-street, and rather than not ferret out such a villain as Todd from the neighbourhood, I would run any risks. I am with you, sir."

"And I," said Sir Christopher Wren.

"And I — and I," cried every one.

"Come on," said the magistrate. "Come on. I will take the small lantern, and if I meet Todd, my great aim will be to take him a prisoner, not to kill him; and mind all of you, if by any chance a scuffle with that man should ensue, it would be a scandalous cheating of the gallows to do him any injury that might even delay his execution. Now, come on."

It required no small amount of real courage to lead the way in that expedition into the very bowels of the earth, as it were; but with the small lantern elevated as far above his head as the roof of the passage would admit of, Sir Richard stepped cautiously and slowly on.

The excavation in which they were was roughly but well made. At intervals of about twelve feet each, there always occurred two upright pieces of plank supporting a third piece on the roof, and firmly wedged in, so that there was but little likelihood of a fall of earth from above.

Suddenly a scuffling noise was heard, and Sir Richard for a moment paused.

"What is it?" said the fruiterer.

"Only some rats," he replied. "I daresay there are plenty of such gentlemen in this quarter of the world, and probably they never saw so large a party here before. They are scudding along in a regiment here."

After going on for about twenty paces further, Sir Richard found a door completely blocking up the passage. By dint of careful investigation of it, he found it was locked, and the key in the other side of the lock. He pushed it through with some difficulty, and then, with a skeleton key, opened the door in the course of a few moments.

"Come on," he said. "Ah! this is a different place."

They now found themselves in some regularly constructed vaults, arched with stone, down the sides of which there rolled long streams of moisture. They were all quite at a loss to know what place they had got into, for they knew of nothing of the sort beneath Fleet-street, and they gazed about them with wonder.

CHAPTER XCIV.

IN THE VAULTS.

"WHO ON EARTH WOULD HAVE THOUGHT of vaults like these in such a situation?" said the fruiterer.

"They are," said Sir Christopher, "undoubtedly the remains of some public building, which probably at a very distant date has occupied the site above. They are well built, and really of considerable architectural beauty in some respects. I am quite pleased at the opportunity of seeing such a place."

"It looks," remarked the magistrate, "as though it had been long hidden from the world. It is such men as Sweeney Todd who find out more underground secrets in a month than we should in a lifetime; but I hope that we shall find out all his cleverness and most abhorrent iniquities now."

The air in this stone place was by no means very bad, and indeed, after the vaults, there was rather an agreeable damp kind of freshness in it; while it was evident, by the manner in which the lights burnt in it, that there was no want of vitality in its atmosphere. At first it was no easy matter to find any kind of outlet from the place. After some searching, however, another door was discovered, very similar, indeed, to the one that Sir Richard Blunt had opened with

the picklock, and that, too, was found to be locked on the other side, and the key, as in the former case, in the lock.

"All this locking of doors," said the magistrate, "was, I have no sort of doubt, to protect himself from any night visit upon the part of Mrs. Lovett, from whom I feel certain that Sweeney Todd has been expecting attempts upon his life, as much as to my own knowledge he has made attempts upon hers; but by some kind of fatality, or providence, they seem to be unable to harm each other."

"It is a providence," said Sir Christopher. "They must both suffer the penalty of outraging, as they have done, the laws of God and man; and the retribution would be by no means complete were they to fall by the hands or each other."

"I think you are right, sir," said the fruiterer.

The door which was now opened, only led to some other vaults, which somewhat resembled those the party had just left, only that they were by no means so lofty or so carefully constructed as they were; and before they had proceeded far, some evidences of habitation began to show themselves. Some old boots occupied a place in one corner, and some old hats, and other articles of clothing, were lying in a confused heap in another. Sir Richard Blunt looked upon all this as ample testimony that he was quite close to the abode of Sweeney Todd, and he accordingly turned to his friends, saying —

"It is necessary that we proceed with the utmost caution. I think, a very few steps will take us into the cellars of Todd's house, and the object now is not by any means to give him the least alarm, but merely to find out, if possible, by what means he murders and disposes of his victims."

Acting upon this caution, they extinguished all the lights, with the exception of one lantern, and that Sir Richard Blunt himself carried, as he still continued to head the expedition. Suddenly he came upon an arched doorway without a door; and hardly had he proceeded a few paces, when he saw something lying in a strange confused mass upon the floor, which, upon a closer examination, proved to be a dead body.

The reader will probably in this body see the spy who had been employed by Mrs. Lovett to see that Todd did not run away in the course of the preceding night.

The body was lying upon some stones, that seemed to have been placed one upon another in such a position that their most jagged corners and uneven surfaces should be uppermost. A glance at the roof showed a square, black-looking hole.

Sir Richard Blunt was upon the point of saying something, when overhead they heard the distinct tramp of a man. The magistrate immediately placed his finger upon his lips, and all was as still as the grave in that place. Presently they heard a voice, and they all knew that it was the voice of Sweeney Todd. It came from above, and reached their ears with sufficient clearness to enable them to catch the words —

THE BODY FOUND UNDER TODD'S HOUSE.

"Her death is certain if I can but get her to cross the threshold of this parlour!"

Then the pacing to and fro of that really wretched man continued. The few words that Todd had spoken, had been sufficient to convince Sir Richard Blunt of one thing, which was, that they were beneath the parlour, and not the shop. It was from the shop the people disappeared, so the heart of Todd's mystery remained yet to be reached. There was another small door-way a little to the left of where he stood, and Sir Richard, upon the impulse of the moment, passed through it alone. He came back again in a moment.

"Gentlemen," he whispered, "have we seen enough?"

They nodded, and without another word, he led the way back again from the dreary subterranean abode of murder. It was only to the fruiterer he whispered, after they had gotten some distance from the spot upon which the dead body lay —

"I know all."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. When we get back to your home, I will tell you. Let for the meantime the general impression be, that all there was to learn consisted of the secret of that square hole in the flooring of the parlour."

"Yes, yes! But there is more?"

"Much more. You and Sir Christopher at present, I think, are the only two persons I shall be communicative with. The whole world will know it all, soon enough, but long and old habits of caution, always induce me to keep my information as quiet as I possibly can."

"You are quite right, Sir Richard. Even I shall feel it to be no offence if you keep entirely to yourself what you have seen."

"No, no! I wish to avail myself of your advice, which has done me good service upon more than one occasion; so when we get to your house, we will talk the matter fully over."

By this time they had got so far from the immediate vicinity of Todd's house, that such excessive caution in conversing was no longer necessary, and the magistrate pausing, made a general remark to all.

"The less that is said about what we have seen here, the better it will be. Let me beg of every one not to give the smallest hint to any one, even in the most confidential manner, of the discoveries that have been made here to-day."

An immediate assent was of course given to this proposition, and in the course of five minutes they were all in St. Dunstan's church. It was something amusing to Sir Richard, at that moment, to notice the look of relief there was upon every countenance, now that the investigation into that underground and unknown region was over. Each person seemed as if he had just escaped from the toils and hazards of a battle. By a glance at his watch, Sir Richard ascertained that only one hour and a quarter had been consumed in the whole affair, and he was pleased to think how soon again he should be personally superintending the safety of Johanna.

Before, however, the party got half way to the door of the church, they heard a vociferous argumentation going on in that quarter, and the voice of the beadle, who was well known to Sir Richard, was heard exclaiming —

"I will come in. I'm the beadle. Fire! Fire! I will come in. What! keep a beadle out of his own church? Oh! Oh! Oh! Conwulsions conwulsions! It ain't possible."

"Gentlemen," said the magistrate, "we must repress our friend the beadle's

curiosity. Let us all say 'Hush' to him as we go out, and not another word."

This was generally understood, and they walked slowly in a kind of procession to the church door.

"Pitchforks and hatchets!" cried the beadle. "I will come in. Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes. Look at my hat and coat; I ain't a himposter, but a real beetle! Bless us, who is here? Why — why, there ain't no service nor a wedding. What a lot of folks. Have they been a grabbing of the Communion plate? Oh, murder, conwulsions, and thieves!"

Sir Richard went close up to him, and in the most mysterious way in the world, whispered in his ear "Hush."

"Eh?" said the beadle.

Sir Christopher took hold of him by the collar of the coat, and said — "Hush."

"Well, but — but — "

The fruiterer beckoned to him with great gravity, and when he come forward a pace or two, said — "Hush."

"But good gracious what am I to hush about? What is it all — what does it mean — tell us, for goodness gracious sake? I don't know anything; I'm an ass — an idiot. What am I to hush about — I shall sit upon no end of thorns and nettles, till I know. — What is it?"

"Hush! hush! hush!" said every one as he passed the now nearly distracted beadle, and finally there he was left in the church porch with nothing in the shape of information, but hush! The man who had been left by the magistrate as a sentinel at the church door, was the last to leave, and he took his cue from all the others; and when the beadle laid hold of him crying — "I'll take you up. I won't let you go," he gently sat him on the floor; and then saying "Hush!" away he went likewise.

The large slab in the church, that usually covered up the passage leading to the vaults, was left uncovered; but then the beadle perfectly understood that that was for the sole purpose of relieving the vaults, during the week, of the accumulation of mephitic vapours supposed to be in them; and at all events no impulse of curiosity could be sufficiently strong in him to induce so desperate a step as a descent alone into those dreary abodes of the departed; so that he was, in a manner of speaking, compelled to put up entirely with "Hush!" for his portion of the mystery.

Sir Richard bade good-day to every one but the fruiterer at the door of the church; and then with him he walked to his shop opposite to Todd's. Crotchet was close at hand, and he came into the shop, at a signal from the magistrate to do so.

"Is all right, Crotchet?"

"Right as a trivet, sir. Lord bless you about so much as a sneeze, but I'll find it out; and as for little Miss Thingamybob, he shan't hurt a hair of her pretty little bit of a head."

"That's right, Crotchet. Remember that the bringing to justice, with ample evidence of all his crimes, of Sweeney Todd, is a great object; but it is an infinitely greater one to preserve the life of Johanna Oakley."

"I knows it," said Crotchet.

"Resume your charge, then, Crotchet. All will be well, and this will be Todd's last day out of Newgate."

Crotchet nodded, and made his exit.

In the succeeding half hour, it would seem that Sir Richard Blunt made his old acquaintance, the fruiterer, thoroughly acquainted with all he knew of the way in which Todd got rid of his victims. What that way was will very shortly now appear; and we think it had better appear in this regular and most authentic narrative, than in a chance conversation between Sir Richard Blunt and his friend.

It was the special duty of one officer to come into the fruiterer's shop with a report and a description of whoever went into Todd's house, and now this man made his appearance.

"Well, Jervis," said the magistrate, "so Todd has a customer, has he?"

"I don't know, sir. It is a woman, well dressed, and rather tall than otherwise."

"Mrs. Lovett, without a doubt. No one need go and look after that lady, for I don't know any one, except you or I, Jervis, who is so capable of taking care of number one. Todd will find her a troublesome customer, and if she is at all the woman I take her to be, she will not go into his back parlour quite so easily as he would fain persuade her."

"Then no one need follow, sir?"

"No; but if the young lad comes out, you may just look in and ask some frivolous question to see what is going on. If the female is not in the shop — she is dead."

"Dead, sir!"

"Yes. She will not live a minute after she leaves the shop; but you may depend she will not do so; she is to the full as well acquainted with Todd as we are, so there is no sort of apprehension of *her* coming to any harm. I should indeed be sorry to lose her."

Sir Richard Blunt was right in his guess. It was no other than Mrs. Lovett, who, agreeably to her appointment with Todd, called upon him for her half of the plunder for the last few years.

CHAPTER XCV.

MRS. LOVETT IS VERY INTRACTABLE INDEED.

Before entering the shop, Mrs. Lovett hovered about it, peeping at the things in the window, and glancing about her as though she had some uncomfortable ideas in her mind concerning the place, and was coquetting with her feelings a little before she could make up her mind to go into it.

At length she laid her hand upon the handle of the door, and turned it. She stood upon the threshold, and her sharp glance at once comprehended that Todd was not there. Johanna advanced towards her, and waited for her to speak.

"Oh," she said. "Is Mr. Todd in?"

"No," said Johanna. "No, madam."

Johanna did not think it worth while at that time to expose herself to the great danger of disobeying Todd's positive commands, to say he was not at home, merely upon a point of punctilious truth. Mrs. Lovett looked keenly at her.

"So," she said, "he is out — is he?"

"Yes, madam."

"And you are Mr. Todd's boy?"

The emphasis which Mrs. Lovett placed upon the word boy, rather alarmed Johanna, and she was more terrified when Mrs. Lovett marched twice round her, as though she were performing some incantation, glaring at her all the while from top to toe.

Whatever was Mrs. Lovett's opinion of Johanna, however, she magnanimously kept it to herself; but the young girl had a sort of perception, that her suit had not escaped the keen and penetrating eyes of Mrs. Lovett. This conviction gave a great air of timidity to Johanna's manner in speaking to the bold bad woman who confronted her.

"And so he is out?" added Mrs. Lovett.

"Yes, madam."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Only a short time."

"Well, my principal business this day, is to see Mr. Todd. I have made such arrangements at home, that I can wait here the whole day if necessary, for see him I must — and see him I will; I had a sort of presentiment that he

might be out, notwithstanding I have an appointment with him."

With this Mrs. Lovett sat down and composed herself evidently for a long wait — she did not sit in the shaving-chair though. Johanna thought that as she passed it, she rather shuddered; but that might have been a mere fancy upon the part of our young friend. Mrs. Lovett was not exactly of the shuddering order of human beings.

"Did he say when he should return?"

"No, madam."

All these questions of Mrs. Lovett's were asked with a sneering kind of incredulity, that was quite sufficient to show Johanna how completely she disbelieved the statement concerning the absence of Todd. That she would wait until Todd was perforce obliged to show himself, Johanna did not doubt. There was something about the pale face and compressed lips of Mrs. Lovett that at once bespoke such a determination; but should any scene of unusual violence ensue, Johanna made up her mind to rush from the shop, if near the door, and if not able to do that, to cast a missile through the window, which she knew would bring her immediate help.

"How long have you been with Mr. Todd?" asked Mrs. Lovett of Johanna.

"Only a few days, madam."

"And what made you come?"

"My necessities, madam. I was in want of a situation, and Mr. Todd wanted an errand boy."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Lovett. "This is very strange." She rested her head upon her hand for a few moments, and appeared to be lost in thought, and at times Johanna could see that she was keenly eyeing her. Truly, Johanna had never felt so thoroughly uncomfortable since she had been in Todd's shop, for she could not but feel that she was discovered.

The only question was now whether, when she did see Todd, Mrs. Lovett would think it worth her while to speak of the affair at all. The probability, however, was that she was too much engrossed in the business that brought her there to pay more than a passing attention to a mystery which, to all appearance, could not in any way concern her.

But Todd all this while was a prisoner in his own parlour, and it may easily be imagined how he chafed and fumed over such a state of things. If any convenient mode of taking the life of Mrs. Lovett had but presented itself to him, how gladly he would have embraced it; but none did; and after enduring the present state of affairs for about a quarter of an hour, he coolly opened the parlour door and walked into the shop as if nothing were amiss.

Mrs. Lovett was not at all taken by surprise at this proceeding. She merely rose and took a step towards the door, as she said, in a cool sarcastic tone —

"I am glad you have come home."

"Come home?" said Todd, with a well-acted look of surprise. "Come home? What do you mean, my dear madam? I am particularly glad to see you, and was particularly desirous to do so."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, to be sure. Really, do you know, I told the lad here, to deny me to anybody but you."

"And he made the slight mistake of denying you to me only."

"Is it possible? — Can such things be? Oh, you careless rascal. Upon my word, some employers would pull your ears — that they would. I'm ashamed of you — that I am. Really, Mrs. Lovett, these boys are always annoying one in some way or another; but walk in, if you please — walk in, and we will soon settle our little affairs."

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Lovett, "I prefer the shop, Mr. Todd."

"You don't say so?"

"You hear me say so, and you might know by this time, that when I say anything — I mean it."

"Of course, Mrs. Lovett, of course," said Todd; "I know you for a lady of infinite powers of mind — of great susceptibility — of feeling — of uncommon intellect and thrift. Please to step into the parlour, and I will settle with you at once, for I believe you call for a small trifle that you are entitled to from me, Mrs. Lovett."

"I do call for what I am entitled to, and I will have it here."

"Charley, just go to St. Dunstan's, my lad, and bring me word the exact time; and then, you can do it all under one, you know, just walk down Fleet-market, and see if you can find any love-apples,* and if so, you can ask the price of them, and let me know."

"Yes, sir," said Johanna.

In another moment she was gone. Mrs. Lovett took another step nearer to the door, and actually laid her hand upon it to prevent it closing thoroughly. She did not think that she would be safe if it were shut; and then addressing Todd, she said —

"All disguise between you and I, is useless now, Todd. Give me my half of the money that has been earned by blood. It may have the curse of murder clinging to it, but I will have it — I say I will have it."

"Are you mad?"

"Not yet — not yet. But I shall be, and then it will be time for you to beware of me."

"Mrs. Lovett — Mrs. Lovett, is it not a melancholy thing, that you and I, who may be said to be at war with all the world, should begin to quarrel with each other? If we are not true to one another, what can we expect from others?

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* *"Love-apple" is an archaic term for a tomato.*

Have we not for so long carried on our snug little business in safety, merely because we were good friends?"

"No, Todd, no. We never were friends — you know that as well as I do. It is a principal of human nature, that those who are associated together for wicked purposes are never friends. You and I have not been exceptions to the rule. We hate each other — we always did and will, you know it."

"Dear, dear!" said Todd, lifting up his hands, and approaching a step nearer to Mrs. Lovett. "This is afflicting — this is truly afflicting to hear such words from you, Mrs. Lovett."

"Keep off — keep off, I say! Another step, and I will at once into the street, and then to the passers-by scream out for public vengeance upon Todd the murderer!"

"Hush! — hush! God of Heaven! woman, what do you mean by speaking of murder in such a tone?"

"I mean, Todd, what I say; and what I threaten I will do. Keep off — keep off! I will not have you another step nearer to me with that hang-dog look."

"Moderate your tone, woman!" said Todd, as he stamped upon the floor of the shop; "moderate your tone, woman, or you will destroy yourself and me."

"I care not."

"You care not? — what do you mean by that? Have you gone mad in earnest? What do you mean by you care not? Has the scaffold any charms for you?"

"It might have for once, with you for a companion on it, Sweeney Todd; but if I am desperate and reckless, you have yourself to thank for it. Well you know that, Todd. I have toiled, and sinned, and murdered, for what you have done the same, for gold! — Gold was the God of my idolatry, and it was yours. We both seized the same idea. We both saw how gold alone was worshipped in the land. We saw how Heaven was affected to be worshipped by all; but we found out that gold was the real divinity. We saw that it was for the lucre of gain that the priest clothed himself in the garments of his pretended ministry, and spake his mock prayers to the people. We saw that it was for gold only that the rulers of the land struggled and fought. We found that the love and the worship of gold was the true religion of all; and we sought to possess ourselves of the idol."

"Mad! — mad!" cried Todd.

"No, I speak sanely enough now. I say, we found out that by the possession of gold in Christian, canting, religious, virtuous England, we should find many worshippers. We found out that thousands upon thousands would bend the knee to us on that account, and on that account only. If we were paragons of virtue, we might rot and starve; but if we were monsters of vice, if we had but gold, and kept but by the side of the law, we should be kings — emperors upon the earth."

"Bah! bah! bah!" cried Todd.

"Well, we took a royal road to our object. We murdered for it, Todd. You dipped your hands in gore, and I helped you. Yes, I do not deny that I helped you."

"Peace, woman!"

"I will not hold my peace. The time has come for you to hear me, and I will make you do so. I will speak trumpet-tongued, and if you like not that word murder, I will shriek it in your ears. If you like not the word blood, I will on the house-tops proclaim and tell the people that it is synonymous with Todd. Ha! ha! You shrink now."

CHAPTER XCVI.

THE BOAT ON THE RIVER.

TODD DID SHRINK AGHAST. This wild vehemence of Mrs. Lovett's was something that he did not expect. Every word that she uttered filled him with alarm. He began really to think that she had gone mad, and that he might have everything to dread from her wild vehemence, and that probably he had gone too far in cheating her out of the result of her labours.

"Peace," he said. "Peace, and you shall be satisfied."

"I will be satisfied."

"Well, well, of course you shall. But you cannot be if you destroy both yourself and me, which your present conduct threatens."

"I tell you I joined with you in murder for the love of gold, and I will have my recompense. Give me that which is mine own. I will have it, or I will drag you with me to the halter. Do you understand that, Sweeney Todd? I ask you, do you understand that?"

"It is plain enough," said Todd.

"Then give me my gold — gold for blood. Give it to me, and let me go."

"You are really so precipitate. Upon my word, Mrs. Lovett, you are quite an altered woman, that you are. I certainly never did expect to hear such language from you. Any one would think that you had an idea I meant to cheat you."

Mrs. Lovett made an impatient gesture, but Todd continued —

"Now, anything more repugnant to my feelings than that could not possibly be, I assure you; and I consider you fully entitled to £22,000 8s. 3d., which is precisely your half of the proceeds of the little business."

"Give me the money."

"Now, do you suppose, Mrs. Lovett, that I am so green as to keep here in the house no less a sum than £22,000 8s. 3d.? You really must think I have taken leave of my senses, to dream for one moment of such a thing."

"Where is it, then? — where is it? I see you are bent upon driving me mad."

"Why, really, Mrs. L., it would be insulting you to say that you were perfectly in your right senses at this moment; but come, sit down, and we will see what can be done. Sit down, and compose yourself."

"In the shaving chair?"

"Ha-ha, that's a good joke. In the shaving chair! Ha-ha! No Mrs. L., I don't exactly want to polish you off. Sit down where you like, but not in the shaving chair, if you don't fancy it, Mrs. L. Pray sit down."

"For you to cut my throat?"

"What?"

"I say, for you to cut my throat? Do you think I am not sharp sighted enough to see that razor partially hidden in your sleeve? No, Todd, I am well aware that you are panting to murder me. I tell you I know it, and it is useless your making the faintest attempt to conceal it. The fact is broad and evident; but I am upon my guard, and I am armed likewise, Todd."

"Armed?"

"Yes, Todd, I am armed, and you are terrified at the idea, as I knew you would be. Nothing to you is so horrible as death. You who have sent so many from the world, will yourself go from it howling with fright. I am armed, but I do not mean to tell you how."

"You are wrong, Mrs. Lovett. What on earth would be the use of my taking your life?"

"You would have all then."

"All? What do I want with all? I am not a young man now, and all I wish is the means of enjoyment for the remainder of my days. That I can well command with a less sum than my half of that which we have to divide will come to. I have no one that I care to leave a sixpence to, and therefore what need I trouble myself to hoard? You are quite mistaken, Mrs. Lovett."

"Give me my money then."

"I will, of course; but I tell you it is at the banker's, Messrs. Grunt, Mack, Stickinton, and Fubbs. Yes, that is the name of the highly respectable firm in whose hands for the present both my money and yours is deposited; and from the high character of the house, I should say it could not possibly be in safer hands."

"My share will be quite safe with me, or if unsafe, you need not care. I will have it."

"Step into the parlour, and I will write you an order for your half, and you can get it in half an hour."

"No Todd. You will make the attempt to murder me if I step into the parlour. I will not even come further into your shop, than here upon the threshold of it, with the door in my hand. Why do you keep a razor concealed in your sleeve?"

"Oh — I — It's a little habit of mine; but allow me to assure you how very incorrect your suspicions are, Mrs. Lovett; and if you will not come in, I will write the order, and bring it to you; or what do you say to my going with you to the bankers, where you can yourself ask what is the amount of the sum standing in my name there; and when you have ascertained it, you can have half of it to a sixpence."

"Come, then. I confess, Todd, I am sufficiently suspicious of you, that I would rather not lose sight of you."

"Dear me, how dreadful it is for friends to be in such a state of feeling towards each other, to be sure. But the time will come, Mrs. Lovett, when you will see my conduct in a different light, and you will smile at the suspicion which you say you now entertain, but which sometimes I cannot help thinking are not the genuine sentiments of your heart."

"Come — come, at once."

"I must wait for the boy; I cannot leave the shop until the boy is here to mind it in my absence. — Oh, here he is."

At this moment, Johanna, who had not troubled herself to go to the market at all, came back.

"Well, what is the exact time," said Todd, "by St. Dunstan's?"

"A quarter-past eleven, sir."

"How very satisfactory. I am only going a little way with this lady, and will soon be back. You can keep up the fire, Charley, and in that corner you will find some religious tracts, which will I hope improve your mind. Above all things, my lad, never neglect your religious exercises. I hope you said your prayers last night, Charley?"

"I did, sir," said Johanna, and she said it with a look that added the query, "did you say yours?"

Todd hesitated a moment, as though something were passing through his mind respecting Johanna, and then he muttered to himself —

"There is time enough, yet."

No doubt he had begun to entertain serious suspicions of Master Charley, and in those few words was alluding to his intention of taking his life before the coming night.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Lovett," said Todd, as he put on his hat, and pressed it down unusually over his brows, "I am ready."

"And I," she said.

Todd only glanced round the shop, to be certain that he had left everything as he wished it, and he tried the parlour door. Then he at once stalked into Fleet-street, followed by Mrs. Lovett.

"It will look better for you to take my arm," he said.

"I don't care how it looks," she replied. "All I want is my money. Do not touch me, or you will see good cause shortly to me having done so. Go on and I will follow you; but if you attempt to escape me, I will raise the street in pursuit of you, by screaming out that you are Todd the mur—"

"Hush—hush, woman. Do you know where you are?"

"Yes, in the street, but I do not care. All I want is my money, and I will have it."

"Curses on you and your money too," muttered Todd, as he crossed Fleet-street, and turned up Bridge-street at a rapid pace. He passed all the turnings leading to the city, and kept on his way towards the bridge.

Mrs. Lovett followed him closely.

"Stop!" she said. "Stop!"

Todd stopped and turned about. He was mortally afraid that she would carry out some of her threats if he exhibited anything of a restive spirit towards her.

"Whither are you going?" she said. "This is not the way to the City."

"It is by the Thames."

"By the Thames?"

"Yes, I go by water; I do not wish to run the risk of meeting all sorts of people in the streets. I have not communicated to you that we are in great danger, but it is a fact. I do not now think that I shall get fairly off, but you will, if I am not interfered with before you get your money. By taking a boat at the stairs here by Blackfriars Bridge, we can be landed at a spot within about twenty yards of the banking-house, which will be by far the safer route."

Mrs. Lovett did not much fancy the river excursion; but she considered that after all there would be a waterman in the boat, and that the river at that time of the day was populous, so she thought that Todd dared not attempt anything.

"Very well," she said; "so that we are quick, I care not."

"I am to the full," said Todd, "as anxious as you can be to get the job settled."

Mrs. Lovett thought that there was something ominous in the way in which he pronounced the word "job;" but then she thought perhaps she was too critical, and she followed him to the stairs by the side of the old bridge, certainly not without suspicions, but they were only general ones. The idea struck her, however, that she should be safer with two watermen, and she said—

"We will have two men, and by so doing we shall go quicker down the stream."

"So we shall," said Todd; "it is a good idea. Hilloa! first oars, here—first oars!"

"Here you are, sir," said a waterman.

"We want a couple of you," said Todd.

"Yes, your honour. Here we are—me and my mate. All's right, your honour. Now, Bill, look alive.—Mind the step, ma'am. That's yer sort. Where to, your honour?"

"To Pigs Quay."

"Ay, ay. Give way, Bill, give way. A nice day for the water, your honour; a fine fresh air, and not too much of it. Easy, Bill."

"Very," said Todd, as he took his place beside Mrs. Lovett in the stern of the boat, which in a moment, propelled by the vigorous strokes of the two rowers, shot out into the middle of the stream. He whispered to Mrs. Lovett—"Now, how delightful it would be if you and I, with all our money, were going from England to-day!"

"No."

"No? Why, I cannot conceive anything more pleasant. Ha! ha!"

Both Todd and Mrs. Lovett were so much occupied in watching each other, that they did not perceive another boat push off from the same stairs at which they had embarked with two men in it, and which kept in their wake pretty closely. The two watermen of Todd's boat, however, saw it, and they looked at each other, but they said nothing. They went upon the wise plan, that it was no business of theirs; and so they pulled away, while Todd glanced uneasily into the pale face of Mrs. Lovett.

To say that Mrs. Lovett kept an eye upon Todd, would be but faintly to express the feline-like watchfulness with which she regarded him, as they sat together in the boat. There was not the slightest movement of his eye—the least twitch of a muscle of his face, that she did not observe, and strive to draw some conclusion from; and he felt that his very soul was being looked into by that bold woman, who had been the companion of his iniquity, and whom he was now plotting and planning, by some mad desperate means, to deprive of her share of that ill-gotten wealth, which never in this world, even if ten times the amount, could make either of them happy.

CHAPTER XCVII.

THE ATTEMPTED MURDER ON THE THAMES.

THE BOAT THAT FOLLOWED TODD DID NOT, after a time, keep quite in the wake of the one containing him and Mrs. Lovett. It rather went on a line

parallel to it, but it kept at a convenient distance; and there were those in that boat, who never took an eye off Todd and his female accomplice.

It must not be for one moment supposed that Mrs. Lovett was quite deceived by Todd's representations concerning the money; but then it must be considered that, with all her cunning, that lady was in a very difficult position indeed — one that it was impossible to change for the better.

If she had boldly told Todd that she doubted — nay, that she absolutely disbelieved all that he said about the money being lodged with a firm in the city, she gained nothing, but simply placed herself in a position that forced upon her some violent action.

What that action could be would have been Mrs. Lovett's great difficulty. Of course she would have had no trouble in the world in going at once to a police-office, and denouncing Todd. That, to be sure, would have been a great revenge; but then, in the midst of all her anger, she did not forget that by so doing she had to criminate herself, and from that moment put an end to all her dreams of revelling in some foreign land upon the produce of her crimes.

Situated, then, as she was, Mrs. Lovett felt that she had no sort of resource but to follow Todd up, as it were — to keep close to him, and partly to worry him, and partly to shame him into doing her justice. Well she knew that he was upon the point of fleeing from the scene of his iniquities; and well she knew what a hindrance it would be to his arrangements to have her at his elbow continually.

And so she thought that he would see it was better to pay her, and be rid of her, and so every one would have thought; but Todd's nature was of that mad implacable character, that anything in the shape of opposition only made a wish a passion.

"I will not pay her," he muttered to himself, "if my refusal so to do brings us both to the gallows!"

If Mrs. Lovett could have dived sufficiently deep into Todd's mind to be aware of this sentiment, she might have changed her tactics; but who could have thought it? Who could have supposed that any passion but self-preservation could master all others in his mind?

The two boats sped on towards London Bridge — not the elegant structure that now spans the Thames, but the previous one, with its narrow arches, and its dangerous fall of water when the tide was ebbing, which was the case upon this occasion.*

The watermen looked uneasily at the arch through which it would be necessary to go, and where the tide was raging with unexampled fury, and lashing the sides of the arch like a mill-stream, bearing upon its surface millions

* *The water level on the upstream side of the old London Bridge was sometimes as much as five feet higher than the level on the lower side, creating a roaring cataract under the arch.*

of bubbles, and making such a seething roaring sound, that it was a point of attraction to some idle chance passengers upon the bridge to watch any adventurous wherry as it shot through the dangerous passage.

"A rough tide, Bill," growled one of the watermen.

"Ay," said the other. "Do you want to go through the bridge, master?"

Todd smiled grimly as he replied by asking a question.

"Is it dangerous?"

"Why, you see, master, it may be or it may not. But we are not the sort to say no, if a fare says as he wants to go through the bridge. To be sure there be times when there is a squall upon the river, and then any man may say no."

"But that is not now," said Todd.

"No, master, that is not now, so if you must go through the bridge, only say so, and through we go. We have been lots o' times when it's as bad, aye, and perhaps a trifle wusser than it is now. Haven't we, Bill?"

"Aye, aye."

"If," said Todd, "the lady has no particular objection."

"Can we not land upon this side of the bridge?" said Mrs. Lovett.

"In course, ma'am," said one of the boatmen. "In course, ma'am."

"But," added Todd hastily, "we must, then, until to-morrow, abandon the business upon which we came, as landing upon this side of the bridge will not suit me by any means."

"Pass through," cried Mrs. Lovett sternly. "I for one will not abandon the business upon which I came, except with my life. It is more than life to me, and I will go upon it, let it lead me where it may."

"And I," said Todd, in a voice of great indifference, "I, too, am of precisely that opinion. So through the bridge we must go at any risk, if you, my men, will take us."

"Pull away, Bill," was the only reply of the waterman. "Pull away, Bill, and keep her steady. On we go."

By this time a curious throng of persons had assembled on the bridge to watch the wherry, for previous to its approach two others had declined the dangerous passage of the arch, and had landed their passengers at a small stairs some distance from the strong eddying current that leaped and bubbled through the arch. It was therefore something of a treat for the crowd to see their boat make for the dreaded spot, an evident determination on the part of the rowers to shoot through the arch of the bridge if it were possible so to do.

No one spoke on board the boat. The watermen pulled very steady into the current, keeping over their shoulders a wary eye upon the head of the boat. Todd's eyes gleamed like two coals of fire, and Mrs. Lovett was as pale as death itself.

Perhaps at that moment she reflected that she had trusted herself with all her sins on board that little boat amid the wild rush of waters; but if she did,

she said nothing. Neither by word nor by action did she give indication of the fear that was tugging at her heart.

And now the little wherry was floating in the boiling surge that flew towards the arch, and made when it got there such a battle to get through. There was no occasion for pulling. The only good they could now do with their oars was to steady the little craft, and so far as was possible to keep her head to the current.

That this was done by the two watermen with admirable and practised skill, every one who watched the progress of the party from the bridge or elsewhere could perceive; and now the critical moment was at hand, and the boat being caught like a reed, was swept under the bridge by the rapid current.

"Easy, Bill," cried one of the men.

"Easy it is," said the other.

"You will upset us, my dear madam," said Todd, "if you move;" and then, while the two men were fully engaged with the boat, and by far too much occupied with the necessary movements for the preservation of themselves and their little craft, Todd, with one blow upon the head, struck Mrs. Lovett overboard.

She uttered a piercing shriek.

"What's that? — what's that?" cried the boatmen.

The boat scraped against the side of the arch for a moment, and then shot through it with a terrific bound into the comparatively still water on the other side of the bridge.

"I'm afraid," said Todd, "that the lady has fallen overboard."

"Afraid!" cried one of the watermen. "Why, good God! don't you see she has; and there she goes, along with the stream. Pull away, Bill; don't you see her? There she goes!"

"Alas, poor thing!" said Todd.

He affected to be overcome by his feelings, and to be compelled to rest his head upon his hands, while he kept his hot-looking blood-shot eyes fixed upon the form of Mrs. Lovett in the water.

And now a scene ensued of deep interest to Todd — a scene which he watched with the greatest attention. It was a scene upon the issue of which he felt that his life depended.

If Mrs. Lovett were saved, his life would not be worth an hour's purchase. If she were drowned, he was, so he fancied, a free man; and he saw that from the shore several boats put off after her, while the two men in his wherry pulled as though their lives depended upon hers.

Todd could have struck them for the exertions that they were making, but he dared not even speak one deprecating word to make them pause. He was condemned only to watch what was going on; and truly a most interesting scene it was.

OLD LONDON BRIDGE — TODD TRIES HIS MURDEROUS HAND ON MRS. LOVETT.

Mrs. Lovett had on a large cloak, and it was by the aid of that, as well as by the strength of the current, that she floated so long as to make it quite remarkable, and to induce the opinion in the minds of some of the spectators that she was swimming.

Suddenly, just as a boat that had put off from the stairs by the Custom House reached her, down she went.

"Gone!" said Todd.

"Yes, she's gone," said one of the watermen. "She's gone, poor thing, whoever she was, and no one will get her now."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Ah, master, as sure as may be; but you are a witness that it was no fault of ours, master."

"Certainly," said Todd. "The fact is, that she got alarmed the moment the boat shot under the arch, and rose up. I tried to catch her, but she toppled over into the water."

"Natural enough, sir. If she did get up, over she was sure to go. Did you hear what a shriek she gave, Bill? My eye, if I don't dream of that, I'm a Dutchman! I fancy it is ringing in my ears. Yet I have heard a few odd sounds on the river in my time, but that was the very worst."

"And she is gone," said Todd. "Why does that boat linger there upon the spot where she went down? Stay — stay, I cannot see if you pull into shore so quick. Now that barge is between me and the boat."

"There's nothing to see now, sir."

"Well — well. That will do — that will do. Poor creature! Viewing it in one way, my friends, it's a happy release, for she was a little touched in her intellect, poor thing; but it's dreadful to lose one to whom you are much attached; notwithstanding, I shall shed many a tear over her loss, and of the two I had really much rather it had been myself. Alas! alas! you see how deeply affected I am!"

"It's no use grieving, sir."

"Not a whit — not a whit. I know that, but I can't help it. Take that and divide it between you. I give it to you as a kind of assurance that it is not your fault the poor thing fell overboard."

"Thank your honour," said the man in whose huge palm Todd had placed a guinea. "We may be asked who you are possibly, sir, if the body should be found."

"Oh, certainly — certainly," said Todd, "that is well thought of. I am the Rev. Silas Mugginthorpe, preacher at the new chapel in Little Britain. Will you remember?"

"Oh, yes sir. All's right."

Todd ascended the slippery steps of the little landing-place with an awfully demoniac chuckle upon his face, and when he reached the top of them he struck his breast with his clenched hand, as he said in a voice of fierce glee —

"'Tis done — 'tis done. Ha, ha, ha! 'Tis done. Why, Mrs. Lovett, you have surely been singularly indiscreet to-day. Ha, ha! Food for fishes, if fishes can live in the Thames. Ha, ha! Farewell, Mrs. Lovett, a long farewell to you. So — so you thought, did you, to get the better of Sweeney Todd? To stick to him like a bear until he should be compelled to, what you called, settle with you? Well, he has settled with you — he has! Ha, ha!"

Thus in wild ferocious glee did Todd walk through the city back to his own house after perpetrating this the worst murder, if there can be at all degrees in murder, that he had ever done. People got out of his way as they heard his wild demoniac laugh, and many, after one glance at his awful face, crossed over to the other side of the street with precipitation.

"Good-day, Mrs. Lovett," he kept muttering. "A charming day, Mrs. Lovett, and charmingly you look to-day, only a little swelled and bloated with the water. You wish me to settle with you? Oh, of course, I will settle with you before we part. Ha, ha!"

Todd had never been so thoroughly pleased in all his life. More than once he stopped in the street to laugh, and twice on his route he called at noted hostels in the city to refresh himself with a glass of something strong and hot. He fancied that he wore upon his countenance quite an amiable aspect, and if one can fancy the devil himself looking sentimental, or an ogre looking religious and humane, we may have some sort of mixed idea of how Todd looked when he was amiable.

In this blissful condition he reached Fleet-street, and just as he crossed the way from Ludgate Hill to the top of Fleet Market he was accosted by a miserable-looking woman in widow's weeds, with a girl in one hand and a boy in the other. They were begging, that was evident, for each of the children, and genteel pleasant-looking children they were, although now dejected by destitution, had upon its breast a little written paper with the one word, "Want" upon it. That word ought to have been sufficient to unlock the hearts of the passers by, and yet how the crowd hurried on!

"Oh, Mr. Todd," said the woman, "can you spare a trifle for the little ones?"

"Who are you," he said, "that you address me by my name, woman?"

"My name is Cummins, sir. Don't you recollect how my poor husband, John Cummins, went out one day about a month ago, to carry the watch-cases he had to polish to his employers, saying that he would call at your shop and be shaved before he went into the city, and didn't call, sir, as you kindly told me, but has never been heard of since? The city people will have it that he ran away; but ah, sir, I know him better. Would he run away from me and from those that he loved so well? Oh, no — no — no, I know John better."

CHAPTER XCVIII.

JOHANNA HAS A VISITOR WHILE TODD IS GONE UPON THE RIVER.

"WELL?" SAID Todd.

"Well, sir, I was thinking that — that you might spare a trifle for the children, sir. They are starving — do you hear, Mr. Todd? — they are starving, and have no father now."

"What was the value of the watch-cases your husband had with him, Mrs. Cummins, when he disappeared?"

"About a hundred pounds, sir, they tell me. But don't you believe, sir, for one moment that John deserted me and these — ah no, sir."

"You really think so?"

"I am sure of it, sir, quite — quite sure of it. He loved me, sir, and these — he did indeed, sir. You will help us, Mr. Todd — oh, say that you will do what you can for us."

"Certainly, my good woman — certainly. What is this little fellow's name, Mrs. Cummins?"

"William — William is his name," said the poor woman, in such a flurry from the idea of what Todd was going to do for the children that she could hardly speak, but caught her breath hysterically. "His name is William, Mr. Todd."

"And this little girl, ma'am?"

"Ann, sir — Ann. That is her name, Mr. Todd. The same, if you please, sir, as her poor mother's. Look up, Ann, my dear, and curtsy to the gentleman. God bless you, Mr. Todd, for thinking of me and mine. God bless you, sir!"

"Ann and William," said Todd, "Ann and William; and very nice children they are, too, in my opinion, Mrs. Cummins."

"They are good children, sir." Mrs. Cummins burst into tears at the idea of what Todd was going to do for the children, for the whole of the parish was impressed with the idea that he was well to do. "They are very good children Mr. Todd; and although a charge to me, are still a blessing; for now that John is gone, they seem to hold me to the world, sir."

"Well, Mrs. Cummins, I am glad you have applied to me, for if you had not, I certainly should not have known the names of your children. As it is, however, whenever I pray, I will think of them, and of you; and in the meantime, I commend you to the care of that Providence which, of course, cannot permit the widow and the fatherless to want anything in this world, or the next either."

THE WIDOW ASKS FOR CHARITY OF HER HUSBAND'S MURDERER — TODD.

Todd walked leisurely on.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed. "Good again. What have I to do with charity, or charity with me? I am at war with all the world, and at war with Heaven, too, if there be one, which I will not admit! No, no — I will not admit that."

WHILE TODD WAS AWAY UPON THIS ERRAND of getting rid of Mrs. Lovett, which we have seen he has accomplished so much to his satisfaction, Johanna

was not entirely without visitors. The excellent watch that was kept upon the movements of Todd, in their minutest particular, by Sir Richard Blunt and his officers, let them know perfectly well that Todd was from home; but it was not from them that Johanna had her first visit after Todd was gone.

He had not left the shop above ten minutes when Johanna heard a mysterious noise outside the door of it. It sounded as if someone were scraping it with something. At first she felt a little uneasy at the sound, but as it increased she calmed herself, and resolved upon ascertaining what it was.

Turning to the door, cautiously she opened it a little way. That was quite sufficient to dispel any fears that she might have, for the paw of a dog was immediately thrust through the opening; and when upon this Johanna opened the door freely, Hector, with a loud bark, dashed into the shop.

So fierce was the dog's demeanour, that Johanna shrank aside, but master Hector saw with half an eye that he had frightened her, so he went up to her, and licked her hand in token of amity, after which he barked loudly at the shop, as though he would have said, "Mind though I am friends with you, I am still the uncompromising foe of all else in this place."

"Alas poor dog," said Johanna as the tears rushed to her eyes, "you will never see your master again."

The young girl's grief for the loss of her lover seemed all to be roused up freshly from the depths of her heart at this appearance of the dog, which she had some reason to believe had been the companion of Mark Ingestrie. She sat down upon the little stool by the fire, and covering face with her hands, she wept bitterly.

In the meantime, Hector, finding that Todd was not there to do battle with him, made up his mind for a grand rummage in the shop; and truly he conducted it with a perseverance and a recklessness of consequences that was wonderful. He was on the counter that ran along under the window — he was under it — he was on every shelf, and he tore open every cupboard; but alas! poor Hector could find no token of his lost master. At length the howling and the scratching that he made induced Johanna to look up to see what he wanted. She was rather appalled at the confusion he had created, and she could not think what he wanted until she found that there was a shelf at the top of the cupboard, that was equally out of her reach as it was out of his.

"I cannot help you, my poor friend," she said. "There seems to be nothing on that shelf."

Hector, however, having retired to a remote corner of the shop, and got on a chair in order that he might get a good look at the shelf, was of a different opinion; and, finding that he was not to calculate upon any help from Johanna, he made various springs up to the shelf with his mouth open, until at last he caught hold of a little bit of tape that seemed to be hanging over the edge of it.

The tape was attached to something, which Hector immediately, with a

loud bark of defiance, took possession of, partly by standing upon it, and partly by holding it in his mouth. Upon stooping to see what this was, Johanna discovered that it was a waistcoat of blue cloth.

At first Hector did not seem much to fancy even letting her look at it; but after looking intently in her face for a few moments, he very quietly resigned it to her, only he kept very close to it while she turned it round and round and looked at it. It might have been Mark Ingestrie's. It looked something like the sort of garment that a master mariner might be supposed to wear, and the evident recognition of it by the dog spoke wonders in favour of the supposition that it had belonged to his master at one time or another.

Johanna thought that in one of the pockets there seemed something, and upon putting in her hand she found a small piece of paper folded in four. To undo it was the work of a moment, and then she saw upon it the following words: —

"Mr. Oakley, Spectacle-maker, 33, Fore-street, City."

Her senses seemed upon the point of deserting her. Every object for a moment appeared to whirl round her in a mad dance. Who should know better — ah, who should know half so well as she — the handwriting which conveyed those few words to her senses? It was the handwriting of her lost lover, Mark Ingestrie!

"Hilloa! Pison, is you here?" cried a voice at the shop door at this moment.

Johanna started to her feet.

"Who are you? — what do you want?" she cried. "Murder! — murder! He has been foully murdered, I say; I will swear it — I — I — God help me!"

With the little scrap of paper in her hand, she staggered back until she came to the huge shaving-chair, into which she sank with a long-drawn sigh.

"Why, what's the row?" said the man, who was no other than Hector's friend, the ostler, from the inn opposite. "What's the row? Now what an out-and-out willain of a dog you is, Pison, to cut over here like bricks as soon as you can git loose to do so. Don't you know that old Todd is a busting to do you an ill turn some o' these days? and yet you will come, you hidiot."

"Mr. Todd is out," said Johanna.

"Oh, is he, my little man? Well, the devil go with him, that's all I say. Come along, that's a good dog."

Pison only wagged his tail in recognition of the friendly feeling between him and the ostler, and then he kept quite close to Johanna and the waistcoat, which the moment he saw her drop, he laid hold of, and held tight with such an expression as was quite enough to convince the ostler he would not readily give it up again.

"Now what a hanimal you is," cried the ostler. "Whose blessed veskut is that you as got?"

"He found it here," said Johanna. "Did you see his master on the day when he came here?"

"No, my little chap, I didn't; but I don't care who knows it — it's my 'pinion that whosomedever his master was, old Sweeney Todd, your master, knows more on him than most folks. Come away, Pison, will you?"

The dog did not now show much disinclination to follow the ostler, but he kept the waistcoat firmly in his grasp, as he left the shop after him. Johanna still held that little scrap of paper in her hand, and oh! what a world of food for reflection did it present her with. Was it, or was it not, an establishment of the fact of Mark Ingestrie having been Todd's victim? That was the question that Johanna put to herself, as through her tears, that fell like rain, she gazed upon that paper, with those few words upon it, in the well-known hand of her lover.

The more Johanna reflected upon this question, the more difficult a one did she find it to answer in any way that was at all satisfactory to her feelings. The strong presumption that Mark Ingestrie had fallen a victim to Todd had not been sufficiently obliterated by all that Sir Richard Blunt had said to her to free her mind from a strong bias to fancy anything that transpired at Todd's a corroboration of that fact.

"Yes," she said, mournfully, "yes, poor — poor Mark. Each day only adds to my conviction that you became this man's victim, and that that fatal String of Pearls, which you fondly thought would be a means of uniting us together by removing the disabilities of want of fortune, has been your death. That waistcoat, which your faithful dog has carried with him, is another relic of you, and this scrap of paper is but another link in the chain of circumstances that convinces me we shall never meet again in this world."

Poor Johanna was absolutely reasoning herself into an agony of grief, when the door of the shop opened, and an old man with white hair made his appearance.

"Is Mr. Todd within?" he said.

"No, sir," replied Johanna.

"And is it possible," added the old man, straightening himself up, "that I am disguised so well that even you do not know me, Johanna?"

In a moment now she recognised the voice. It was that of Sir Richard Blunt.

"Oh, sir," she said, "I do indeed know you now, and I am very — very wretched."

"Has anything new occurred, Johanna, to produce this feeling?"

"Yes, sir. The dog, that my heart tells me belonged to poor Mark, has been over here, and with a rare instinct he found a piece of apparel, in the pocket of which was this paper. It is in his writing. I know it too — too well to be denied. Ah, sir, you, even you, will no longer now seek to delude me with false hopes. But do not tarry here, sir; Todd has been long gone, and may at any chance moment come back again."

"Be at rest upon that point, Johanna. He cannot come back without my being made aware of it by my friends without. But tell me in what way you attach such serious importance to this piece of paper, Johanna?"

"In what way, my dear friend? Do I not say that it is in poor Mark's own handwriting? How could it come here unless he brought it? Oh, sir, do not ask me in what way I attach importance to it. Rather let me ask you how, otherwise than upon the supposition of his having become one of Todd's victims, can you account for its being here at all?"

"Really," said Sir Richard, "this Mark Ingestrie must have been a very forgetful young man."

"Forgetful?"

"Yes. It seems that it was necessary for him to carry your name and address in his pocket. Now if he had given such a slip of paper as this to another person for fear he should forget what was not so deeply imprinted in his memory I should not have wondered at it for a moment."

Johanna clasped her hands and looked the magistrate in the face, as she said —

"Then, sir, you think — that is, you believe — that — that this is no proof of poor Mark having been here?"

"As I hope for mercy in Heaven, it is to my mind a proof the other way, Johanna."

She burst into a passion of hysterical weeping. Sir Richard Blunt knew too much of human nature to interfere by word or gesture, with this effort of nature to relieve the overchanged heart, and he waited patiently, affecting to be looking upon some old prints upon the wall until he heard the sobs decrease to sighs. Then he turned with a smile to Johanna, and said —

"My dear girl, gather hope from that scrap of paper, not despair. Depend upon it, the address of your father held too conspicuous a place in the heart of him who loved you to require that it should have been written upon a piece of paper. You know that my theory on the subject is that Mr. Thornhill was actually sent to you by Mark Ingestrie, and that it was he who perished here."

"And Mark himself — if that were so?"

"His fate has still to be elucidated; but that he perished here I do not believe, as I have often told you."

"This is an exquisite relief," said Johanna, as she laid her hand upon her heart.

"Make much of it," said Sir Richard; "something even yet seems to tell me that you will be happy. I cannot think it possible that Heaven would permit such a man as Todd to destroy your earthly felicity. But how comes the shop in such confusion?"

"It was the dog. He would look everywhere, and I had not the heart nor the strength to prevent him. Todd has a horror of him; and fright will keep

him quiet when I tell him the cause of the mischief that is done here."

"Perhaps then it will be better to leave it as it is," said Sir Richard, "than awaken his suspicions by attempting to put the place to rights, in which you might fail in some particulars known to him. And now tell me, Johanna, what passed between him and this Mrs. Lovett?"

"But a few words, sir, before I was sent out. There is one thing though that I suspect, and that is that Mrs. Lovett has found out my secret."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, she regarded me with a strange gaze that made me feel that she penetrated my disguise. I know not if she will say as much to Todd, but one glance of his eye upon me when he returns will satisfy me upon that, I think."

At this moment a bugle sounded in Fleet-street.

"That is my signal," said Sir Richard. "Todd is coming. I will be close at hand, Johanna, lest Mrs. Lovett has told him your secret, and you should find yourself in any danger. Farewell! Heaven hold you in its keeping."

CHAPTER XCIX.

THE COOK FEELS THAT ALL THE WORLD NEGLECTS HIM, AND THEN HE GETS A LETTER.

SIR RICHARD BLUNT LEFT THE SHOP, and Johanna had just time to conceal the scrap of paper which she had found in the waistcoat, and to seem to be busy at the fire, when Todd made his appearance. She had never seen such a grim smile upon Todd's face as it now wore. He was for once in his life fairly pleased. When had he made such a morning's work as that? Not even in his acquisition of those fatal Pearls had he gained so much as by that one slight push that had sent Mrs. Lovett and her claims into the river so neatly.

No wonder Sweeney Todd was elated and delighted. He had all the money now to himself. There was no one now to say to him, "Where is my share?" He had all the produce of another's awful criminality to add to his own. Was he not thus a very happy man for a little while?

The sunshine of the heart was not a thing to last long in such a bosom as Sweeney Todd's. His was not that sweet and lasting hilarity of soul that can alone arise from a deep and sincere consciousness of right. No! The fierce delight of a successful stroke of villany may for a time resemble happiness, but

it is a resemblance as weak as that between the faint watery ray of a winter's sun and the full blaze of the god-like luminary in all the beauty of the vernal season.

But for the time, we say, Todd was pleased, and the demoniac triumph of his soul beamed forth from his eyes and played around the puckered corners of his huge mouth.

"Well, Charley," he said, "how goes it with you, my lad?"

Johanna stared as well she might to hear Todd speak in such a mild pacific sort of way.

"Sir?" she said.

"I say, how goes it with you, my good boy. How have you passed the time in my unavoidable absence upon a little business?"

"Quite tolerable, sir, thank you, with the exception that a dog pushed his way into the shop, and, as you see, sir, has made some confusion."

"A dog?"

"Yes, sir. A large one, black and white. I had no strength to turn him out, so he had his will in the shop, and tossed the things about as you see, sir."

"My malediction upon that confounded dog. He is mad, Charley, I tell you, he is stark, staring mad. Why did you not throw open razors at him until one had transfixed him?"

"I don't like touching the razors, sir."

"You don't — you don't? He! he! What will he think when one touches him?" muttered Todd to himself as he turned aside and made a movement as though cutting a throat. "You don't like touching the razors, Charley?"

"No, sir, I thought you would be angry if I had, so the dog had all his own way here. I would have put the place to rights, but I thought you ought to see it as it is."

"Right, my boy — right. To-morrow will be quite time enough to put it to rights. Yes, to-morrow. Has any one called, Charley?"

"No, sir."

"Well I am glad of that, for when one is off upon an action of charity one don't like one's business to suffer as well. It's quite unknown what I give away, and I always like to see the object myself, you know, Charley, as I find I can then better adapt my benevolence to their real wants, which is a great — a very great object."

"I should think it was, sir."

"You are a clever observant lad, Charley, and you will, when you leave me, I feel convinced, drop into a genteel independence. You will want for nothing then, I feel quite assured, Charley."

"You are very good, sir."

"I strive to be good, Charley, and by the help of the gospel we may all be good to some extent — sinners that we are. Now, simple as is, it's really a great

thing to be supplied in an unlimited manner with cold water."

"No doubt of it, sir."

"Well, I have supplied the person to whom my benevolence has extended this morning, with, I hope, an unlimited quantity, and always fresh. He!"

Todd here executed one of his awful laughs, and then went into his parlour grinning at his own hideous facetiousness over the murder he had committed. Johanna had managed to say, from time to time, what was expected by way of answer to him, but it was with a shuddering consciousness that he had been about some great crime that she did so; and when he had left the shop, she said faintly to herself—

"He has murdered Mrs. Lovett."

It was sufficient, if Todd went out with an enemy and came home jocular, to conclude what had happened. That person then might be fairly presumed to be no more, and hence, with a shudder of horror pervading her frame, did Johanna whisper to herself—

"He has surely murdered Mrs. Lovett."

THE FIRST THING THAT TODD DID when he was alone in his parlour, and the door fast, was to produce the memoranda he had made of all that he had to do previous to leaving England. One item ran thus:—

"Mem. To pay Mrs. Lovet in full."

After that item he wrote paid, and then he laughed again in his hideous way, and leaning his head upon his hand, or rather his chin upon it, he spoke in a chuckling tone.

"She will turn up some day—yes, she will turn up some day, and the swollen disgusting mass, that was once the bold and glittering Mrs. Lovett, will be pulled through the river mud by a boat-hook, and then there will be an inquest, and a verdict of found drowned, with a statement that the body was in too advanced a state of decomposition to be identified. Ha!"

Todd actually rubbed his hands together, and then he took a good drop of brandy, and felt himself quite a pleasant sort of character, and one upon whom the fickle goddess, Fortune, had taken to smiling in her most bland and pleasant way.

"When I am snug and comfortable at Hamburg," he said, "how eagerly I shall look for the London papers, to let me know how far the fire in Fleet-street, that is to happen to-night, has extended. How I shall laugh if it travel to the old church, and burns that down likewise. Ha! I think I shall take to laughing as a regular thing when I am fairly abroad with all my money, and safe—so safe as I shall be, so very—very safe."

Yes, there sat Sweeney Todd rejoicing. He might have said with Romeo in Mantua—

"My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne,
And all this day an unaccustomed spirit
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts."

But as it was with the young husband of the sainted Juliet, the day of reckoning was coming to Todd, and the spirit that spoke of comfort, joy, and security to his heart and brain, was after all a false one.

But we must leave Todd to his self-felicitations, while we request the reader's kind company to Bell Yard, for certain things had taken place in the establishment of Mrs. Lovett which it is highly necessary should find a place in this veracious and carefully collected narrative.

WHEN MRS. LOVETT, WITH A FULL NOTION of the projected perfidy of Todd, left home for the purpose of bringing that individual to a sense of his wrong doings, and insisting upon a settlement, she did not awaken popular remark or popular interest by shutting up her shop, but she took such measures as she believed would last very well until she got back again.

She was not sanguine upon the subject of getting back very soon, for she had made up her mind that back she would not come without the money.

Previously, then, to leaving, she sought the narrow opening in the strong iron-door through which she was accustomed to speak to the discontented cook, and fastening a bottle of wine by the neck to a piece of cord, she let it down into the prison-house of pie-manufactory, saying as she did so—

"I keep my word with you. Here is wine. I trust that you will keep your word with me. A batch is wanted at twelve to-day, as you know."

"Very well," said the cook. "Very well. They shall be ready. But you promised me freedom, Mrs. Lovett."

"I did, and freedom you shall have shortly. All you have to do now is to attend to business for a little while. When I ring at twelve, send up the batch."

"I will—I will. But yet—"

"What is it now?"

"If you only could fancy, Mrs. Lovett, what it was to pass one's time in this place, you would have some feeling for me. Will you send or bring me some real butcher's meat?"

Bang went the wicket-door, and the cook found himself once again shut out from the world in those dismal vaults of Mrs. Lovett's house.

"Twelve o'clock," muttered Mrs. Lovett, as she proceeded to her parlour. "I shall surely be home by twelve. Todd will find out that I am too persevering for him. His fears will force him to pay me, although his justice never would. I will threaten him into payment. The odious villain! to attempt yet to deprive me of all that I have toiled for, with the exception of what of late I have had the prudence to keep in the house!"

The next thing that Mrs. Lovett had to do was to get some one to

effectually mind the shop in her absence, and for that purpose she pitched upon a Mrs. Stag, a tall, gaunt-looking female, who acted as a kind of supernumerary laundress in Lincoln's Inn. With this person Mrs. Lovett felt that she need have no delicacy as regards locking-up and so forth; and as Mrs. Stag laboured under a defect of hearing, she would not be likely to pay any attention to what might take place below; but still Mrs. Lovett was determined to leave nothing to chance, and she left Mrs. Stag a note which was to go down on the movable platform to the cook in case she, Mrs. Lovett, was not at home at the twelve o'clock batch. This note contained the following words, which, as Mrs. Stag's parents and guardians had omitted to include reading in her education, were perfectly safe from her scrutiny—

"Send up the four o'clock batch, and you will be free within twenty-four hours from then."

This she concluded would keep him quiet; and within twenty-four hours Mrs. Lovett felt that her affairs must be settled in some way or another; so that it was a very safe promise, even if she had not still retained in her own hands the means of breaking it if there should be occasion so to do.

Truly, Mrs. Lovett was, in the full acceptation of the term, a woman of business.

Mrs. Stag was sure to look in the first thing in the morning upon Mrs. Lovett; so that as soon as that useful and submissive personage made her appearance in Bell Yard, she was duly installed in authority in the shop—the parlour being properly fastened up against Mrs. Stag and all intruders.

"You will be so good as to sit here until I come back, Mrs. Stag?" said Mrs. Lovett; "and sell as many pies as you can. I am going to the christening of a friend's child, who is anxious that I should be its godmother."

What a delightful godmother Mrs. Lovett would have made!

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Stag.

"I think I shall be back at twelve o' clock; but if I am not, you can let this note go down with the empty tray on the trap-door after you have slid off it the twelve o' clock batch of pies."

"Yes, ma'am."

"You will answer no questions to any one. All you have to say is, that I am out in the neighbourhood, and may come home at any minute, as indeed I may. I shall, of course, pay you, Mrs. Stag, for your whole day. Pray help yourself to a pie or two, as you feel inclined. Good morning."

"Good mornin', ma'am, good mornin'. She's a very pleasant woman," said Mrs. Stag, after Mrs. Lovett had left; "she's a remarkably pleasant woman. What a delicious pie, to be sure!"

Mrs. Stag was soon deep in the mysteries of a yesterday's-veal.

"It's very odd," added the laundress, as she wiped the gravy from the sides of her mouth; "it's very odd that Mrs. Lovett is so very particular in shutting

up her parlour always, when she might know what a likely thing it is that anybody may want to look at the drawers and cupboards. It's a most remarkable thing to think what she can have there that she will lock up in such a way."

Upon this, just with a faint forlorn sort of hope that the door might be left open, Mrs. Stag tried it, but it was fast; and, with a sigh of disappointment, she returned to her seat again.

In another moment a yesterday's-pork yielded up its fascinations to the appetite of Mrs. Stag.

This, then, was the sort of life that Mrs. Stag passed in the shop. Lamentations and gravy—gravy and lamentations; and while she was thus occupied, the cook was pacing the cellars in rather a discontented mood, with his hands behind his back, reflecting upon things past, present, and to come, and upon his own dismal situation in particular.

"I cannot stand this," he said, "I really cannot stand this. I have had promises from Mrs. Lovett of freedom, and I have had similar promises from he who came to the grating in the door, but none of the promises have been fulfilled. I cannot stand this any longer, it is impossible. I am driven mad as it is already. I must do something. I can no longer exist in this way."

The cook looked about him, as many people are in the habit of doing when they say they must do something, without having a very clear notion of what it is to be; but as he at length fixed his eye upon that piece of machinery, far up to the roof, by which the batches of pies went up to the shop, and by which flour and butter and other matters, always excepting meat, found their way down to him, an idea took possession of him.

What that idea was will show itself in another place.

CHAPTER C.

TODD TAKES HIS LAST WALK UP FLEET STREET AND TO BELL YARD.

THE TWELVE O'CLOCK BATCH OF PIES went up, and down came the little missive of Mrs. Lovett respecting the four o'clock lot to the cook; but no Mrs. Lovett made her appearance, to relieve Mrs. Stag from her duties in the shop.

"Ah," said that elongated lady, "it's all very well of Mrs. L. to say she would pay me for the day. I suppose she means to make a day of it, and that's the reason. Now, young man, what's for you?"

"A pork with a nob of veal in it to give it a relish," was the reply of the

young scion of the law, to whom Stag had addressed herself.

"Go along with you, I don't want none o' your impertinence."

"Now, ma'am, look alive. Two veals if you please. One pork — five porks — four veals. Do you make half a veal?"

"No we don't."

"A hot pork — three porks — two porks — eight veals. Don't be pushing in that way — four porks —" *smash*! — "There, now, I've dropped mine, and it's all along of you."

"Do be quiet," said Mrs. Stag, "gentlemen do be quiet; 'patience,' says Paul, 'and I'll soon serve you all.' What are you laughing at, you little jackanapes? You ought to be ashamed of yourself to be making faces at a female twice you age."

"And three times your size," said a voice.

There was a great roar of laughter at this, but by degrees poor Stag got through the business of the twelve o'clock batch, and sat down with a sigh, to console herself, by eating two or three of the most luscious-looking that remained.

"It ain't to be denied," said Stag, "but they are good. I never met with such gravy in all my life as is in 'em. Yes, they are first-rate. I'll just put one in the crown of my bonnet, for there's no knowing a minute now when Mrs. L. may pop in upon one at unawares-like. It's a comfort to have one of these pies, promiscous like, at one's hand, to lay hold of just in this sort of way, and pass in one's mouth in this kind of way. Oh, heart alive, but this is a good one. I declare the gravy is running out of it like water from a plug, when there's no house on fire, and it ain't wanted."

Mrs. Stag would have done very well indeed if she could but have got something to drink. That certainly was a drawback, that at first the lady's ingenuity did not present any means of speedily overcoming; but as necessity is the mother of invention, Mrs. Stag at last hit upon a plan.

"There's plenty of money in the till, of course," she said, "and suppose I stand at the door, and wait, till some wretch of a boy passes, and then give him a halfpenny for himself, just to run to the corner and get me a drop of something warm and comfortable."

Mrs. Stag had no sooner started this "suppose," than she felt a burning desire to carry it out; and accordingly, history says, that at a quarter to one she might have been seen at the door of Mrs. Lovett's pie-shop, with a shilling in one hand, a halfpenny in another, and a bottle concealed in her pocket, looking like an ogress at every boy who passed, and who looked as though he wanted a halfpenny, and consequently would go upon the secret message, for the purpose of earning one there and then.

Presently one came along the centre of Bell Yard, who seemed just the sort of person.

"Boy, boy!" cried Mrs. Stag.

"Well, old 'un," he replied, "what do you bring it in — Wilful Murder with the chill off, or what?"

"Don't be owdacious. If you want to earn a penny — I mean a half-penny — honestly, take this shilling and this bottle, and go to the corner, and get a quartern of the best."

"The best what?"

"Oh, you foolish boy. Gin, of course; but remember that my eye is upon you."

It was well that Mrs. Stag spoke in the singular regarding her optical organ, for she had but one. The boy professed a ready acquiescence, and away he went, with the bottle and the shilling. Alas! Mrs. Stag was left lamenting. He came not back again, and from thenceforward Mrs. Stag lost the small amount of faith she had had in boyhood. The well-concocted scheme had failed, and there she was, with countless halfpence in the till, and so thirsting for strong water, that she was half inclined to make a grand rush herself to the nearest public-house, and chance any one in the interim helping themselves to the pies ad-lib.

But she was not reduced to that extremity. Suddenly the window was darkened by a shadow, and through one of the topmost panes an immense hideous face, with an awful grin upon it, confronted Mrs. Stag.

The good lady was fascinated — not in an agreeable sense, but in quite the reverse — she could not take her eyes from off the hideous gigantic face, as it placed itself close to the frame of ill-made greenish glass, in order to get a good view into the shop.

"Goodness gracious, it's Luficer himself!" said Mrs. Stag. "I'm a lost woman. Quite a lost woman. I'm undone. It's Luficer himself, I'm sure and certain!"

Probably the hideous eyes that belonged to the hideous face, conveyed the impression to the brain behind them that Mrs. Stag was in a state of apprehension; for suddenly the face was withdrawn, and Todd — yes, Todd himself, for to whom else could such a face belong? — made his way into the shop.

Mrs. Stag groaned again, and in a stammering voice, said —

"If you please, sir. I — I ain't ready yet."

"Ready for what?" said Todd.

"To go to — to — the brimstone beds, if you please, sir. I haven't done half enough yet."

"Pho!" said Todd. "My good woman, you don't surely take me for the devil? I am an old friend of Mrs. Lovett's, and a neighbour. I have just stepped in to ask her how she does to-day."

Mrs. Stag drew a long breath of relief as she said —

"Well, really, sir, I begs your parding. It must have been the pane of glass that — that — that — "

"Threw my face out of shape a little," said Todd, making one of his most

hideous contortions, and finishing it off with a loud "Ha!"

Mrs. Stag nearly fell off her chair. But it was not Todd's wish to frighten her, although he had, in the hilarity of his heart, yielded, like Lord Brougham, to the speculative fun of the moment. He now tried to reassure her.

"Don't be at all alarmed at me, madam," he said. "Mrs. Lovett laughs often at my little funny ways. Is she at home?"

Todd knew what sort of home he had provided Mrs. Lovett with, and this visit to Bell Yard was one partly of curiosity and partly of triumph, to ascertain how she had left things in her absence from her establishment.

"No, sir," said Mrs. Stag, replying to the question of Todd; "she is not at home, sir."

"Dear me, I thought she was always in at this time of the day. When, madam, do you expect her?"

"Leastways," said Mrs. Stag, "I don't know, sir."

"Were you here, madam, when she left home?"

"Yes, I were."

"Oh, and did she leave any message, madam, in case Mr. Todd from Fleet-street should call? Pray recollect yourself, my dear madam, as it may possibly be important. I do not say that it is, but it may be."

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Stag; "oh dear, no. All she said was, that she was going to a christening."

"A christening? Ha! She has been christened!"

"Sir!"

"I only said she had been christened, and no stint of the water, that was all, madam; but I perfectly understand you. Mrs. Lovett has gone to the christening of some one of those sweet little innocents, all perfume and flabbiness, that take one's heart completely by storm. Ah, my dear madam, when one looks at the slumbering infant, how one feels an irresistible desire to smother it."

"Lor, sir!"

"With soft kisses, my dear madam. Only fancy me now a baby!"

Todd made so awful a contortion of visage contingent upon this supposition that poor Mrs. Stag, in the nervous condition which the whole adventure had thrown her into, nearly fainted right away. Indeed, the only thing that recovered her was hearing her visitor say —

"I am really very thirsty to-day. How do you feel, madam?"

These were delightful words.

"Oh, sir," she said, "how very odd. I am thirsty likewise."

"Well, that is remarkable," said Todd. "Now, my dear madam, I don't make a common thing of saying as much to anybody, but you, who are a lady evidently of refined taste and intellectual capabilities, I am sure, will understand me, and make allowances for my feelings when I say that I prefer to anything else — gin!"

"You don't mean it, sir?"

"Indeed, but I do."

"Oh, how could I mistake you for anything but a very nice man indeed, and a perfect gentleman. It's one of the most singular things in all the world, but I never do hardly take anything, yet what I do take is — is — "

"Gin."

Mrs. Stag nodded and smiled faintly.

"Well, my dear madam, I don't see why we should not have a drop while I wait for Mrs. Lovett. Don't you trouble yourself, my dear madam. Now really do not. I know that you will like to have to say to that good, delightful, Mrs. Lovett, that you have not left the shop since she was absent; I will get it. They will lend me a bottle, and I have capacious pockets."

"But for you, sir, to — "

Todd was gone.

"Well, really, he is a very nice sort of conversable man," said Mrs. Stag to herself, "when you come to know him, and he ain't near so ugly as he looks after all. I do hope Mrs. Lovett won't trouble herself to come home for the next half hour, since Mr. Todd has been so good as to call and to make himself so very agreeable about the — the gin."

Todd went into Fleet-street for the gin, and he returned by the dark archway leading into Bell Yard. It was darker then than it is now, and in the deepness of an ancient doorway, he paused to drop into the gin — not a deadly poison — but such a potion as he knew would soon wrap up the senses of Mrs. Lovett's substitute in oblivion.

This narcotic he took from a small phial he had in his breast-pocket.

He did not say anything, but he gave one laugh, and then he walked on to the pie-shop, where he was eagerly and warmly welcomed by Mrs. Stag, who very assiduously placed a chair for him, saying, as she did so, that "Mrs. Lovett would quite stare if she were to pop in just then, and see them enjoying themselves, in a manner of speaking, in so delightful a manner."

"I should stare!" said Todd.

"You would, sir?"

"Yes; I rather am inclined to think that that christening business will detain her. By this time she has got into the thick of it, my dear madam, you may depend, although I am quite certain she will be strictly temporate, and take nothing but water."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"I am sure of it. Can you find a glass, madam? I have not the happiness of knowing your name."

"Stay, if you please, sir. I have one glass here without a foot. It's an odd thing, but Mrs. Lovett shuts up the place when she goes out, as if we were all thieves and murderers."

"Does she really? Well — well, we will manage with one glass, my dear

Mrs. Stag. It is the first time we have had a drop together, and I have only to hope that it will not be the last. I ought not, perhaps, to say it before your face, but you are the most entertaining company that I have met with for a long time. — Drink, madam."

"After you, sir."

"No — no, I insist."

Mrs. Stag drank off the full glass that Todd presented her with, and then affecting to pour one out for himself, but dexterously keeping the bottle between him and the lady, he only carried the empty glass to his lips.

Now, Mrs. Stag was a decided connoisseur in gin, and she suddenly assumed a thoughtful air, and looked up to the ceiling as she slightly moved her lips.

"Rather an unusual taste after it's down, don't you think, sir?" she said.

"Has it? Well, I don't know. Perhaps you have been tasting a pie, madam, and that may have influenced the flavour. Try it again. You never can tell the taste of a glass of gin, in my opinion, until you have taken two at least. Try this, Mrs. Stag."

"Really I — I. Thank you, sir."

Off went a second glass, and then Todd glared at her with the eyes of a fiend, as he said, placing the bottle upon the counter, "That ought to be a dose, I think."

"Sir?" stammered Mrs. Stag. "I — I — God bless me — I — sir — gin — I — that is lots of pies — gin — gravy. Mrs. Lovett — in the crown of a bonnet — I — my dear, my dear — Bless us all. Lock it all up — no — no — no. Gin — I — good again — Pies — gravy."

Todd caught her by the throat or she would have fallen; and then, as she became quite insensible, he thrust her under the counter.

CHAPTER CI.

TODD MAKES HIMSELF QUITE AT HOME IN BELL-YARD.

"IDIOT!" SAID TODD, AS HE SPURNED the insensible form of Mrs. Stag with his foot. "Idiot! I would kill you, but that it would not do me any good. The narcotic you have taken in the gin may or may not carry you off for all I care. It don't matter to me one straw."

He glared around him for a few moments with the fierceness of an ogre, and then walking to the shop-door, he deliberately locked and bolted it, so that

TODD PERFORMS AN OPERATION ON MRS. STAG.

no one could get in, even if they were expiring for a pie.

"Humph," he said. "This is a time of day when it is not likely the shop will be troubled with many customers. It is between the batches, I know, so I am safe for an hour; and during that time if I do not make some discoveries here, it will surely be my own fault."

Again he glared around him with the ogre-like aspect, and he ran his eyes carefully over the whole shop, from corner to corner — from floor to roof, and from roof to floor. At length he said —

"Where now, if I were hiding anything, would I select a place in this shop?"

After putting this question to himself Todd again ran his eyes over the shop, and at length he came to the conclusion that it was not there he should seek for any hiding place at all, and he certainly paid the sagacity of Mrs. Lovett one of the highest compliments he possibly could by concluding that she would do as he would under like circumstances.

"No," he said. "The shop is no hiding place for the secret store of my late friend Mrs. Lovett. No — no. I must seek in the very centre of her home, for that which I would find. Let me think — let me think."

Todd felt himself quite at home in Bell Yard. He was in truth the landlord of the house. It had not been safe to make the extensive under-ground alterations in the place if Mrs. Lovett had been the tenant of a stranger merely; so Todd had purchased the freehold, and such being the case, and his tenant, the charming Mrs. Lovett, being as he firmly believed, at the bottom of the Thames, who should feel at home in the place if he, Sweeney Todd, did not?

He felt that he had time, too. There was no hurry in life, and he quite smiled to himself, as he said —

"How often I have longed for a rummage among my dear departed friend Mrs. Lovett's goods and chattels, and now how many happily and singly circumstances have changed about to enable me to gratify my inclination. Ha!"

Todd, in the security of his bad heart, uttered one of his old laughs — but then for the whole of that day he had been unusually happy. His good terms with himself shone out even of his eyes, horrible eyes.

"Yes," he said, "yes, she is dead—dead—dead. Ha! ha! Mrs. Lovett — clever, fascinating creature — how muddy you lie to-night. Ha!"

It was not prudent, however, to waste time, although he had plenty of it — it never is; so up rose Todd, and proceeded to the parlour. How fast-locked the door was!

"Now really," he said, "it is a thousand pities that poor dear Mrs. L. has gone down to the bottom of the Thames with her keys in her pocket. It would have made no manner of difference in the world to her to have let me have them. It would have saved me some little trouble, and the doors some little damage."

With a malicious grin, as though he delighted in the mischief he had made, he dashed himself bodily against the parlour door, and burst it open with a crash.

"That will do," he said. "To be sure, the party who, when my absence gets noised about, comes to take possession of this house, would rather that the doors were whole; but what of that? Ha! I have mortgaged it twice over for its full value, and they may fight about it if they like. Ha! ha! How they will litigate, and I shall read the pleasant account of it in the papers."

By this time Todd was in Mrs. Lovett's parlour, and folding his arms across

his breast, he gazed about him with a feeling of marked satisfaction, as he said —

"For five years she has been making, of course, a private purse for herself, the dear creature, as well as looking to the share of the money in the bank; and for the last few weeks, since our agreement together has not been quite so perfect, she has kept all her takings herself; so reasoning upon that, she must, bless her provident spirit, have a tolerable sum laid by somewhere, which I, as her executor, will most assuredly pounce upon."

At this moment some one clamoured for admission at the shop-door, rapping at it with a penny-piece in a manner that sounded very persevering.

"Curses on you," muttered Todd, "who are you?"

"A twopenny — a twopenny — a twopenny!" cried a boy, who was at the door, in a sing-song sort of voice — "I want a twopenny — a twopenny."

Rap, rap, rap! went one of the penny-pieces against the upper half of the shop-door, which was of glass. Rap, rap, rap! Todd felt quite convinced that that boy would not go without some sort of answer being given to his demand, so he slunk round the shop, crouching down, until he came close to the door, and then assuming one of his most hideous faces, he suddenly rose up, and from within half an inch of the boy's face upon the other side of the glass, he confronted him.

So horrible and so completely unexpected was this face to the boy, that for a moment or two he seemed to be absolutely paralysed by it, and then, with a cry of terror, he dropped the penny-piece with which he had been rapping the window, and fled up Bell Yard as though the evil one himself were at his heels.

"That will do," said Todd.

He went back to the parlour and glared round him again in the hope of finding something there, but the only cupboard which he observed was fast locked. One blow with the poker, using it javelin-like, forced it open, and Todd began flinging out upon the floor the glass and china, with which it was well enough filled, without any mercy. What cared he for such matters? Would he not before twelve hours now be miles and miles away? What, then, was glass and china to him? Nothing — absolutely nothing.

He was disappointed, though, for he did not find the supposed concealed hoard of Mrs. Lovett behind the other things in this cupboard.

"Be it so," he said. "No doubt she fancies her bed-room is the safest place, after all, for her money — that is easily sought. Bless you, Mrs. Lovett, I will find your gold yet!"

With this view, Todd, by the aid of the poker, broke open another door, namely, the one which led from the parlour to the staircase, that would enable him to ascend to the upper part of the house. Truly, Mrs. Lovett was great in the locking-up way — very great indeed.

Todd was now getting out of patience just a little, but only a little, that was all. He naturally enough in his own house wanted to make discoveries a

little quicker than he was making them, that was all; and so he felt put out of his way a little, as any gentleman might under such circumstances. He swore a little, and was not so polite in his mention of the deceased Mrs. Lovett as he might have been.

He ascended the stairs three at a time.

"I wonder," he said, when he reached the top of the first flight; "I wonder where the wily wretch slept. She never would let me up stairs since she occupied the house."

The locking-up propensities of Mrs. Lovett did not continue past the ground-floor; and Todd found all the doors upon the floor he was now on readily enough yield to his touch. The second one he went into was undoubtedly the room he sought. It was rather elegantly furnished as a bed chamber; and as Todd stood in the centre of the floor, he chuckled to himself, and muttered —

"Ha! when she rose this morning, she did not quite fancy she was taking her last look at this chamber. Ha! ha! Well, my dear Mrs. L., you had some taste, I will admit, for this room is very nicely got up. It is a world of pities you had not sense enough to be my slave, but you must try to be my equal, which in your poor vanity you thought I could permit. No — no — no! — that was impossible. Why should I single you out of all the world, Mrs. Lovett, to be just to?"

This, in Todd's estimation, was a very conclusive argument, indeed. Whether it would have been so to Mrs. Lovett is another thing.

And now the arch villain commenced a search in the chamber of his victim of the most extraordinary character for minuteness that could possibly be conceived. It was quite clear that there he expected to find something worth looking for, and that if he were foiled, it should not be for want of due diligence in the investigation.

In the course of ten minutes, the trim and well-kept bedroom was one scene of confusion and disorder. The dressing-glass was thrown down, and, being in his way once, was kicked to the other end of the room, and smashed to fragments. The bed-clothes were tossed hither and thither in the most reckless manner. Boxes were burst open and ransacked, but all in vain. Not one penny-piece could Todd discover.

"Confound her!" he said, as he wiped his brow with a lace cap he picked off the dressing-table; "confound her! I begin to suspect that what she had of her own she put in her pocket this morning, and it has gone down to the bottom of the river with her! How infernally provoking!"

He peeped up the chimney, and got nothing by that motion but a flop of soot in his eye.

He stamped and swore and cursed in the most horrible manner that can possibly be conceived.

Feeling that Mrs. Lovett in the matter of her little private savings had

TODD DESTROYS MRS. LOVETT'S FURNITURE.

been one too many for him, he looked rather hopelessly through the other rooms of the house. They were all completely vacant, and from the appearance of the dust upon the floors of them did not seem to have been entered for years past. He gave up the search in despair, and gloomily walked down stairs to the parlour again.

"It is lost," he said. "It is lost. Well, I must even be content with that which I have: I don't think any one will be the richer for what is here. No, no. It could not have escaped my search, and if it has done so by a miracle, or next thing

to one, it will remain until the house falls to pieces years hence, perhaps, and fall into the hands of some one when I am de — No — no — what puts that word dead into my mouth? I hate to think of it! I am young in constitution, and shall live many — many years yet; oh, yes, I — I need have no fear of death."

Todd glared round him as though he expected that the very impersonification of the grim King of Terrors would rise up before him to take vengeance for being treated so slightingly; but all was still.

He wiped his brow again with the lace cap of Mrs. Lovett, which he had mechanically retained when he left the bed-room, and then he began to ask himself what should be done with the shop.

"For a few hours yet," he said, "a few short hours, there must be no disturbance and no commotion in this neighbourhood with which my name may possibly be connected. After that, they may do what they like and say what they like, but now all must be peace and silence. What shall I do with this confounded shop, now? I wish I had not given so strong a dose of the narcotic to you, old woman, left in charge by Mrs. Lovett. Ah, what is that?"

The sound from the shop as of some one being violently sick, came upon Todd's ears.

"Ah," he said, "so the narcotic has taken that effect, has it, upon Mrs. Lovett's representative? Well, well, she will recover from it much sooner than I thought she would, and that will now be all the better, for it absolves me of my difficulty about the shop for the next few hours."

He walked into the shop and found Mrs. Stag sitting up behind the counter, and in rather a dubious condition as regarded the peace of her stomach.

"Well, ma'am," said Todd. "How are you now?"

"The Lord have mercy upon us!"

"Amen! But how came you in this state, ma'am?"

"The pies, sir. The pies. You really have no idea of how very rich they are, sir. It's all along of the pies, that's all, sir; but I am getting better, though my head is none of the best."

"Yes," said Todd. "Of course it was the very rich pies. It could not have been what you drank."

"Oh, no, no. Oh, dear no. That wasn't enough to hurt an infant, sir, as you ought to know. What a mercy it is that Mrs. Lovett has not come home, for she is rather a violent woman at times. It's really quite a mercy."

"She won't be home just yet, I think," said Todd. "You will have time to get completely to rights before you see her, and when you do see her I would advise you to make your peace with the other world as quickly as you can!"

Todd closed the parlour door; and as it was only the lock that had given, it did not show much symptoms of what had happened to it; as that in all likelihood Mrs. Stag, supposing that it was fast as she had first found it, would not pay any attention to it or scrutinise it sufficiently to be aware that it had been at all tampered with by any one.

"Only a few hours after all," muttered Todd, "and then I don't care what anybody thinks or says about this shop and its affairs, or about me in connection with them. Ah, I had quite forgotten. I wonder what Mrs. Lovett's cook is about?"

Todd paused, and gave some few moments' thought to the cook. He had an idea of going down to the oven cellar, and killing him, so that he might feel quite certain he was out of the way of perpetrating any mischief; but a second thought determined him in the other way.

"No — no," he said. "What can he do? No doubt the house will be shut after a time, and then he will starve to death. Ha!"

CHAPTER CII.

TAKES A SLIGHT GLANCE AT TOBIAS AND HIS INTENDED.

THE IDEA OF THE COOK BEING STARVED to death, had quite reconciled Todd to the notion of leaving him alone; so he left the shop, and proceeded to his own domicile in Fleet-street, and as nothing of great moment has occurred during his absence, we will take the liberty of conducting the reader to the house of Colonel Jeffery, and taking a slight peep at our old friend Tobias, whom we left in rather a critical position.

Tobias had been in so delicate a condition, prior to the last outrage of Todd at the colonel's house, that one might suppose such a thing would go far towards terminating his mortal career, and so indeed it did; but in youth there is such a tenacity to life that we may fairly look for the most extraordinary things in the shape of clinging to the vital principle, and in the way of getting over injuries. Poor Tobias was, to be sure, thrown back by Todd's attack, but he was not destroyed. The medical man gave it as his opinion, that the mental shock was by far worse than the physical injury, and he said to the colonel —

"Some means must be devised to make him believe that he is quite free from any further attack upon the part of Todd, or he will never recover. He will awaken, it is true, from the trance he is now in, but it will be to all the horrors and dread of some expected fresh attack from Todd."

"But I will assure him of my protection," said the colonel. "I will in the most positive manner tell him that he shall here be perfectly safe from that man."

"Excuse me, colonel," replied the surgeon, "but all that was done before,

and yet Tobias has found that Todd reached him, even in one of the rooms of this house. You will find that he will be very sceptical regarding your powers to protect him now from that bold and infamous man. I hope I am not offending you, colonel, by my plain speaking?"

"Not at all my dear sir, not at all. Do not think of such a thing. Plain speaking, when it is dictated by friendly feeling, is one of the most admirable things in all the world, and no one can possibly admire it more than I do. I feel, too, the full force of what you have said, and that to the ears of Tobias it would sound like a farce for me to offer to protect him from the further assaults of Sweeney Todd."

"But something may be done that is quite of a decisive character upon the subject, colonel."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, that to sick folks I say anything that I think will tend to their recovery, even although I may feel that I am a little transgressing the bounds of truth. We must consider what we say to people in the position of Tobias, as so much medicine artfully administered to him."

"I quite agree with you, and I feel that you have some important suggestion to make to me regarding Tobias. What is it?"

"Then, colonel, if I were you, I should not hesitate for one moment to tell him that Todd was dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, that is the only thing that will thoroughly convince Tobias he has nothing further to fear from him. I think it not only one of those delusions that are in themselves harmless, but I think it a justifiable dose of moral medicine."

"It shall be done," said the colonel. "It shall be done. I do not hesitate about it for a moment. I thank you for the idea, and if that will do Tobias any good, he shall have the full benefit of it at my hands. Shall we seek him now?"

"Yes, I hope that he is in a state to fully comprehend what is said to him, and in that case the sooner we say this from which we expect such good results, the better it will be. I am most anxious to witness the effect it will have upon his mind, colonel. If I mistake not, it will be one far exceeding anything you can suppose."

Upon this they both went up stairs to the chamber in which poor Tobias lay. The boy was upon a bed, lying to all appearance bereft of sense. His breathing was rather laborious, and every now and then there was a nervous twitching of the muscles of the face, which bespoke how ill at ease the whole system was. At times too he would mutter some incoherent words, during which both the medical man and the colonel thought they could distinguish the name of Todd.

"Yes," said the surgeon, "that is the spectre that is ever present to the imagination of this poor boy and we must speedily get rid of it from him, or

it will assuredly kill him. I would not answer for his life another twenty-four hours, if his fancy were still to continue to be tortured by an expectation of the appearance of Todd."

"Will you, or shall I, speak to him?"

"You, if you please, colonel; he knows your voice better no doubt than he does mine."

Colonel Jeffery bent his head close down to Tobias's ear, and in a clear correct voice spoke to him.

"Tobias, I have come to say something very important to you. It is something which I hope will do you good to hear. Do you comprehend me, Tobias?"

The sufferer uttered a faint groan, as he tossed one of his arms uneasily about upon the coverlet.

"You quite understand me, Tobias? Only say that you do so, and I shall be satisfied to go on, and say to you what I have to say."

"Todd, Todd!" gasped Tobias. "Oh, God! coming — he is coming."

"You hear," said the surgeon. "That is what his imagination runs upon. That is proof conclusive."

"It is, poor boy," said the colonel. "But I wish I could get him to say that he fully comprehends my words."

"Never mind that. I would recommend that you make the communication to him at once, and abruptly. It will, in all likelihood, thus have more effect than if you dilute it by any great note of preparation before it reaches his ears."

The Colonel nodded his acquiescence; and then, once more inclining his mouth to Tobias's ear, he said, in clear and moderately loud accents —

"Sweeney Todd is dead!"

Tobias at once sprang up to a sitting posture in the bed, and cried —

"No, no! Is it really so?"

"Yes," added the colonel. "Sweeney Todd is dead."

For a moment or two Tobias looked from the colonel to the surgeon, and from the surgeon to the colonel, with a bewildered expression of countenance, and then burst into tears.

"That will do," said the surgeon.

"It has succeeded?" whispered the colonel.

"Fully. It could not do better. He will recover full consciousness now when those tears are over. All will go well with him; but do not, by word or look, insinuate the remotest doubt of the truth of what you have told him. It would be better to say the same thing to any of the servants that may come about him."

"I will — I will; and particularly to his master, whom I would as soon trust with a secret as I would with the command of a regiment of cavalry."

Tobias wept for the space of about ten minutes, and then he looked up with a face in which there was a totally different expression to what it had borne but a short time previously, and with a faltering voice he spoke —

"And so Todd is gone at last?"

"He has," replied the colonel; "and, therefore, you may now, Tobias, make your mind quite easy about him."

"Oh, quite — quite!"

By the long breath that Tobias drew, it was evident what an exquisite relief it was to him to be able to feel that the man who had been the bane of his young life was no more. No assurance of protection from him could have come near the feeling of satisfaction that he now felt in the consciousness of such a release. But Todd being dead, settled the affair at once. There was no drawback upon his satisfaction.

"Oh!" he said, "I do indeed feel that life is with me again, and that I can be happy. Where is Minna?"

"She cannot remain here always," replied the colonel; "but she will be in the house shortly, upon a visit to your mother, and you shall yourself have the pleasure of communicating the welcome news of Todd's death to her — news which to her bears as great a significance as it does to you."

"Oh, yes," replied Tobias. "Minna will be pleased. We ought not to rejoice at the death of any one; but then Todd was so very, very bad a man, that his dying is a good thing, as it keeps him from loading his soul with more wickedness."

"That," said the medical man, "is the proper view to take of the matter, Tobias; but now you will permit me to say to you that you should not talk too much, nor overtax your young strength. I will darken the room, by closing the shutters; and it is highly desirable that you should enjoy a few hours calm sleep, which now, with the conviction that Todd is dead, I do not see any difficulty in your doing."

"Oh, no — no," said Tobias, with quite a bright expression upon his face. "Oh, no. I shall sleep well now. Quite well, for what have I to fear now?" These few words were spoken in such a tone of calm composure, that the colonel had every reason to rejoice in the experiment he had tried, upon the advice of the medical man. The latter closed the shutters of the room all but one, so that there was but a soft and chastened light in the room; and then, with a smile upon his face, Tobias — after hoping that they would arouse him when Minna should come, and receiving a promise that way — turned his face to his pillow, and composed himself to the first pure rest he had had since the attack that the villain Todd had made upon him in the colonel's house.

"It is not much of a deception," said Colonel Jeffery to the surgeon, when the latter was leaving the house, "for I believe now that Todd's hours are indeed numbered. He will be arrested to-night."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the surgeon. "Such a notable villain ought to be as quickly as possible put out of the world."

"He ought, indeed; and from what I hear from Sir Richard Blunt, I believe

that before twenty-four hours are gone over my head, the whole of London will ring with the name of Todd, and the story of his frightful criminality."

TOBIAS SLEPT QUIETLY, AND SECURELY for four hours, during which space of time he was twice visited by Minna Gray, who had arrived while he was in that state of repose. The colonel, although he felt the danger of letting Mrs. Ragg know that the report to Tobias of the death of Todd was premature, felt no such scruple with regard to Minna. Indeed he considered that it would have been an insult to her judgment not to have told her exactly how the case stood.

When she heard it all, and upon visiting Tobias's bed-room, found what a sweet sleep he was in, and what a quiet gentle smile was upon his face, she tearfully acknowledged what a good thing the innocent deception was which had produced such a result.

"It will save him," she said.

"It will," replied the colonel; "and be sure that you keep sufficient guard over yourself to keep from betraying the secret."

"Oh, sir, trust me, I will."

"And remember that in this house, Minna, it is known only to you and to me. If Tobias should ask you anything about it, you had better know nothing, for I promised him that he should have the pleasure of making the communication to you himself, therefore you cannot be puzzled by any questions regarding particulars when he is your informant."

Minna joyfully concurred with all that the colonel said upon this head; and then, after a long talk with Mrs. Ragg in the kitchen — that good lady having the most implicit faith in the story of the death of Todd, and the profoundest hope that she should soon hear the full particulars of that event — she betook herself to the bedside of Tobias, there to await his awakening.

When he did open his eyes, they were clear and bright, and the fever had left his brow and cheeks. The first object his eye rested upon was Minna, and the first words he said were —

"Todd is dead!"

"Ah, then, Tobias, you have nothing now to fear, for you have not an enemy in the world."

"No," he cried, "I have now nothing to fear — but, my Minna, my own, my beautiful! how much I have to love! We shall be now, Minna, very, very happy, indeed, and God will bless me for your dear sake!"

CHAPTER CIII.

MR. LUPIN HAS A SINGULAR INTERVIEW WITH MRS. OAKLEY.

AMID ALL THE EXCITING CIRCUMSTANCES that it has been our duty to relate — amid the turmoil of events consequent upon the wild villainy of Todd, and the urgent attempts of Mrs. Lovett to get her accounts audited — we have very much lost sight of Mrs. Oakley.

Perhaps the reader has not been altogether unwilling to lose sight of a lady who, we will admit, was not calculated to make great advances in his esteem.

But yet one thing must be recollected, and that is that Mrs. Oakley is Johanna's mother! That, we opine, is a fact which she should be given some degree of attention for; and insomuch as the bright eyes of the fair and noble-minded Johanna might be dimmed by an additional tear if anything very serious was to become of Mrs. Oakley, we will go a little out of our way just now to see what that deluded parson-ridden woman is about.

The outgoings and the incomings of Mrs. Oakley for a long time past had been so various and discursive, that the poor spectacle-maker had long since left off considering that he had anything in the shape of a domestic establishment. Certainly, Johanna was always at hand, until lately, to attend to her father's comforts — but the wife never. There was either a prayer-meeting, or a love-feast, or some congregation or another assembled to hear or to see Mr. Lupin; so that if the wife and the mother went to such places to learn her duties, it was pretty evident that the lesson occupied the whole of her time.

But still at times she did come home. At odd seasons she was to be found groaning and snuffling at the fireside in the little dark parlour at the back of the shop; but now for some few days she had totally disappeared.

Mr. Oakley was alone.

Up a dingy court in the City, not a hundred miles from the dingy purlieus of Monkwell-street, there was a dingy conventicle, upon the front of which the word "Ebenezer" announced its character, or its would-be character. The upper part of this chapel was converted into a dwelling-place, and there luxuriated Mr. Lupin.

The flock (geese, of course!) of the reverend gent rented the edifice, so that there he was rent free, and there he was in the habit of inviting to tea such of the females of his congregation who either had money of their own, or whose husbands had tills easily accessible, or pockets into which the wife's hand could

be dipped at discretion; and dipped it generally was at in-discretion; — for folks, whether they be wives or not, when they can dip into other folks' pockets, do not always know how much to take just and no more.

Now Mr. Lupin had established a Three-days-two-hours-and-general-subscription-saving grace-prayer, which consisted of praying every two hours for three days and three nights, and at each prayer making an offering in hard cash for the use of the church and the gospel, he (Mr. Lupin) being both the church and the gospel.

Alas! what will not human folly in the name of religion stoop to! There were women — mothers of families, who came to Mr. Lupin's house above the chapel with what plunder they could get together, and there actually stand the three days and three nights, the reverend gent making it his duty to keep them awake at the end of every two hours at least, as he pretended to pray, and sending them away completely placid, but with the comfortable conviction, as they themselves expressed it, that their "souls were saved alive."

Mrs. Oakley was one of these dupes.

Now, although these proceedings were very profitable to Mr. Lupin, he found that it was very irksome to get up himself in the middle of the night to awaken the sinners to prayer, so he used to introduce brandy-and-water after he had pretty well tired out his devotee, and ascertained the amount of money he was likely to get, and in the confusion of mind consequent upon that gentle stimulant, the time went on very glibly.

"Sister Oakley," said Lupin, on the evening of the first day of Mrs. Oakley's residence beneath his highly-spiritual roof. "Sister Oakley, truly you will be a great brand snatched from the burning — How much money have you got?"

"Alas!" said Mrs. Oakley, "business must be bad, for I only found in the till three pounds eleven-and-sixpence."

Mr. Lupin groaned.

"But I will from time to time take what I can, and let you have it, for the welfare of one's precious soul is above all price."

"Truly, Sister Oakley, it is, and you may as well give me the small instalment now if it shall seem right unto thee, sister. I thank you in the name of the Lord! Humph — only three pounds eleven-and-sixpence. Well, well, we shall do better another time, perhaps, sister. Rest in peace, and I will from time to time come in and awaken thee to prayer. Truly and verily I have a hard time of it always."

It was on the second night that fatigue had had a great effect upon Mrs. Oakley, and upon the reverend gent likewise that he brought her a tumbler of hot brandy-and-water, saying as he placed it by her —

"Truly I have had a dream, and the Lord told me to give you this. I pray you take it, Mrs. O., and may it put you in mind of the glory of the world that is to come — Amen!"

Mr. Lupin retired, and as the stimulant was not at all an ungrateful thing to Mrs. Oakley, she was about to raise it to her lips, when a stunning knock at the chapel door made her give such a start, that she dropped glass, and spirit, and spoon to the ground. No doubt, a repetition of the knock at the moment, prevented Lupin from hearing the crash, which the fall in spirits produced. Mrs. Oakley heard him open the window of his room, and in a voice of stifled anger cry —

"Who is there? Who is there?"

"It's me, Groggs, and you know it," said a female voice. "Come down and open the door, or I will rouse the whole neighbourhood."

"Come, you be off. I have some one here."

"What, another idiot? Ho! — ho! — ho! Why, Groggs, they will find you out some day, and limb you. If they only knew that you were Groggs the returned transport*, how they would mob you to be sure. But I have come for money, old fellow, and I will have it. I ain't drunk, but I have had enough — just enough, mark me old boy, and you know what I am capable of when that's the case. I am your wife and you know it. Ho! ho!"

Dab came the knocker again upon the chapel door.

"Do you want to be my ruin?" said Lupin. "Stay a moment and I will throw you out five shillings; but if you make any noise you shall not have one farthing from me."

"Shall I not? Ha! — ha! Shall I not? Five shillings indeed!"

The lady upon this, feeling no doubt that both her wants and his powers of persuasion were made very light of, commenced such a tremendous knocking at the door, that the terrified Lupin at once descended to let her in, uttering such terrible curses as he went that Mrs. Oakley was petrified with dismay.

Foolish woman! Did she expect that her idol would turn out to be anything but a common brazen image?

In the course of a few moments she heard the couple coming up stairs again, and when they reached the top, she heard Lupin say, "Confound you, you always will come with your infernal demands at the very worst and most awkward times and seasons to me. Did you not take ten pounds some time ago, and promise to come near me no more?"

"Ha! — ha! Yes, I did. But I am here again you see. You thought I would drink myself to death with that amount of money, and that you would get rid of me, but it did me good. Ho! — ho! — ho! The good stuff did me good."

"You are a fool," said Lupin. "I tell you, woman, you will be my ruin, my

**A transport was a prisoner exiled to an overseas penal colony. Before the American Revolution prisoners were transported to America, but that stopped in the late 1770s; transportation to Australia started in 1788 and continued until the late 1860s. Since this story is set in 1785, the reference is probably an anachronism.*

absolute ruin; and then where will your supplies come from I should like to know? Why I have an idiot only in the next room, of whom I hope to make a good thing; and if you had only come in five minutes sooner you would have been heard by her, and I should have been done up here."

"And why don't she hear you now? Have you cut her throat like you did the woman's by Wapping?"

"Hush! — hush! you devil! Why do you allude to that?"

"Because I like, my beauty. Because I know you did it. And whenever I do mention it, the gallows shines out in your face as plain — ay, as plain as this hand; and I like to see you quake and change colour, and be ready almost to fall down with your fears. Ho! — ho! I like that. Yes, it's as good to me as a drop of drink, that it is."

"I only wish your throat was cut, that is all."

"I know you do. But you won't try that on upon me. No — no. You won't try that on. Look at this, my beauty. Do you think I would step into a place of yours without something in the shape of a friend with me? Oh — no — no — "

The lady exhibited the handle and point of the blade of a knife, as she spoke, at which Mr. Lupin staggered back, and then in a faltering voice he said —

"I will go and see how my portion has worked with the idiot I mentioned. I gave her a good dose of laudanum in a glass of brandy and water."

It may be imagined with what feelings Mrs. Oakley heard this interesting little dialogue. It may be imagined, if she had at the bottom of her heart any lingering feelings of right or wrong, how they were likely to be roused up by all this — how her thoughts were likely to fly back to the house she had made wretched, and virtually deserted for so long a period of time. And now what was to become of her? Had she not heard Lupin denounced by one who knew him well as a murderer — an allegation which he had not even in the faintest manner denied?

Mrs. Oakley went down upon her knees in earnest, and wringing her hands, she cried —

"God save me for my poor husband and my child's sake!"

We will suppose that if any appeals at all reach Heaven, that this was one of those that would be sure to get there. Hastily pushing aside with her hands the fragments of the broken glass, Mrs. Oakley flung herself upon the floor, at the moment that Lupin with a light in his hand entered the room.

"Hilloa!" he said.

All was still. Mrs. Oakley did not move hand nor foot. She scarcely dared to breathe, for she felt that upon his belief that she had swallowed the narcotic her life rested. When he saw her lying upon the floor, he gave a short laugh, as he said —

"I thought she could not resist the brandy and water. The laudanum has done its work quickly indeed. It's well that it has, for if it had not — Well,

well! If I only now had the courage to take a knife to my wife, and get rid of her once and for all, I should do well. Sister Oakley, you will not awaken for many hours, and when you do, you will be by far too much confused to know if you have said all your prayers or not. I shall make a fortune out of these women."

Mrs. Oakley felt upon the point of fainting, and if he had but touched her, she was certain that she must have gone off; but he felt so satisfied with the powerful dose of laudanum that he had given her in the brandy and water, that he did not think it worth while in any way further to interfere with her.

"Old and ugly too!" he muttered, as he left the room.

Perhaps these last words cut Mrs. Oakley to the soul more quickly than all he had previously said. If she was not from that moment cured of what might in her case be called Lupinism, it was a very odd thing indeed.

The Rev. gent had been gone more than ten minutes before Mrs. Oakley gathered courage to look up, and to listen to what was taking place in the next room. Then she found that Lupin was speaking. She was still too much overcome by terror to rise, but she managed to crawl along the floor, until she reached the wall between the two rooms.

It was a flimsy wall that, composed only of canvas, for the rooms above the chapel had been got up in a very extemporaneous kind of way.

Nothing could take place in the way of conversation in the next room, that might be distinctly enough heard in the one that Mrs. Oakley was in. As we have said, Lupin was speaking. Mrs. Oakley placed her ear close to the canvas, and heard every word that he uttered.

"Listen to reason," he said, "listen to reason, Jane. Of course, I will give you as much money as I can. I do not attempt to deny your claim upon me, and what is to hinder us working together, and making a good thing of it? Ah, if I could only persuade you to be a religious woman."

"Gammon!" said Jane.

"I know that very well," said Lupin. "That's the very thing. I know it is gammon as well as you do. What's that?"

Mrs. Oakley had made a slight noise in the next room.

CHAPTER CIV.

MRS. OAKLEY SEES A STRANGE SIGHT, AND THINKS THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

"WHAT'S THAT, EH?" added Lupin.

Mrs. Oakley sank flat upon the floor in a moment; she thought that now surely her last hour was come.

"I thought I heard a noise. Did you, Jane?" added Lupin.

"I didn't hear anything," said the woman. "It's your conscience, old boy, that makes you hear all sorts of things. You know you are a hard one, and no mistake. You know, there ain't exactly your equal in London for a vagabond. But come, hand out the cash, for I ain't particularly fond of your company, nor you of mine, I take it."

"It must have been imagination," muttered Lupin, still alluding to the noise he had heard or fancied he had heard. "It must have been imagination, and the wind at night does certainly make odd noises in the chapel at times, know."

"Bother the noises. Give me the money, and let me go, I say. Come, be quick about it, or else I shall think of some way of helping myself, and you know when I begin, that I am apt to be rather troublesome."

"A little," said Lupin. "Just a little. But as I was saying, Jane — you and I together might make a fortune quite easily. You are a clever woman."

"Am I really? When did you find that out, you old rogue?"

"Really, Jane, it is difficult to talk with you while you are in such a humour. Come, will you take something to drink? Say you will, and you shall have the very best I can get you. Only you must promise to take it in moderation, and not get much the worse for it, Jane."

"Do you think now that I am such an idiot as to take a dram of anything in your place? No! I am not quite so green as that. Give me some money and I'll fetch something, and as long as I have got my hand on the bottle, where I will take good care to keep it, I shall know that I am safe from you, but not otherwise. You would like to give me a drop of the same stuff you have set the woman in the next room to sleep with, wouldn't you now, my beauty?"

"No, Jane. Not you. You are not such a fool as to be taken in as she is. Such poor tricks won't do for you, I know well. There is money, and there is an empty bottle. Go and get what you like for yourself, as you wish not what I may happen

to have in the place. I will let you in again, so you need not be afraid of that, Jane."

"Afraid? Afraid? That's a likely thing, indeed. I afraid of being kept out by you? No, old boy, if you did keep me out one minute longer than my patience lasted, and that would not be very long I think, I would raise such a racket about your ears, that you would wish yourself anywhere but where you are. How did I get in before, when you would have given one of your ears to keep me out? Why, by frightening you, of course, and I'll do it again. Give me hold of the bottle. I afraid of you, indeed? A likely thing."

The lady left the room with the bottle and half a guinea in her hand, while Lupin, with affected solicitude, lighted her to the door of the chapel, and lingered until he heard her footsteps die away right up the dismal dingy-looking court.

While Lupin was lighting his wife down the stairs, Mrs. Oakley found a small slit in the canvas that the division between the two rooms, and she industriously widened it, so that she was enabled to see into the adjoining apartment. She then waited in fear and in trembling the return of Lupin.

The arch hypocrite was not many minutes in making his appearance. He set the candlestick down upon the table with a force that nearly started the candle out of it, and then in a fierce voice he cried —

"Done — she is done at last! Ha! ha! Jane, you are done at last! I kept that bottle for an emergency. It seemed empty, but smeared all around its inner side is a sufficient quantity of a powerful narcotic to affect the very devil himself if he were to drink anything that had been poured into it. You think yourself mighty clever, Jane; but you are done at last. Now what a capital thing it is that I have sent that old fool, Mrs. Oakley, to sleep, for otherwise I should certainly be under the necessity of cutting her throat."

Mrs. Oakley could hardly suppress a groan at this intelligence; but the exigences of her situation pressed strongly upon her, and she did succeed in smothering her feelings and keeping herself quiet.

Lupin paced the room anxiously waiting for his wife's return; and in the course of about five minutes, a heavy dab of a single knock upon the chapel door announced that fact. He immediately snatched up the candle and ran down stairs to let her in, lest according to her threat she should get to the end of her very limited stock of patience. They came up the stairs together — Jane was speaking —

"Brandy!" she said; "I have got brandy, and I mean to keep my hand on the bottle, I tell you. Ah, I know you — no one knows you better than I do. You may impose upon everybody but me. You won't find it so very easy a thing to get the better of me; I'll keep my hand on the bottle."

"How very suspicious you are," said Lupin, "It's quite distressing."

"Is it? Ho! ho! Well, I'll have my drop and then I will go. If you are civil

to me whenever I choose to come it will be better for you; but I am not the sort of person to stand any nonsense, I can assure you."

"No, Jane, I never said you were," replied Lupin; "and I hope that to-night will see the beginning as it were of a kind of reconciliation and better feeling between us. I am sure I always thought of you with kindness."

By this time they were in the room, and the lady half drew the knife she had before exhibited from the bosom of her dress, as she said —

"Look at this — look at this! I distrust you all the more when you talk as you do now, and I tell you that if I have any of your nonsense, I will pretty soon settle you. You mean something, I know, by the twinkle of your eye. I have watched you before, and I know you."

"Now, really, this is too bad," said Lupin, as he wiped his face with a remarkably old handkerchief; "this is too bad, Jane. If I am kind and civil to you, that don't suit; and if I am rough and rather stern, you fly out at that too. What am I to do? Will nothing please you?"

"Bah!" said Jane. "Hold your nonsence. How much money am I to have when I have finished the brandy? That is the question now."

"Will three guineas be enough, Jane, just for the present occasion?"

"No, I must have five, or if you don't produce them, I'll make you."

"You shall have them, Jane. You see how complying I am to you. But won't you give me a drop of the brandy? You don't mean to take it all?"

"Yes I do. It's only half a pint, and what's that? You can drink some of what you said you had in the place. I didn't go out to buy for you. Besides, I won't trust it a moment out of my hands. You would put something in it before I could wink."

"Really, really! What a strange woman. But won't you have a glass, Jane, to drink it out of? Let me get you a glass now?"

"No, you would put something in that too. Oh, I am up to your tricks, I am, old boy. You won't get the better of me. Very good brandy it is, too. Ah! strong rather."

Jane took a hearty pull at the bottle, so hearty a one that two thirds of the mixture vanished, and then with her hand on the neck of it, she sat glaring at Lupin, who was on the opposite side of the table, with an awfully satanic grin upon his ugly features.

"It has an odd taste."

"An odd taste?" cried Lupin. "It's a capital thing that you bought it yourself, and kept your hand over the bottle. I'm very glad of that, old woman."

"But I feel odd — I — I — ain't the thing. I don't feel very well, Lupin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I — I feel as if I were dying. I — I don't see things very clearly. I am ill — ill. Oh, what is this? Something is amiss. Mercy, mercy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I — I — shall fall. Help! The room swims round with me. I am poisoned. I know I am. Mercy! help! murder! Oh, spare me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lupin rose and went round the table. He caught hold of the wretched woman by the head, and applying his mouth close to her ear, he said —

"Jane! There was something in the bottle, and I intend to cut your throat. I hope the knife you have got with you has a good edge to it?"

She tried to scream, but an indistinct, strange, stifled cry only came from her lips. She tried to get up, but her limbs refused their office. The powerful narcotic had taken effect, and she fell forward, her head striking the table heavily, and upsetting the bottle with the remainder of the drugged brandy in it as she did so.

"Done!" said Lupin. "Done at last. Oh, how I have watched for such an opportunity as this. How often I have pleased myself with the idea of meeting her in some lonely place when she was off her guard, and killing her, but I never thought that anything could happen half so lucky as this. Let me think. I am quite alone in this building, or as good as alone, for Mrs. Oakley sleeps soundly. I can easily drag the dead body down stairs, and place it in one of the vaults underneath the chapel, to which I have the key. I will wrench open some coffin if that be all, and cram her in on the top of the dead there previously. Ah, that will do, and then I defy any circumstances to find me out. How safe a — mur — I mean a death this will be to be sure. How very — very safe."

Mrs. Oakley shook in every limb, but she kept her eyes steadfastly fixed at the small hole in the canvas, through which she could see into the room, and by a horrible species of fascination, she felt that if she had ever so much wished to do so, she could not then have withdrawn it. No! she was as it were condemned as a fiat of destiny, as a punishment for her weak and criminal credulity regarding that man, to be a witness to the dreadful deed he proposed committing, within the sphere of her observation.

It was dreadful. It was truly horrible. But it was not now by any means to be avoided.

Lupin disappeared for a few seconds into a room where he usually himself slept. From thence he returned with a wash-hand basin in his hand, which he placed upon the floor. He then fumbled about the clothing of his wife until he found the knife that she had twice so threateningly exhibited to him. He held it up to the light and narrowly scrutinised it.

"It will do I think," he said.

He tried its keenness upon the edge of the sole of his shoe, and he was satisfied that it had been well prepared for mischief.

"It will do well," he said. "Well, nothing can be better. From this night I shall be free from the fears that have haunted me night and day for so long. This woman is the only person in all London who really knows me, and who

LUPIN DRUGS HIS WIFE, AND THEN CUTS HER THROAT.

has it in her power to destroy all my prospects. When she is gone, I shall be perfectly easy and safe, and surely never was such a deed as this done with so much positive safety."

Mrs. Oakley felt sickened at what she saw, but still she looked upon it with that same species of horrible fascination which it is said — and said truly, too — prevents the victim of a serpent's glittering eye from escaping the jaws of the destroyer. She saw it all. She did not move — she did not scream — she did not weep — but as if frozen to the spot, she, with a statuesque calmness, looked upon that most horrible scene of blood. She was the witness appointed by Heaven to see it done, and she could not escape her mission.

Lupin twined his left hand in the hair at the back of the head of the wretched woman, and then he held her head over the wash-hand basin. There was a bright flash of the knife, and then a gushing, gurgling sound, and blood poured into the basin, hot, hissing and frothing. The light fell upon the face of Lupin, and at that time so changed was it, that Mrs. Oakley could not have recognised it, and, but that she knew from the antecedents that it was no other than he, she might have doubted if some devil had not risen up through the floor to do the deed of blood.

He dropped the knife to the floor.

The murdered woman made a faint movement with her arms, and then all was over. The blood still rolled forth and filled the wash-hand basin. Lupin caught the cover from the table, throwing everything that was upon it to the floor, and wrapped it many times round the head, face, and neck of his victim.

"It is done!" he said. "It is done!"

He still held the body by the hair of the head, and dragging it along the floor, he dropped it near the door opening on to the staircase. He then went to a cupboard in the room, and finding a bottle, he plunged the neck of it into his mouth, and drank deeply. The draught was ardent spirit, but it had no more effect upon him at that moment than as though it had been so much water from a spring. That is to say, it had no intoxicating effect. It may have stilled some of the emotions of dread and horror which his own crime must have called up from the bottom even of such a heart as his. He was human, and he could not be utterly callous.

Leaning against the cupboard-door for a few seconds he gasped out —

"Yes, it is done. It is quite done, and now for the worst. Now for the body, and the vaults, and the dead. Can I do it? can I do it? I must. Yes, I must. There is no safety for me if I do not. I shall come else to the scaffold. I think already that I see the hooting crowd — the rope and the cross-beam. Now they hold my arms. Now they tell me to call upon God for mercy to my wretched blood-stained soul. Now the mob shouts. The hangman touches me — I feel the rope about my neck. They draw the cap over my face, and so shut out the world from me for ever. I die — I struggle — I writhe — I faint — God — God — God help me!"

He fell heavily to the floor of the room.

CHAPTER CV.

MRS. OAKLEY ESCAPES, AND TAKES A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THINGS IN GENERAL.

MRS. OAKLEY NEARLY FAINTED HERSELF at this juncture, but she felt that her life was in jeopardy, and by a strong mental effort, such as she could hardly have supposed herself capable of making, she sustained herself, and preserved her senses.

Lupin lay for some minutes quite insensible upon the floor, but he did not lie long enough for Mrs. Oakley to take advantage of his temporary swoon and leave the place. Had she perhaps been very prompt and resolute, and self-possessed, she might have done so, but under the whole of the circumstances, it was not to be supposed that such could be her state of mind; so the slight opportunity, for, after all, it was only a slight one, if one at all, was let slip by her.

She was just beginning to ask herself if there was a chance of getting away before Lupin should recover, when he uttered a hideous groan, and moved slightly.

After these indications of recovery, Mrs. Oakley was afraid to move; and certainly, the slightest indication of her being otherwise than in the state of insensibility which Lupin believed to be her condition, there is very little doubt it would have been the signal for her death.

The man who commits a murder for the attainment of any object of importance to him, will not scruple to commit another to hide the first deed from the eyes of the world.

And now Lupin slowly rose to a sitting posture, and glared around him for a few moments in silence. Then he spoke.

"What is this?" he said. "What is all this? What is the meaning of all this? Blood! — blood! Is this blood upon my hands? No — no — yes, it is — it is. Ah! I recollect."

He held his blood-stained hands to his eyes for a few moments, and then as he withdrew them, he slowly turned his eyes to where the body lay. With a shudder he dragged himself along the floor further off from it, gasping out as he did so —

"Off — off, horrible object! — off — off!"

His distempered imagination, no doubt, pictured the body as following

him. Is there not, indeed, a prompt retribution in this world?

"Off — off, I say! No further! — Not dead? — not dead yet? How much blood have you in you now to shed? Off — off!"

He reached the wall. He could get no further, and thus pursued still by the same wild insane idea, he sprung to his feet, and uttering a loud cry, he caught up a chair and held it out at arm's length before him, shouting —

"Keep away — keep away! Keep off, I say — I — I did not do it. Who shall say I did it? Who saw me do it?"

He slowly dropped the chair, and then in a more composed voice he said —

"Hush! hush! I am mad to raise these cries. They will alarm the court. I am mad — mad!"

Mrs. Oakley had hoped that his ravings would reach some other ears then hers, and that his apprehension, with the bleeding witness of his crime close at hand, would follow as a thing of course, and then how gladly would she have flown from her place of concealment, and cried out —

"He did it! I saw him! That is the man!"

But such was not the case. Either he really did not call out loud enough to make himself heard, or the inhabitants of the court were too much accustomed to all sorts of sounds to pay any attention even to the ravings of a murderer!

No one came. No one even knocked at the chapel-door to know if anything was amiss, and when she saw him calm, and in a measure self-possessed again, her heart died within her.

"Murder! murder!" he said; "I have done murder! Yes, I have steeped my hands in blood — again — again! It is not the first time, but one does not become familiar with murder. I did not feel as I feel now when I took a life before. Oh, horror! horror!"

He shook, but soon again recovered himself.

"The vaults! The vaults!" he said. "They will hide the dead. Who will look for this woman? What friends has she? Is there one in all the world who cares if she be alive or dead? Not one. Is there one who will stir six steps to find out what has become of her? Not one."

Again he solaced himself with a draught of brandy, and then he set about making his preparations for disposing of the dead body of his slaughtered victim.

From a drawer in the room he took a large sheet, and spread it upon the floor. Then he kicked and pushed the dead body with his feet on to it, and then he deliberately rolled it up round and round in the sheet, and at each fold feeling that it was further removed from his sight, he seemed to breathe more and more freely.

He spoke in something like his old tones.

"That will do — that will do. The vaults will be the place. Was there ever

such a cunning place for murder to be done in as a chapel, with its ready receptacles of the dead beneath it? There let her rot. She will never come up in judgment against me from there. It is done now. The deed that I often thought of doing, and yet never had the courage, nor the opportunity at the same time, to accomplish until to-night. The vaults — the vaults. Ay, the vaults!"

He lit a lantern that he took from the cupboard, and then he opened the door that communicated with the staircase terminating in the chapel. He listened as though he fancied that some one might be below listening to the deed of blood above.

"All is still," he muttered, "so very still. It is providential. It is the will of Heaven that this woman should die to night, and after all I am but the instrument of its decrees — nothing more. That is comforting."

He now dragged the body to the door he had opened, but he did not carry it. When he got it there he overbalanced it, and let it fall down. Mrs. Oakley, even from where she was, heard the horrible smash with which it reached the bottom of the stairs.

Lupin followed with the lantern.

And now it would seem as if another opportunity had presented itself to Mrs. Oakley to escape. The staircase down which Lupin had gone communicated with the chapel. It was another flight that led to the ordinary door through which any one passed who might be coming to the private part of the house. That staircase of course she expected to reach without going through the room in which the murder was committed, as her room and the adjoining one both opened upon its landing as well as into each other.

Mrs. Oakley slowly rose from her knees.

"God help us," she said, "and give me strength to make an attempt to leave this frightful place. There will surely be time while Lupin is in the vaults. Oh, yes, there will surely be time."

She tottered along with as little strength as though she had been lying for weeks upon a bed of sickness, so completely had she been unnerved by what she had seen.

She touched the handle of the door. Even that was support. And then, she turned it. The door did not open. It was locked!

Mrs. Oakley felt as if at that moment all her chance of escape was gone. She felt as though she were given over by providence to Lupin to be murdered. Why had he locked the door, but that if by any rare chance she should awaken from the lethargic sleep into which he supposed her to be plunged, she should have no outlet but through the room in which he would be? But he was not there now, and the door of communication between her room and that in which the murder had been done might not be fast.

To try it was the work now of a moment; Mrs. Oakley felt a little more

self-possessed with the knowledge that Lupin was not close at hand, and she opened the door. It yielded readily enough to her touch.

She was in the room of murder — in the very atmosphere of blood. She glanced around her, and, although she had seen all through the opening in the canvas partition, yet she was horrified to find herself closer to the spot upon which the fearful deed had been done. Lupin, when he had lit his lantern with which to go to the vaults, had not extinguished the ordinary light that burnt in his room. That had a long spectral-looking wick; but it gave sufficient light to enable Mrs. Oakley to see the blood upon the floor.

She sickened at the sight.

But if she were to escape, it must be done at once. Lupin would not be likely to linger longer by one brief moment in the vaults than was absolutely necessary; and he might return before she had effected her purpose yet.

She flew to the door of his room, which opened on to the landing. She made an effort to open it. Alas! it was in vain; it, too, was locked, and the key was gone!

"I am a prisoner!" said Mrs. Oakley, as she clasped her hands; "I am a prisoner to this dreadful man!"

For some few moments now she felt completely overwhelmed by this misfortune. The only outlet from the room that was not fast, was that which Lupin himself had taken, and which led to the chapel. Should she venture that way or not? — that was the question. Could she resolve upon staying where she was, and trusting to an escape in the morning? No, no; she told herself that would be too horrible. She would have, then, to look at Lupin in the face, and to talk to him.

"No — no — no! I cannot do that," she said. "I will go down the staircase that he has gone down — I will pass through the chapel — I will try to open the chapel door, and then I will rush out with the cry of murder upon my lips."

It was a trembling anxious thing to follow the murderer and his victim down that staircase; but having found all other mode of egress denied to her, Mrs. Oakley attempted it.

Slowly she went, step by step; and ever and anon she paused to listen for any sound that should be indicative of Lupin's whereabouts — but she heard nothing.

"He must be deep beneath the chapel," she said, "among the vaults — that is where he must be. I shall be safe if I hasten now. Oh, so safe — quite safe!"

She did hasten, and another moment brought her to the foot of the stairs. A door in the chapel-wall terminated them. That was the door against which Mrs. Oakley had heard the dead body strike with such a frightful crash when Lupin had cast it down the stairs. It was swinging open now.

Another moment and she was in the chapel.

From out of the aperture, occasioned by the lifting up of a large square

trap-door in the centre of the chapel floor, there came a faint stream of light. Mrs. Oakley knew that that trap-door led to the vaults. She knew that a flight of steps was immediately beneath it which lead to the loathsome receptacles of the dead, where the pious members of Mr. Lupin's flock were laid when they and this world had bidden each other adieu. She knew that he derived no despicable revenue from letting such lodgings to the dead.

And he was down there with his victim — the first person that he ever permitted to lie there without a fee!

Mrs. Oakley, to reach the chapel door, must needs pass quite close to the open trap-door; and as she neared it, a terrible curiosity took possession of her — it was to see what Lupin was doing below — it was to ascertain in what way he disposed of his victim's body. She thought that she ought to see that. She thought, then, that she could tell all, and bring the hounds of justice to the very spot where the murdered woman lay.

She paused for a moment upon the brink of the trap, and then, by an impulse that at the moment seemed, and was, irresistible, she began the descent among the vaults.

These vaults were quite dignified by being so called. They were nothing but cellars — nothing in the world but damp gloomy cellars — and Lupin made as much of them as he did of the chapel overhead. The corpses lay there thick and three-fold. A ghostly company! and yet Lupin had many underground lodgings to let.

What cared he if the fumes from the dead came up, and made havoc upon hot Sundays among the living? What cared he what mischief the charnel-house beneath the planks did to the old and to the young? His own constitution, he had a strong impression, could be fortified by copious libations of brandy. Probably he was wrong in his practice, but he had faith in his remedy, and that was a great thing — a very great thing, indeed.

Mrs. Oakley slowly crept down the steps leading to the vaults. She was guided by the faint light of Lupin's lantern, which was she knew not where. Twice she paused to listen if he were coming, as in such a case she would have flown back upon the wings of terror, but she heard nothing, and she passed onward.

Twelve steps led to the lowest depth upon which the vaults were situated. Then there was a kind of passage, upon which were flag stones very roughly and clumsily laid down. Right and left of this passage the vaults were. It wound completely round the chapel, but she had not to go very far to ascertain where Lupin was at work. The light of the lantern guided her to the half-open door of the vault, within which he was at work.

CHAPTER CVI.

MR. LUPIN FINDS HIMSELF IN AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT.

MRS. OAKLEY PEEPED INTO THE VAULT, but she held herself in readiness to fly at a moment's notice, and then she thought she could easily hide among the pews in the chapel. Nothing, she thought, could be very well easier than such a course. Could she not hide in the very pew that she had for a long time called her own? And then by watching Lupin, she should have the advantage of seeing in a moment when he had done his work, and there would then be little trouble in eluding him.

On tip-toe, Mrs. Oakley advanced to the half-opened door of the vault, and peeped in upon the man, who thought himself so very safe. The eye of heaven, he must have thought, saw him; but he would have staked his life forthwith upon the fact, that no human observation was bent upon his actions; and yet there was some one for whom he entertained the greatest contempt — one whom he would have defied to injure him, gathering up evidence to hang him.

Go on, Lupin. Bury your victim. But don't think yourself so very safe just yet. It is an old saying, that "Murder will out." Do you think that yours will prove the exception?

From a recess in the wall Lupin had dragged a coffin. It was an old one and rather rotten, so that by the aid of a small crowbar that he had there — what use did Lupin find for a crowbar in the vaults beneath his chapel? Was it to rip open the coffins and rob even the dead? Well, well — by the aid of this crowbar, he soon forced open the lid of the coffin.

He stood in it then, and stamped down the remains with his feet to make room for the murdered body.

Mrs. Oakley sickened at this; she had not quite expected to see such a horror as that. It appeared to her at the moment, to be worse than the murder above stairs. She really felt quite faint as she saw him.

When he had flattened the nearly decayed body in the coffin as much as he could, he lifted the corpse of his victim from the floor of the vault. It was still closely enveloped in the large sheet, although at one part the blood had begun to make its way through all the folds upon folds of that wrapper, and he threw it into the coffin. It more than filled it.

Poor Mrs. Oakley shut her eyes; she knew what he was going to do. She knew it from what he had done, and she saw it in his eyes. He was of course

MR. LUPIN CRUSHES THE CORPSE TO MAKE ROOM FOR HIS MURDERED WIFE.

going to tread down the dead body of her he had murdered, in the same way that he had already trodden down the half-decomposed one in the coffin.

Strange companionship! How little the very respectable defunct, who had been expensively placed in one of the vaults, could have imagined that she — it was a female — that she should be trodden down as flat as any pancake, to make room for the Reverend Josiah Lupin's murdered wife!

"To what base uses may we come as last."

Mrs. Oakley heard him treading and stamping, and then she opened her

eyes, and she saw him fitting on the lid of the coffin again. He had made it hold its double burthen.

And now she had surely seen all that she came to see, and yet with a frightful fascination she lingered as though spell-bound to the spot. She thought that she had plenty of time. Of course Lupin would put the coffin into its recess again, and that would take him some time. It would, with its additional weight, certainly be no easy task, but he set about it, and it is astonishing what herculean labours people will perform, when their necks are to answer for any delay or dereliction of the duty. Lupin dragged the coffin to its receptacle on a low shelf, and fairly hitched one end of it in the aperture made for its reception.

By the assistance of the lever he pushed it fairly in, and then he paused and wiped his brow.

"It is done," he said.

He leaned heavily against the damp wall.

"It is done — it is done. This will be one of the undiscovered murders that are done in London. I am safe now. Nobody will miss her — nobody will look for her — nobody will dream that this vault can possibly conceal such a crime; and now that the terror of it, and the horror of doing it, is all over, I feel like a new man, and am much rejoiced."

"Rejoiced," thought Mrs. Oakley with a shudder.

"She was the torment of my life," added Lupin. "I knew no peace while she lived. Success had no charm for me. Go where I would, think of what I would, do what I would, I always had the dread of that woman before my eyes; but now — now I am rid of her."

He took up his lantern from the floor of the vault.

Now it was time for Mrs. Oakley to fly. She turned and hastily ran up the staircase of the vault. The idea took possession, and it was after all only a fancy, that Lupin was pursuing her with the crow-bar in his hand. But how it urged her on. What wings it gave her, but confused her the while, so that instead of hurrying to the chapel door, and making a bold effort to open it as she had meant to do, she only sought the door in the wall, and the staircase down which she had come to the chapel, nor did she pause until she found herself in the murder room.

Then with a heart beating so wildly, that she was fain to lay her hands upon it in the hope of stopping its maddening pulsation, she stopped to listen.

It was only fancy. It was a delusion. No Lupin was pursuing her from the vaults.

"Thank Heaven!" she said. "Thank Heaven! but oh, why am I here? Why have I come here again, instead of making my escape by the chapel door? This is a fatal error. Oh, Heaven save me! Is there yet time? Does he linger yet sufficiently long in the vaults, to enable me to take refuge among the pews?"

These were questions which the stillness in the chapel below seemed to

answer in the affirmative, and once more Mrs. Oakley approached the staircase to descend it. She got three steps down the stairs, and then she heard a footstep below. It was too late. Lupin was coming up. Yes, it was too late!

He approached with a heavy and regular footfall. That heaviness and regularity were sufficient evidences that he had not heard her, and had no suspicion that she nor any one else had been a witness to his crime. So far she was comparatively safe, but the blessed chance of escape without any meeting with him was gone.

Up — up, he came! Mrs. Oakley retreated step by step as he advanced. She passed into the chamber, which may for distinction's sake be called her own room, and there she cast herself upon the couch, and closed her eyes shudderingly.

She had a presentiment that Lupin would come to look at her to see that she still slumbered. She was right.

He had not been in the room where the deed of blood had been committed many minutes, when he opened the door of communication between the two apartments, and came in not with the lantern, but with the candle he had left burning upon the table. He did not come above three steps into the room, and then he spoke —

"Sister Oakley, it is time to pray."

Mrs. Oakley moved not — spoke not.

"Sister Oakley, will you be so good as to rise, and go to the corner of the next street on a little errand for me?"

How tempting this was! but Mrs. Oakley had the discretion to imagine the wolf in the sheep's clothing now; she saw in all this only a clear mode of ascertaining if she were awake or not, and she would not speak nor move.

This was, in truth, a wise policy upon the part of Mrs. Oakley. That it was so, became abundantly apparent when Lupin spoke again.

"All is right," he said. "The opiate has done its work bravely, I feel easy now, and yet I don't know how I came for a moment to feel otherwise, or to imagine for a moment there was danger from this woman. If I only had any proof that there was, I would soon put it beyond her power to be mischievous. But, no — no, she has slept soundly and knows nothing."

It required, indeed, no ordinary nerve during this speech of Lupin's, for Mrs. Oakley to preserve the stillness of apparent deep sleep; but we none of us know what we can do until we are put to it; after all, what a just punishment to Mrs. Oakley was all that she was now going through. She had had more faith in that bold, bad, mountebank of a parson than in Heaven itself, and she was justly punished.

Having then made this trial of her sleeping state, Mr. Lupin retired with the candle again, quite satisfied — at least one would have thought so; and as he had talked of the amazing ease of mind he felt now that he had, murdered

his wife, it was rather surprising that he did not go to bed and sleep serenely instead of pacing his room to and fro for more than four hours mumbling disjointed words and sentences to himself as he did so, for Mrs. Oakley heard him, but she did not dare to move.

Suddenly he flung open the door between the two rooms, and in a startling voice he cried —

"Fire! fire!"

It was truly a wonder that upon this Mrs. Oakley did not jump up, it sounded so very alarming; but it was not to be, and with a presence of mind that surely was not all her own, she yet remained profoundly still.

"Fool that I am," muttered Lupin, "to be continually assailed by dread of this woman, when everything assures me that she has been in a sound sleep caused by a powerful narcotic, during the whole night; but the morning is now near at hand, and she will soon awaken. I have already got what money I can, from her, and I must give her breakfast and then send her off. It would be useless to kill her."

The manner in which Lupin pronounced these last words was very alarming for it implied rather that he was asking himself the question whether it would be useless to kill her or not, than the expression of a decided opinion; but still Mrs. Oakley moved not.

Lupin, suddenly, as though he had quite made up his mind not to trouble himself about her any more, slammed to the door of communication between the two rooms.

Mrs. Oakley breathed freely again — that is, comparatively freely; and yet what a shocking agonizing idea it was that she might have to breakfast with that dreadful man. What should she say to him? — how should she look at him?

The dawn was coming, and she shook with apprehension to find that such was the fact, and Lupin had said that she would soon awaken; so, effect to awaken she must, in order to keep up the delusion; but how should she manage then to deceive the suspicious vigilance of such a man?

But all this had to be encountered. How was it to be avoided? She could do nothing but arm herself with such fortitude as she could call to her aid.

Oh, how she wished herself in her own parlour behind the shop, and upon her knees asking the pardon of her husband for all that she had done, and for all that she had not done! What would she have not given even to have seen the honest face of big Ben, the beef-eater!

The light of the coming day grew each moment stronger, and at length Mrs. Oakley thought it would be prudent to seem to wake up, and calling out "Mr. Lupin! Mr. Lupin!" she rose from the couch.

Lupin opened the door of communication between the two rooms, and glared at her.

"Did you call, sister Oakley?"

"Yes, reverend sir, surely I have been sleeping, and have forgotten some of the prayers."

"No; truly, sister Oakley, I have watched for you, and I can assure you that you will enter into the kingdom always, provided that you are regular in your contributions to the chapel, for at the last that of a surety will be demanded to be known of you, sister Oakley."

"I have been thinking of that, brother Lupin," said Mrs. Oakley, "and this day week I will manage to bring two pounds."

"Only two?"

"I will make it three, if I can, brother Oakley; but my head feels quite confused and giddy. It is very strange."

"Ah," whispered Lupin to himself. "That is the natural effect of the narcotic. It has worked well. Then," he said aloud, "sister Oakley, I pray you to walk in to this room, and I will provide for you what the profane world call the breakfast, for although food for the soul is in alway preferable to food for the body, yet we must not always neglect our earthly tabernacle."

"I am much obliged to you," said Mrs. Oakley. "You may depend upon my regular offerings to the chapel."

CHAPTER CVII.

MRS. OAKLEY DISSEMBLES.

WITH TREMBLING STEPS, MRS. OAKLEY followed Lupin, the murderer, into his own room. Of course she was resolved to see nothing, and to make no remark that could in any way direct the attention of Lupin more closely to her, and, oh, how she panted for some opportunity of rushing into the street and crying aloud to the passers by, that the pious hypocrite was a murderer. But as yet she felt that her life depended upon the manner in which she played her part.

"Truly, sister Oakley," said Lupin, "I hope you passed a quiet and peaceful night. Amen!"

"Very," replied Mrs. Oakley.

"Ah, I wish I could say as much, sister Oakley."

"And can you not?"

"Alas! no, I had some dreams — some very bad dreams; but Satan always

will be doing something, you know, sister. Do you know I dreamt of a murder!"

As he uttered these words, no Grand Inquisitor could have looked more keenly into the eyes of a victim, than did Mr. Lupin into the face of Mrs. Oakley; but she divined his motive, she felt that he was trying her, but she had even in such a moment sufficient presence of mind to keep her eyes steadily upon his face, and to say with seeming unconcern, "Murder, did you say, Mr. Lupin?"

"Yes, I did say murder, and *you*—" He pointed at her with his finger, but finding that she only looked surprised, rather, he added—"and *you* are one of the elect, I rejoice to say, sister Oakley. Amen! It is a capital thing to be saved!"

"It is, indeed, Mr. Lupin."

"Well—well. Let us have the carnal meal, called breakfast. I will proceed, God willing, to the corner of the court, and purchase two eggs, Mrs. Oakley, if it be pleasing to you."

"Anything you like, Mr. Lupin; I have but a poor appetite in the morning, always."

Mr. Lupin put on his hat, and after slowly turning round and casting an anxious glance upon the room and every object within, to assure himself that he had left no evidences of his crime behind him, he slowly left to get the eggs.

Mrs. Oakley heard him descend the stairs, and she heard the door close behind him. Then she asked herself if that were really and truly an opportunity of escape that she dared attempt to avail herself of, or if it were only one in seeming, and that if she were upon its provocation to attempt to leave the place, she would only be confirming the slight suspicions that might be in the mind of Lupin, concerning her privity to his deed of blood.

He had talked of only going to the corner of the court, and how did she know that he had even gone so far? Might not the message about the eggs be merely a pretended one, to see what she would do? This was a consideration that kept her, tremblingly, where she was.

About five minutes elapsed, and then she heard a knock at the door below. Who could that be? Mr. Lupin had a key with which he always let himself in, so it could not be he. What was she to think? what was she to do? Suddenly then she heard the door opened, and then after a few moments delay some footstep sounded upon the stairs, but it was very unlike that of Lupin, the murderer.

The delightful thought came over the imagination of Mrs. Oakley, that some one was coming to whom she might at once make an avowal of all she knew of Lupin's guilt, and who might be able to protect her from the vengeance of the murderer. She rose, and peeped through the key-hole.

She saw Lupin coming up the stairs. He was making quite a laborious effort to tread differently to what was usual with him, and from that moment

Mrs. Oakley felt that she was to be subjected to some extraordinary trial of her self-possession. She crept back to her seat, and waited in terror.

In the course of a few moments, Lupin, after treading with a heavy thump upon every stair, instead of gliding up in his usual manner, reaching the door at which he tapped, and then in an assumed voice, which if she, Mrs. Oakley, had not known he was there, would have deceived her, he said—

"Hilloa! who's at home?"

"Who's there?" said Mrs. Oakley.

"It's John Smith," cried Lupin. "I am an officer of the police. Has anybody anything to say to me here? They tell me in the court that some odd noises were heard in the night."

"I don't know anything about it," said Mrs. Oakley, "but if you will come in and wait until Mr. Lupin comes in, he may like to see you."

"Oh, no, no, no! It's no matter. Good morning, ma'am."

Down stairs went Lupin, thinking he had acted the officer to perfection, and making no doubt in the world but that he had thoroughly deceived Mrs. Oakley, who he was now quite satisfied knew absolutely nothing about the murder.

In the course of a couple of minutes, Mr. Lupin in his own character came gliding in.

"I am afraid I have kept you waiting, sister Oakley."

"Oh, not at all, but there has been a man there who says his name is Smith, and he—"

"I met him! I met him! It is all right. He heard something going on in the next house, I suppose, and mistook it for this. Pray cook the eggs to your liking, sister Oakley, and help yourself to anything. Don't be particular, sister Oakley, but make yourself at home."

"I will, reverend sir, I will."

Mrs. Oakley was really playing her part very well, but she fancied each moment that the murderer would see something in her manner to give him a suspicion that she knew too much for his safety.

She was wrong though, for upon the contrary, Mr. Lupin felt quite satisfied that the secret of his guilt was confined to his own breast.

"I pray you, sister Oakley," he said, "to eat freely of my humble fare, and after breakfast we will have a prayer."

It seemed to Mrs. Oakley, now that she had awakened to a sense of the awful hypocrisy of Mr. Lupin, something very horrible for him to talk of having a prayer; but she took care not to show what she felt in that particular.

"How kind and good of you," she said.

"Aye, truly, sister Oakley, I am kind and good, and yet there are envious folks in the world, who I dare say would not hesitate to give even me a bad name."

"Impossible, surely."

"I would it were, I would it were, my dear sister Oakley, I would it were impossible."

"It seems to me, reverend sir, as though it would not be in the power of poor human nature to praise you too much; but it is time that I should think of going home now, if you please."

"Well, sister, if you must go home among the heathens and the Philistines, I will not hinder you; but with the hope of seeing you soon again, I will now offer up a prayer."

It was truly sickening even to Mrs. Oakley, whose feelings the reader will think could not be very fine, to see such an arch hypocrite offering up a prayer to that Deity whom he must so bitterly have offended by his awful crimes.

But Mr. Lupin cut the prayer tolerably short, and then giving to Mrs. Oakley what he called the kiss of peace, and to which, loathsome as it was from him, she felt herself forced to submit, he bade her good day.

And now, indeed, she began to entertain a sanguine hope, that she would be released from his company, and she should soon be in a condition to denounce him to justice for the awful crime which she had seen him commit. She could not possibly avoid a slight feeling of satisfaction to appear upon her face.

"You seem pleased," said Lupin.

"I am, reverend sir."

"May I ask what at?"

"Ah, how can I be otherwise than delighted, when I am assured by such a saint upon earth as yourself that I am one of the elect?"

This was an answer with which, whether it was satisfactory or not, Mr. Lupin was, as it were, compelled to put up with; but taking up his hat, he said—

"Truly, sister Oakley, it will become me to see you a part of the way home."

Mrs. Oakley expressed her satisfaction with the holy man's company, and they both descended the stairs together. She felt, however, an exquisite pang of alarm upon finding that Lupin led her down the staircase that led to the chapel, and not down the one which would have conducted them to the ordinary door of exit from the domestic portion of the building.

But even with all the dread upon her soul that he might be meditating some awful act in the chapel, she felt that she must assume a calmness though she felt it not.

"Why this leads to the chapel," she said. She thought it would sound more natural for her to make that remark, than to say nothing about it.

"Yes, sister it does, and here is the trap-door that conducts to the vaults."

He suddenly turned upon her, and clutched her by the arm, as he spoke. Poor Mrs. Oakley then really thought that her last hour was come, and that all along in pretending to have no suspicion of her, he was only dissembling. It was a mercy she did not at that terrible moment commit herself in some

way. Surely Heaven supported her, for she did not.

"Reverend sir," she said, "what mean you?"

"What mean I? I mean will you descend to the vaults with me."

"And pray? Yes, if you wish it."

"Nothing — nothing," muttered Lupin. "What a fool I am. I might have been well convinced long ago, and yet I cannot forbear new trials. All is safe, all is safe. This way, sister Oakley, this way. I will only see you to the corner of your own street."

"Many thanks."

They both emerged from the chapel. Lupin slammed the door after him, and arm in arm they walked up the court together.

Poor Mrs. Oakley felt that to be the most trying moment of all for her nerves. While she had much to do — while she was alone with Lupin in the domestic portion of the chapel, and while she knew that the least slip of the tongue, or the least want of control over her feelings might be her death — she conducted herself gallantly; but now when she was fairly in the open air, now that she was in comparative safety, her feelings almost got the better of her.

It was only by a powerful effort that she could at all control them.

She felt that by suddenly quitting the arm of Lupin, and making a rush for it, she might escape him, but then she did not want him to escape the consequences of his crime, for Mrs. Oakley had a woman's sympathy with the fate even of the not very respectable Mrs. Lupin. Besides, with all the vindictive hate that he might be supposed to feel upon finding that his guilt was known, he might yet pursue her, and before she could find aid, kill her.

"I must still dissemble," she thought, "and speak this most monstrous villain fairly."

"Quite a charming morning, reverend sir," she said.

"Very," said Lupin.

"I really am afraid that I am sadly intruding upon your time, by letting you come with me?"

"Oh, no — no — no."

He seemed to be getting very thoughtful, and Mrs. Oakley was proportionably more and more upon her guard, for she felt convinced that if he really thought she knew anything of his guilt he would kill her.

Now they emerged from the court; but it was yet rather an early hour in the morning, and but very few passengers were in the streets. The only person that was tolerably close to them was an elderly woman, and Mrs. Oakley much as she panted for an opportunity of separating herself from Lupin, felt that the time to do so had not yet come.

On they went, in the direction of Mrs. Oakley's house, that house that she now began to feel she had so much neglected, to look after what, in the language of scripture, might truly have been termed "Strange Idols" — that home which

she now looked to as a haven of safety from the terror of death itself.

"How silent you are, sister," said Lupin.

"Yes, I was thinking."

"Of what?" he said, fiercely.

"Of how much I should be able to take from Mr. Oakley's till, to bring to you, this day week."

"Oh! oh!"

"You may depend, reverend sir, it shall be as much as possible. Of course I must be cautious, though."

"Oh, yes — yes."

They had now reached within a few paces of the corner of the street, and yet Mrs. Oakley had seen no one upon whom, from their appearance, she thought she could rely to call to for aid against the murderer. Suddenly then round the corner, there came a bulky form. The heavy tread of some one of unusual weight sounded upon the street pavement.

Big Ben, the beef-eater, with his arms behind him, and in a very thoughtful mood, came pacing slowly along.

As Mrs. Oakley said afterwards, her heart, at that moment, was in her mouth.

She could not dissemble an instant longer with Lupin, but with a loud shriek that echoed far and wide in the streets, she suddenly sprang from him, crying —

"Ben, Ben, dear strong Ben, seize this man! He is a murderer!"

"D—n! Done at last!" cried Lupin.

He turned to fly, but treading upon a piece of cabbage-leaf that was upon the pavement, down he fell.

"Easy does it," said Ben, and he flung himself upon the top of Lupin, spreading out his arms and legs, and holding him by sheer weight as firmly to the pavement as though he had been nailed there.

"Help, help, help! Murder! help!" shouted Mrs. Oakley. "Murder, murder, murder!"

People began to flock to them from all parts. Lupin succeeded in getting a knife from his pocket, but Mrs. Oakley held him by the wrist with both hands, and in a minute more he was in the grasp of two strong men, one of whom was a police-officer, and who gloried in the job.

CHAPTER CVIII.

RETURNS TO MRS. LOVETT, AND SHOWS HOW SHE GOT OUT OF THE RIVER.

OUR READERS HAVE BEEN AWARE for a long time past that Mrs. Lovett was no common, everyday, sort of woman, and what we are about to relate concerning her, will be further proof that way tending, if it should be by any sceptical person in any way required.

To all appearance, Todd had seen the last of her on the river. But Todd was born to be deceived, and at the time he should have recollected an old adage, to the effect that, folks who are born to be hanged are very seldom drowned.

We shall see.

Mrs. Lovett did go down, but as fortune and the amazingly strong current of the river would have it, she came up again, with a barge between her and Todd, and involuntarily laying hold of the side of the barge, there she remained, too exhausted to cry out, until Todd was far off.

She was seen at last by a man who was at the window of a public-house, and in the course of ten minutes after Todd had began to congratulate himself upon the demise of Mrs. Lovett, she was in a warm bed at the public-house, and her clothes drying at the kitchen-fire.

She had scarcely been for a moment at all insensible; and as she lay in bed she had a most accurate perception of all that happened. The reader may suppose that the feelings of Mrs. Lovett towards Sweeney Todd, were by no means ameliorated by the morning's proceedings.

And yet how calculating she was in her rage!

As the effects of her submersion wore off, and her ordinary strength came back to her, her mind became intently fixed upon but one object, and that was how to be completely and bitterly revenged upon Todd.

"He shall hang," she said. "He shall hang, but I must think of the means, while I likewise take care to avoid the gallows myself; but he shall hang, let the consequences be what they may."

The landlady of the public-house was very assiduous in her attention to Mrs. Lovett, and while she was thus thinking of her revenge upon Todd, she (the landlady) made her appearance in the room with a steaming glass of mulled and spiced wine.

"I hope you are better," she said; "and if you will give me the name and address of your friends, I will send to them at once."

"Friends!" said Mrs. Lovett. "How came you to think that I had any friends?"

"Well, I hardly thought you were without. Don't most folks have friends of some sort or another?"

"Ah, I had forgotten. I have a friend with me — a very dear friend, who will not forsake me. I have more of them at home — for I have a home."

"Oh," thought the landlady, "she is raving."

"Bring me my stays," said Mrs. Lovett. *

The stays, which, together with the rest of her apparel, now had got quite dry, was brought to her, and in a little secret pocket in them, Mrs. Lovett dived with her two fingers, and found a damp five pound note.

"Take that," she said, "for your trouble. I do not want any change. Only be so good now as to help me to dress, and tell me what the time is."

"Three o'clock," said the landlady, "and I'm sure you can't think how pleased I am that you are better. Do you really think you are strong enough to go home yet?"

"Yes. What I have to do at home will lend me strength, if I wanted it."

Mrs. Lovett was soon dressed, and at her request a coach was sent for; and in the course of half-an-hour from the time that the landlady had asked her if she should send for her friends, she, Mrs. Lovett, was bowling along the dense thoroughfares of the city to her home.

What pen could describe the dark and malignant thoughts that filled her brain as she proceeded? What language would be strong enough to depict the storm of passion that raged in the bosom of that imperious woman?

It must suffice, that she made herself a solemn promise of vengeance against Todd, let the risk or the actual consequences to herself be what they might. If with perfect safety to herself she could be revenged upon him — of course she would; but she resolved not to hesitate, even if it involved a self-sacrifice, so full of the very agony of rage was she.

"He shall hang — he shall hang!"

Such were the words she uttered as the lumbering hackney-coach reached Fleet-street.

For all she knew to the contrary, Todd might be looking from his door, for that he had gone home in great triumph at the thought of having got rid of her she did not doubt; and so as it was just then a great object with her to keep him in that pleasant delusion, she got quite down among the straw at the bottom of the hackney-coach.

But she kept her eyes — those bright metallic-looking eyes, which, with a questionable taste, had been so much admired by the lawyers' clerks of the Temple and Lincoln's Inn — she kept her eyes just on the edge of the coach

* *A "pair of stays" was a woman's two-piece rigid torso-and-waist support piece, similar to a corset.*

MRS. LOVETT FINDS SOMEBODY OUT — AT HOME.

window, so that she might have a passing glance at Todd's shop.

Todd was at the door.

How pleased and self-satisfied he looked! He was rubbing his huge hands slowly together, and a grim smile was on his horrible features.

Mrs. Lovett clinched her hands until her nails made marks in the palms of them that did not come out for hours, and in a harsh growling voice, she said —

"Ah, grin on, grin on, fiend — your hours from now shall be numbered. You shall hang, hang, and I shall hope to see you in your last agony. If any bribe can induce the hangman, by some common bungling to protract your pain, he has but to name his price and he shall have it."

The coach rolled on.

Mrs. Lovett rose up from among the straw with a shudder. The immersion in the river had not drowned her certainly, but it had done her no good; and she could not conceal from herself, that a serious illness might very probably result from her unexpected cold bath.

"Never mind!" she said. "Never mind! What care I so that I complete my revenge against Todd? If I die after that it will not much matter. I will have my revenge."

The coach stopped at the corner of Bell-yard.

"That will do," said Mrs. Lovett as she pulled the check-string. "That will do. I will alight here."

She paid the coachman double the amount of his fare, so he only muttered a few curses between his teeth, and drove off.

With quite a staggering step, for Mrs. Lovett was anything but well, she walked to her own shop. The door was closed, and she looked through the upper half of it which was of glass, just in time to see the highly trustworthy personage whom she had left in charge of the concern, place a bottle to her lips, and slowly lift it up.

Mrs. Lovett opened the door, just as the titillating contents of the bottle were rippling over the palate of the lady, who had had such an adventure with Todd.

"Wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Lovett.

Down fell the bottle, and smashed into many fragments on the floor of the shop. An unmistakable odour of gin filled the air.

"So," cried Mrs. Lovett, "this is the way you employ your time is it, while I am away?"

"T — T — Todd," stuttered the woman, "T — T — Todd is such a nice man."

"Todd, do you say?"

"Yes — I — I say — T — Todd is a nice man."

"Answer me, wretch, instantly. Has he been here? Speak, or I will shake your wretched life out of you."

Mrs. Lovett suited the action to the word, and the word to the action, for she clutched her substitute by the throat, and shook her vehemently.

"D — D — Don't Mrs. L. — I — will — tell all — all. I will indeed."

"Speak then. Has Todd been here?"

"In course, and quite a nice man — I — I may say — quite a gin — I mean a nice man — a cordial old Tom. No! Cream of the — Todd."

"Wretch!"

Mrs. Lovett paced the shop for a few moments in an agony of rage. Todd presuming upon her death had actually been there, no doubt upon an expedition to ransack the place. A touch to the lock of the parlour door, told her at once that it was open, and from that moment she no longer could doubt but that the whole house had been subject to the scrutiny of Sweeney Todd.

"The wretch!" she said. "He thought to find enough no doubt to reward his pains, but he has been deceived in that hope, I feel well assured. What I have here, I have too well hidden for any search of a few hours to find it. If they were to pull the house to pieces, brick by brick and timber by timber, they might find something to pay them for their labour."

The lady with the partiality for gin, now seemed to be lapsing into a state of somnolency, but Mrs. Lovett gave her rather a rough shake.

"Tell me," she said, "when did this man come, and what did he say to you?"

"Gin!"

"I ask you what Todd said to you?"

"Oh, yes. I — really — fine times. Old Tom Todd — cream of the Todd."

It was quite clear that she was too far gone in drunkenness for anything distinct or to be relied upon to be got from her, and the only thing Mrs. Lovett had to do, was to consider what to do with her. If she threw her out of the shop into the court, the probability was, that a crowd would collect round her, and that was just what Mrs. Lovett did not want. Indeed, for all she, Mrs. Lovett knew, the drunken woman might stagger round to Todd's, and let him know what of all things, she wished to keep secret from him, namely, that she had returned.

Mrs. Lovett had not yet formed her plans, and certainly until she had done so, she did not want any premature knowledge of her rescue from drowning to reach the ears of Todd.

But what to do with the drunken woman was the question. Mrs. Lovett had to think a little over that. At length, however, she made up her mind, and approaching the lady who had such a partiality for Old Tom, she said —

"Did you ever taste my cordial spirit, that I have up stairs in my bedroom?"

"Eh?"

"Come, I will give you a bottle of it, if you will walk up stairs. Only try."

By the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, the gin heroine rose and tottered to the staircase; Mrs. Lovett pushed her on, and stair by stair she managed to mount to the first floor. It was by far too great a job to get her any further, so opening the door of the back-room, Mrs. Lovett pushed her in with violence, and slammed the door upon her.

"Lie there and rot," she said, "so that you are out of my way. Lie there and rot, idiot."

Without then pausing to cast another thought or look at her victim, Mrs. Lovett walked down the staircase again to the shop.

When there, she felt a kind of faintness come over her, and she was compelled to sit down for a few minutes to recover herself.

"How much I have to think of," she said, when she had a little recovered. "How much I have to think of, and how little a time in which to think. Something must be done before midnight. Todd will fly if I do not do something."

A racking pain in her head, compelled her to rest it upon her hands.

"If I thought," she said, "that I should get very ill — if I thought that there was any chance that I should die, I would go at once to the police office and denounce him. But no — 'tis only a passing pang, and I shall soon be better — shall soon be myself again."

She did not speak now for some few moments, and during that time she rocked to and fro, for the pain in her head was excessive. It did not last, however, but gradually went off, leaving only a sensation of dullness behind it, with some amount of confusion.

Then Mrs. Lovett, as well as she was able, set about thinking calmly and dispassionately, as she hoped, about the best means of satisfying her revenge against Todd. That that revenge should be complete and ample, she was resolved.

Gradually she began to work out a plan of operations, and as she did so, her eyes brightened, and something of her old expression of bold confidence came back to her.

She rose and paced the shop.

"Yes, the villain shall die," she said, "by the hands of the executioner — I swear it! And he shall know, too, that it is I who have doomed him to such a death. He shall feel that, had he kept faith with we all would have been well; but now he shall hang — hang! — and I shall look on and see his torments!"

CHAPTER CIX.

JOHANNA HAS PLENTY OF COMPANY AT TODD'S.

We return to Johanna, whom for a few hours, owing to the pressure of other circumstances, we have been compelled, with all manner of reluctance, to neglect.

Recent events, although they had by no manner of means tended to decrease the just confidence which Johanna had in her own safety, had yet much agitated her; and she at times feared that she should not be able to carry

on the farce of composure before Todd much longer.

"Charley, my dear boy," said Todd, "you are a very good lad, indeed, and I like you."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, sir — very glad."

"That is right; but when I say I like any one, I do not confine myself to that mere expression of liking, and there an end. Of course, as a religious man, I love my enemies, and feel myself bound to do so — eh, Charley?"

"Of course, sir."

Poor Johanna had no resource but to seem to be deceived by this most disgusting hypocrisy.

"But although," continued Todd, waving a razor in the air; "although I may love my enemies, I need not to go out of my way, you know, Charley, to do good things to them as I would to my friends; but you I will do all I can for; and as it may very materially help you to get an honest independence in the course of a little time, I will manage to accommodate you with sleeping here to-night and all nights henceforth."

"How kind of you, sir!"

"I am glad you appreciate it, Charley; and I feel quite sure that your slumber will be most profound."

Todd, upon this, made one of his diabolical faces, and then, taking his hat, he marched out, merely adding as he crossed the threshold of the door —

"I shall not be long gone, Charley."

The day was on the decline, and a strong impression came over Johanna's mind that something in particular would happen before it wholly passed away into darkness. She almost trembled to think what that something could be, and that she might be compelled to be a witness to violence, from which her gentle spirit revolted; and had it not been that she had determined nothing should stop her from investigating the fate of poor Mark Ingestrie, she could even then have rushed into the street in despair.

But as the soft daylight deepened into the dim shadows of evening, she grew more composed, and was better able, with a calmer spirit, to wait the progress of events.

"I am alone once more," said Johanna, "in this dreadful place. Again he leaves me with all my dark and terrible thoughts of the fate of him whom I have so fondly loved thronging around my heart; and this night, no doubt, he thinks to kill me! Oh, Mark Ingestrie! if I were only but quite sure that you had gone to that world from whence there is no return, I think I could, with scarce a sigh, let this dreadful man send me after you!"

Johanna rested her head upon her hands, and wept bitterly.

Suddenly a voice close to her said —

"St. Dunstan."

She sprang from the little low seat upon which she was, and, with a cry of

alarm, was about to make a rush from the shop, when the intruder caught her by the arm, saying —

"Don't you know me, Johanna?"

"Ah, Sir Richard! my dear friend, it is, indeed, you, and I am safe again — I am safe!"

"Certainly you are safe; and permit me to say that you have all along been tolerably safe, Johanna. But how very incautious you are. Here I have come into the shop, and actually stood by you for some few moments, you knowing nothing of it! What now if Todd had so come in?"

"He would have killed me."

"He might have done so. But now all danger is quite over, for you will have protectors at your hand. Do you know where Todd has gone?"

"I do not."

"Well, it don't matter. Let me look at this largest cupboard. I wonder if it will hold two of my men? Let me see. Oh, yes, easily and comfortably. I will be back in a moment."

He went no further than the door, and when he came back, he brought with him Mr. Crotchet and another person, and pointing to the cupboard, he said —

"You will stow yourselves there, if you please, and keep quiet until I call upon you to come out."

"I believe you," said Crotchet. "Lord bless you, we shall be snug enough. How is you, Miss O.? I suppose by this time you feels quite at home in your breech —"

"Silence!" said Sir Richard. "Go to your duty at once, Crotchet. Miss Oakley is in no humour to attend to you just now."

Upon this, Mr. Crotchet and the other man got into the cupboard, and a chair was placed against it; and then Sir Richard said to Johanna —

"I will come in to be shaved when I know that Todd is here, and your trials will soon be over."

"To be shaved? — By him?"

"Yes. But believe me there is no danger. Any one may come here now to be shaved with perfect safety. I have made such arrangements that Todd cannot take another life."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Here is a letter from your friend, Miss Wilmot, which I promised her I would deliver to you. Be careful how you let Todd see it. Read it at once, and then you had better destroy it at once. I must go now; but, of course, if you should be in any danger, call upon my men in the cupboard to assist you, and they will do so at once, although it may spoil my plot a little."

"Oh! how much I owe you."

"Nay, nay, no more upon that head. Farewell now, for a brief space. We

shall very soon meet again. Keep a fair and agreeable face to Todd, if you can, for I do not wish, if it can possibly be helped, anything to mar the plot I have got up for his absolute conviction upon abundant testimony."

Sir Richard shook hands with Johanna, and then hastily left the shop, for he did not wish just then to be found there by Todd, who might return at any moment.

The moment he was gone Johanna eagerly opened the letter that had been brought to her, and found it to contain the following words: —

My Dear Johanna, —

This is a selfish letter; for as I cannot see you, I think I should go mad if I did not write to you; so I do so for the ease of my own heart and brain. For the love of Heaven, and for the love of all you hold dear in this world, get away from Todd as quickly as you can; and when I see you again, I shall have something to say to you which will give you more pleasure than ever, even though with my bad advice, I have given you pain.

Sir Richard Blunt has kindly promised to give this to you, and you know that I am —

Your ever affectionate —

ARABELLA.

"Yes," said Johanna, when she had finished the epistle. "In truth I know you are ever my affectionate Arabella, and I am most happy in such a friend. But this must not meet Todd's eye. Ah! that footstep, I know it too well. He comes — he comes."

She had just hidden the letter, when Sweeney Todd made his appearance.

"Anybody been?" he asked.

"Yes, one man, but he would not wait."

"Ah, wanted to be shaved, I suppose; but no matter — no matter; and I hope you have been quiet, and not been attempting to indulge your curiosity in any way, since I have been gone. Hush! here's somebody coming. Why, it's old Mr. Wrankley, the tobacconist, I declare. Good-day to you, sir — shaved, I suppose? I'm glad you have come, sir, for I have been out till this moment. Hot water, Charley, directly, and hand me that razor."

Johanna, in handing Todd the razor, knocked the edge of it against the chair, and it being uncommonly sharp, cut a great slice of the wood off one of the arms of it.

"What shameful carelessness," said Todd; "I have half a mind to lay the strop over your back, sir; here you have spoilt a capital razor — not a bit of edge left upon it."

"Oh, excuse him, Mr. Todd — excuse him," said the old gentleman; "he's only a little lad, after all. Let me intercede for him."

"Very good, sir; if you wish me to look over it, of course I will; and, thank

God, we have a stock of razors, of course, always at hand. Is there any news stirring, sir?"

"Nothing that I know of, Mr. Todd, except it's the illness of Mr. Cummings, the overseer. They say he got home about twelve to his own house, in Chancery-lane, and ever since then he has been as sick as a dog, and all they can get him to say is, 'Oh, those pies — oh, those pies!'"

"Very odd, sir."

"Very. I think Mr. Cummings must be touched in the upper story, do you know, Mr. Todd. He's a very respectable man, but, between you and I, was never over bright."

"Certainly not, sir — certainly not. But it's a very odd case. What pies can he possibly mean, sir? Did you call when you came from home?"

"No. Ha, ha! I can't help laughing; but, ha, ha! I have come away from home on the sly, you see. The fact is, my wife's cousin — hilloa! — I think you have cut me."

"No, no — we can't cut anybody for three-halfpence, sir. I think I will just give you another lather, sir, before I polish you off. And so you have the pearls with you; well, how odd things come round, to be sure."

"What do you mean?"

"This shaving-brush is just in a good state now. Always as a shaving-brush is on the point of wearing out, it's the best. Charley, you will go at once to Mr. Cummings, and ask if he is any better; you need not hurry, that's a good lad. I am not at all angry with you now. And so, sir, they think at home that you have gone after some business over the water, do they, and have not the least idea that you have come to be shaved? There, be off, Charley — shut the door, that's a good lad, bless you."

When Johanna came back, the tobacconist was gone.

"Well," said Sweeney Todd, as he sharpened a razor very leisurely, "how is Mr. Cummings?"

"I found out his house, sir, with some difficulty, and they say he is better having gone to sleep."

"Oh, very good! I am going to look over some accounts in the parlour, so don't choose to be disturbed, you understand; and for the next ten minutes, if anybody comes, you will say I am out."

Sweeney Todd walked quite coolly into the parlour, and Johanna heard him lock the door on the inside; a strange, undefined sensation of terror crept over her, she knew not why, and she shuddered, as she looked around her. The cupboard door was not close shut, and she knew not what prompted her to approach and peep in. On the first shelf was the hat of the tobacconist: it was rather a remarkable one, and recognised in a moment.

"What has happened? Good God! what can have happened?" thought Johanna, as she staggered back, until she reached the shaving-chair, into which

she cast herself for support. Her eyes fell upon the arm which she had taken such a shaving off with the razor, but all was perfectly whole and correct; there was not the least mark of the cut that so recently had been given to it; and lost in wonder, Johanna, for more than a minute, continued looking for the mark of the injury she knew could not have been, by any possibility, effaced.

And yet she found it not, although there was the chair, just as usual, with its wide spreading arms and its worn, tarnished paint and gilding. No wonder that Johanna rubbed her eyes, and asked herself if she were really awake?

What could account for such a phenomenon? The chair was a fixture too, and the others in the shop were of a widely different make and construction, so it could not have been changed.

"Alas! alas!" mourned Johanna, "my mind is full of horrible surmises, and yet I can form no rational conjecture. I suspect everything, and know nothing. What can I do? What ought I to do, to relieve myself from this state of horrible suspense? Am I really in a place where, by some frightful ingenuity, murder has become bold and familiar, or can it be all a delusion?"

She covered her face with her hands for a time, and when she uncovered them, she saw that Sweeney Todd was staring at her with looks of suspicion from the inner room.

The necessity of instantly acting her part came over Johanna, and she gave a loud scream.

"What the devil is all this about?" said Todd, advancing with a sinister expression. "What's the meaning of it? I suspect —"

"Yes, sir," said Johanna, "and so do I; I must to-morrow have it out."

"Have what out?"

"My tooth, sir — it's been aching for some hours; did you ever have the toothache? If you did, you can feel for me, and not wonder that I lean my head upon my hands and groan."

Todd looked about half satisfied at this excuse of Johanna's, and for a few moments as he looked at her, she thought that after all she should have to call upon her friends in the cupboard to save her from the danger that his eyes, in their flashing ghastliness, threatened. Another moment, and her lips would have parted with the shrill cry of "Murder!" upon them, and then Heaven only knows what might have been the result; but he turned suddenly, and went into the parlour, muttering to himself —

"It is not worth while now, and this night ends it all — yes, this night ends it all."

He slammed the door violently behind him, and Johanna was relieved from the horror which his gaze had awakened, in her heart. She stood still, but gradually she recovered her former calmness — if calmness it could at all be called, seeing that it was only a stiller species of agitation.

But she now began to recall the words of Sir Richard Blunt to the effect

that measures had been taken that no more murders could be committed by Todd, and she began to feel comforted.

"There is something that I do not know yet," she said; "Sir Richard should have told me how there could be no more murders done here, and then I should not have suffered what I did, and what I still suffer with the thought that almost before my eyes a fellow creature has been hurried into eternity; and yet I ought to have faith, and in defiance of all the seeming evidences of a horrible deed about me, I ought, I suppose, to believe that it has been prevented in some most strange and miraculous way."

The more Johanna thought over this promise of Sir Richard Blunt's the more she became convinced that he would never have given utterance to it if he had not felt perfectly sure it would be fulfilled, and so she got comforted, and once again resolved to play her part in that dreadful drama of real life, in the vortex of which, with the purest and the holiest of motives, she had plunged recklessly, we will admit, but yet from motives entitling her to sympathy on earth, and protection in heaven.

Todd remained for a considerable time in the parlour; and when he came out, Johanna saw that he had made some alteration in his apparel. The first words he uttered were — "Keep a good fire, Charley."

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ever see a house on fire, my boy?"

"I never did, sir."

"Ah! It must be an amusing sight — a very amusing sight, especially if the conflagration spreads, and one has an opportunity of viewing it from the water. Talking of water, the lady who was here this morning — Mrs. Lovett — was very fond of water, and now she has got plenty of it. Ah!"

"Really, sir? Has she gone to the sea-side?"

Johanna looked Todd rather hard in the face as she spoke these words, and the close observation seemed to anger him, for he spoke hastily and sharply —

"What is it to you? Get out of my way, will you? and you may begin to think of shutting up, I think, for we shall have no more customers to-night. I am tired and weary. You are to sleep under the counter, you know."

"Yes, sir, you told me so. I daresay I shall be very comfortable there."

"And you have not been peeping and prying about, have you?"

"Not at all."

"Not looking even into that cupboard, I suppose, eh? It's not locked, but that's no reason why you should look into it — not that there is any secrets in it; but I object to peeping and prying upon principle."

Todd, as he spoke, advanced towards the cupboard, and Johanna thought that in another moment a discovery would undoubtedly take place of the two officers who were there concealed; and probably that would have been the case, had not the handle of the shop door been turned at that moment, and a man

presented himself, when Todd turned quickly, and saw that he was a substantial-looking farmer, with dirty top-boots, as if he had just come off a journey.

"Well, master," said the visitor, "I wants a clean shave."

"Oh," said Todd, not in the best of humours, "it's rather late; but I suppose you would not like to wait till morning, for I don't know if I have any hot water."

"Oh, cold will do."

"Cold? Oh, dear no; we never shave in cold water; and if you must, you must; so sit down, sir, and we will soon settle the business."

"Thank you, thank you. I can't go to bed comfortable without a clean shave, do you see? I have come up from Braintree with beasts on commission, and I'm staying at the Bull's Head, you see."

"Oh, indeed," said Todd, as he adjusted the shaving cloth, "the Bull's Head."

"Yes, master; why I brought up a matter o' 220 beasts, I did, do you see, and was on my pooney, as good a stepper as you'd wish to see; and I sold 'em all, do you see, for 550 pun. Ho, ho! good work that, do you see, and only forty-two on 'em was my beasts, do you see; I've got a missus at home, and a daughter; my girl's called Johanna — a-hem!"

Up to this point Johanna had not suspected that the game had begun, and that this was no other than Sir Richard himself, most admirably disguised, who had come to put an end to the mal-practices of Sweeney Todd; but his marked pronunciation of her name at once opened her eyes to that fact, and she knew that something interesting must soon happen.

"And so you sold them all?" said Todd.

"Yes, master, I did, and I've got the money in my pocket now, in bank-notes; I never leaves my money about at inns, do you see, master; safe bind, safe find, you see; I carries it about with me."

"A good plan, too," said Todd; "Charley, some hot water; that's a good lad — and — and — Charley?"

"Yes, sir."

"While I am finishing off this gentleman, you may as well just run to the Temple to Mr. Serjeant Toldrunis and ask for his wig; we shall have to do it in the morning, and may as well have it the first thing in the day to begin upon; and you need not hurry, Charley, as we shall shut up when you come back."

"Very good, sir."

Johanna walked out, but went no further than the shop window, close to which she placed her eyes, so that, between a pomatum jar and a lot of hair brushes, she could clearly see what was going on.

"A nice-looking little lad, that," said Todd's customer.

"Very, sir; an orphan boy; I took him out of charity, poor little fellow; but then, we ought to try to do all the good we can."

"Just so; I'm glad I have come to be shaved here. Mine's rather a strong beard, I think, do you see."

"Why, sir, in a manner of speaking," replied Todd, "it is a strong beard. I suppose you didn't come to London alone, sir?"

CHAPTER CX.

TODD'S HOUR HAS COME.

THE HIDEOUS FACE THAT TODD MADE above the head of his customer at this moment, was more like that which Mephistopheles might have made, after achieving the destruction of a human soul, than anything human. Sir Richard Blunt quickly replied to Todd's question, by saying —

"Oh, yes, quite alone; except the drovers I had no company with me; why do you ask?"

"Why, sir, I thought if you had any gentleman with you who might be waiting at the Bull's Head, you would recommend him to me if anything was wanting in my way, you know, sir; you might have just left him, saying you were going to Todd the barber's, to have a clean shave, sir."

"No, not at all; the fact is, I did not come out to have a shave, but a walk, and it wasn't till I gave my chin a stroke, and found what a beard I had, that I thought of it; and then passing your shop, in I popped, do you see."

"Exactly, sir, I comprehend; you are quite alone in London?"

"Oh, quite; but when I come again, I'll come to you to be shaved, you may depend, and I'll recommend you, too."

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Todd, as he passed his hand over the chin of his customer, "I'm very much obliged; I find I must give you another lather, sir, and I'll get another razor with a keener edge, now that I have taken off all the rough, as one may say, in a manner of speaking."

"Oh, I shall do."

"No, no, don't move, sir, I shall not detain you a moment; I have my other razors in the next room, and will polish you off now, sir, before you will know where you are; you know, sir, you have promised to recommend me, so I must do the best I can with you."

"Well, well, a clean shave is a comfort, but don't be long, for I want to get back, do you see."

"Not a moment, not a moment."

Sweeney Todd walked into his back-parlour, conveying with him the only light that was in the shop, so that the dim glimpse that, up to this time, Johanna from the outside had contrived to get of what was going on, was denied to her; and all that met her eyes was impenetrable darkness.

Oh, what a world of anxious agonising sensations crossed the mind of the young and beautiful girl at that moment. She felt as if some great crisis in her history had arrived, and that she was condemned to look in vain into darkness to see of what it consisted.

We must not, however, allow the reader to remain in the same state of mystification, which came over the perceptive faculties of Johanna Oakley; but we shall proceed to state clearly and distinctly what did happen in the barber's shop while he went to get an uncommonly keen razor in his back-parlour.

The moment his back was turned, the seeming farmer who had made such a good thing of his beasts, sprang from the shaving chair, as if he had been electrified; and yet he did not do it with any appearance of fright, nor did he make any noise. It was only astonishingly quick, and then he placed himself close to the window, and waited patiently with his eyes fixed upon the chair, to see what would happen next.

In the space of about a quarter of a minute, there came from the next room a sound like the rapid drawing back of a heavy bolt, and then in an instant, the shaving chair disappeared beneath the floor; and the circumstances by which Sweeney Todd's customers disappeared was evident.

There was a piece of the flooring turning upon a centre, and the weight of the chair when a bolt was withdrawn by means of simple leverage from the inner room, weighed down one end of the top, which, by a little apparatus, was to swing completely round, there being another chair on the under surface, which thus became the upper, exactly resembling the one in which the unhappy customer was supposed to be 'polished off.'

Hence was it that in one moment, as if by magic, Sweeney Todd's visitors disappeared, and there was the empty chair. No doubt, he trusted to a fall of about twenty feet below, on to a stone floor, to be the death of them, or, at all events, to stun them until he could go down to finish the murder, and — to cut them up for Mrs. Lovett's pies! after robbing them of all the money and valuables they might have about them.

In another moment, the sound as of a bolt was again heard, and Sir Richard Blunt, who had played the part of the wealthy farmer, feeling that the trap was closed again, seated himself in the new chair that had made its appearance with all the nonchalance in life, as if nothing had happened.

IT WAS A FULL MINUTE before Todd ventured to look from the parlour into the darkened shop, and then he shook so that he had to hold by the door to steady himself.

"That's done," he said. "That's the last, I hope. It is time I finished; I never felt so nervous since the first time. Then I did quake a little. How quiet he went:

I have sometimes had a shriek ringing in my ears for a whole week."

It was a large high-backed piece of furniture, that shaving chair, so that, when Todd crept into the shop with the light in his hand, he had not the remotest idea it was tenanted; but when he got round it, and saw his customer calmly waiting with the lather upon his face, the cry of horror that came gurgling and gushing from his throat was horrible to hear.

"Why, what's the matter," said Sir Richard.

"O God, the dead! the dead! O God!" cried Todd, "this is the beginning of my punishment. Have mercy, Heaven! oh, do not look upon me with those dead eyes."

"Murderer!" shouted Sir Richard, in a voice that rung like the blast of a trumpet through the house.

In an instant he sprang upon Sweeney Todd, and grappled him by the throat. There was a short struggle, and they were down upon the floor together, but Todd's wrists were suddenly laid hold of, and a pair of handcuffs most scientifically put upon him by the officers who, at the word 'murderer,' that being a preconcerted signal, came from the cupboard where they had been concealed.

"Secure him well, my men," said the magistrate, "and don't let him lay violent hands upon himself."

Johanna rushed into the shop, and clung to the arm of Sir Richard, crying —

"Is it all over! Is it indeed all done now?"

"It is, Miss Oakley."

The moment Todd heard these few words addressed to Charley Green as he thought him, he turned his glassy blood-shot eyes upon Johanna, and glared at her for the space of about half a minute in silence. He then, although handcuffed, made a sudden and violent effort to reach her, but he was in too experienced hands, and he was held back most effectually.

He struck his forehead with his fettered hands, making a gash in it from which the blood flowed freely, as in infuriated accents, he said —

"Oh fool — fool, to be cheated by a girl! I had my suspicions that the boy was a spy, but I never thought for one moment there was a disguise of sex. Oh, idiot! idiot! And who are you, sir?"

"I am Sir Richard Blunt."

Todd groaned and staggered. The officers would have let him sit down in the shaving chair for a moment or two to recover from the shock his mind had sustained by his capture, but when he found that it was the shaving chair he was led to, he shuddered, and in a wailing voice, said —

"No — no! not there — not there! Anywhere but there. I dare not sit there!"

"It isn't worth while sitting at all," said Crotchet. "I'm blowed if I ain't all crumpled up in a blessed mummy by being in that cupboard so jolly long. All my joints is a-going crinkley-crankley."

Todd looked in the face of Sir Richard Blunt, and in a faint voice spoke —

SWEENEY TODD'S HOUR HAS COME.

"I — I don't feel very well. There's a little drop of cordial medicine that I often take in my coat pocket. You see I can't get at it, my hands being manacled. I only want to take a drop to comfort me."

"Get it out, Crotchet," said Sir Richard.

"Here ye is," said Crotchet, as he produced a little bottle, with a pale straw-coloured liquid in, from Todd's pocket.

"Give it to me. Oh, give it to me," said Todd. "I will thank you much. It will recover me. Give it to me!"

"No, Todd," said Sir Richard, as he took the little bottle and put it in his

own pocket. "I do not intend, if I can help it, to permit you to evade the law by poisoning yourself."

Finding himself thus defeated in his insidious attempt upon his own life, Todd got quite frantic with rage, and had a grand struggle with the officers, in his endeavours to get at some of the razors that were near at hand in the shop; but they effectually prevented him from doing so, and finally he became too much exhausted to make any further efforts.

"My curses be upon you all!" he said. "May you, and all who belong to you — "

But we cannot transcribe the horrible denunciations of Todd. They were too horrible even for the officers to listen to with patience, and Sir Richard Blunt, turning to Johanna, said —

"Run over the way to your friends at the fruiterer's. All is over now, and your disguise is no longer needed."

Johanna did not pause another moment, but ran over the way, and in the course of a few moments she was in the arms of the fruiterer's daughter, where she relieved her overcharged heart by weeping bitterly.

"Shut up the shop, Crotchet," said Sir Richard Blunt, "and then get a coach. I will lodge this man at once in Newgate, and then we will see to Mrs. Lovett."

At this name Todd looked up.

"She has escaped you," he said.

"I don't think so," responded Sir Richard.

"But I say she has — she is dead: she fell into the Thames this morning and was drowned."

"Oh, you allude to your pushing her into the river this morning near London-bridge?" said Sir Richard. "I saw that affair myself."

Todd glared at him.

"But it was not of much consequence. We got her out, and she is all right again now at her shop in Bell-yard."

Todd held his hands over his eyes for some moments, and then he said in a low voice —

"It is all a dream, or I am mad."

Crotchet, in obedience to the orders he had received, put up the shutters of Todd's shop, and then fetched a coach, during the whole of which time, Sir Richard Blunt himself kept his hand upon Todd's collar, so that he could control him if he should again become so violent as he had been.

The spirit to struggle was, however, gone from Todd for the time being. Indeed, he seemed to be completely stunned by his capture, and to be able only to see things darkly. He was yet to awaken to a full consciousness of his situation, and let that awakening be when it would, it was sure to be awful.

"All's right," said Crotchet. "Here's the vehicle, and the crib is shut up."

"Crotchet!"

"Yes, your worship. What is it? Why, you never looked at a feller in that sort of way before."

"I never did have anything so important to say to you, Crotchet, nor did I ever place in your hands so important a trust. It is one that will make you or mar you, Crotchet. I have myself important business here, or I would myself take this man to Newgate. As it is, Crotchet, I wish to entrust you with that important piece of duty, and I rely upon you, Crotchet, for keeping an eye upon him, and delivering him in safety."

"It's as good as done," said Crotchet. "If he gets away from me, he has only another individual to do, and that's the old gent as is down below, with the long tail. Lor' bless you, sir, didn't I say from the first, as Todd smugged the people as comed to him to be shaved?"

"You did, Crotchet."

"Werry good. Then does yer think as I'm the feller all for to let him go when once I've got a hold of him? Rather not!"

"I entrust you with him then, Crotchet. Take him away. I give him entirely into your hands."

Upon this, Crotchet slid his arm beneath that of Sweeney Todd, and looking in his face with a most grotesque air of satisfaction, he said, "kim up — kim up!"

He then, by an immense exertion of strength, hoisted Todd completely over the door step, after which, catching him with both hands about the small of his back, he pitched him into the coach.

"My eye," said the coachman, "has the gemman had a drop too much?"

"He will have," said Crotchet, "some o' these odd days. To Newgate — to Newgate."

Crotchet rode inside along with Todd "for fear he should be dull," he said, and the other officer got up outside the coach, and then off it went to that dreadful building that Todd had often grimly smiled at as he passed, but into which as a resident he had never expected to enter.

Sir Richard Blunt remained in the shop of Sweeney Todd. The oil lamp that hung by a chain from the ceiling shed a tolerable light over all objects, and no sooner had the magistrate fastened the outer door after the departure of Crotchet with Todd, than he stamped three times heavily upon the floor of the shop.

This signal was immediately answered by three distinct taps from underneath the floor, and then the magistrate stamped again in the same manner.

The effect of all this stamping and counter-signals was immediately very apparent. The great chair which has played so prominent a part in he atrocities of Sweeney Todd slowly sunk, and the revolving plank hung suspended by its axle, while a voice from below called out —

"Is all right, sir?"

"Yes, Crotchet has taken him to Newgate. I am now alone. Come up."

"We are coming, sir. We all heard a little disturbance, but the floor is very thick you know, sir. So we could not take upon ourselves to say exactly what was happening."

"Oh, it's all right. He resisted, but by this time he is within the stone walls of Newgate. Let me lend you a hand."

Sir Richard Blunt stooped over the aperture in the floor, and the first person that got up was no other than Mr. Wrankley the Tobacconist.

"How do you feel after your tumble?" said Sir Richard.

"Oh, very well. The fact is they caught me so capitally below that it was quite easy. Todd did not think it worth his while to come down to see if I were alive or dead."

"Ah, that was the only chance; but of course if he had done so he must have been taken at once into custody — that would have been all. Come on, my friends, come on. Our trouble with regard to Todd is over now, I think."

The two churchwardens of St. Dunstan's and the beadle, and four of Sir Richard Blunt's officers, and the fruiterer from opposite, now came up from below the shop of Sweeney Todd, where they had been all waiting to catch Mr. Wrankley when the chair should descend with him.

"Conwulsions!" said the beadle, "I runned agin everybody when I seed him a-coming. I thought to myself, if a parochial authority had been served in that 'ere way, there would have been an end of the world at once."

"I had some idea of asking you at one time to play that little part for me," said Sir Richard.

"Conwulsions! had you, sir?"

"Yes. But now, my friends, let us make a careful search of this house; and among the first things we have to do is, to remove all the combustible materials that Todd has stowed in various parts of it, for unless I am much deceived, the premises are in such a state that the merest accident would set them in a blaze."

"Conwulsions!" then cried the beadle. "I ain't declared out of danger yet then!"

CHAPTER CXI.

MRS. LOVETT PLANS.

We hasten to Bell Yard again.

Mrs. Lovett's immersion in the Thames had really not done her much harm. Perhaps the river was a little purer than we now find it, and probably it had not entirely got rid of its name of the "Silver Thames" — an appellation that now would be really out of place, unless we can imagine some silver of a much more dingy hue than silver ordinarily presents to the eye of the observer.

She soon, we find, settled in her own mind a plan of action, notwithstanding the rather complicated and embarrassing circumstances in which she found herself placed. That plan of action had for its basis the impeachment of Todd as a murderer, at the same time that it looked forward to her own escape from the hands of justice. Her first action was to quiet the cook in the regions below, for if she did not take some such step, she was very much afraid her establishment might come to a stand-still some few hours before she intended that it should do so.

With this object, she wrote upon a little slip of paper the following words, and passed it into the cellar through an almost imperceptible crevice in the flooring of the shop —

"Early to-morrow morning you shall have your liberty, together with gold to take you where you please. All I require of you is, that you do your ordinary duty to-night, and send up the nine o'clock batch of pies."

This, she considered, could not but have its due effect upon the discontented cook; and having transmitted it to him in the manner we have described, she sat down at her desk to write the impeachment of Todd. In the course of an hour, Mrs. Lovett had filled two pages of writing paper with a full account of how persons met their death in the barber's shop. She sealed the letter, and directed it to Sir Richard Blunt in a bold free hand.

"It is done," she said. "When I am far from London, as I can easily find the means of being, this will reach the hands of the magistrate to whom it is addressed, and who has the character of being sharp and active." (Mrs. Lovett did not know how sharp and active Sir Richard had already been in her affairs!) "He will act upon it. Todd, in the midst of his guilt, with many evidences of it about him, will be taken, and I shall escape! Yes, I shall escape, with about a tithe of what I ought to have — but I shall have revenge!"

On one of the shelves of the shop — certainly out of reach, but only just so — stood an old dirty-looking tin jar, such as fancy biscuits might be kept in. No one for a moment would have thought of looking for anything valuable in such a place; and yet, keeping the shop door locked the while, lest any intruder should at unawares pop in and see what she was about, it was to this tin can upon its dirty shelf that Mrs. Lovett cautiously went.

"Those who hide can find," she muttered. "I warrant now that Todd had searched in every seemingly cunning and intricate hiding-place in this whole house, and he has gone away disappointed. The secret of hiding anything is not to try to find some place where people may be baffled when they look, but to light upon some place into which they will not look at all."

With these words, Mrs. Lovett took down the tin can, and having from the upper portion of it removed some dusty, mouldy small biscuits, she dived her hand into it, and fished up a leathern bag. The tape that held its mouth together was sealed, and a glance sufficed to convince Mrs. Lovett that it had not been touched.

"Safe, safe!" she muttered. "It is but a thousand pounds, but it is safe, and it will enable me to fly from this place — it will enable me to have vengeance upon Todd; and small as the sum is, in some country, where money is worth more than it is in pampered England, I shall yet be able to live upon it. I will not complain if I have but the joy of reading an account of the execution of Todd. I fear I must deny myself the pleasure of seeing that sight."

The little leathern bag she hid about her, and then she carefully replaced the tin case upon the shelf whence she had taken it, to disburthen it of its costly contents.

After this Mrs. Lovett got much calmer. She had not the least apprehension now of a visit from Todd. She saw by the state of the house that his search had been a prolonged one, and until he shut up his own shop, she did not expect that he would again think of coming to Bell Yard, and as that would be ten o'clock, she fully believed that before then she would be far away.

And then she sat behind her counter, looking only a shade or so paler than was her wont, and moving her lips slightly now and then as she settled in her own mind the course that she would take so as to baffle all pursuit.

"With no luggage but my gold and notes," she muttered, "I will leave this place at half past nine, by which time the last batch of pies will have been up and sold, and all will be quiet. That will be a little more money to me. Then on foot I will take my way to Highgate — yes, to Highgate, and I will trust no conveyance, for that might be a ready means of tracing me. I will go on foot. Then passing Highgate, I will go on foot upon the Great North Road until some coach overtakes me. It will not matter whither it be going, so that it takes me on that road; and by one conveyance and another, I shall at length reach Liverpool, from which port I shall find some vessel starting to some place abroad, where I can live free from the chance of detection. Yes, that is the plan! That is the plan!"

Mrs. Lovett was a woman of some tact, and the plan of operations she had chalked out was all very well, provided such very *malapropos* proceedings had not taken place at Sweeney Todd's in the meantime. Little did Mrs. Lovett suspect what was there transpiring.

And now we will leave her for a brief space behind her counter, ruminating, and at odd times smiling to herself in a ghastly fashion, while we pop down to the cellars, and take a glance at the impatient imprisoned cook.

About ten minutes before he received the letter — if letter the little flattering memorandum of Mrs. Lovett could be called — from his mistress, the cook had been a little alarmed by a noise in the stone pantry, where the mysterious meat used to make its appearance. Upon proceeding to the spot with a light, he found lying upon the floor a sealed paper, upon lifting which he saw was addressed to himself, and at one corner was written the following words —

"Definitive instructions for to-night from Sir Richard Blunt."

To tear open the letter and to read it with great care, was the work of a few moments only, and then drawing a long breath, the cook said —

"Thank God! I shall not stop another night in this place. I shall be free before midnight. Oh, what an oppressive — what an overpowering joy it will be to me once more to see the sky — to breathe pure fresh air, and to feel that I have bid adieu for ever to this dreadful — dreadful place."

The poor cook looked around him with a shudder, and then he had hardly placed the magistrate's letter securely in his bosom, when the little missive from Mrs. Lovett came fluttering to his feet, through the crack in the roof.

"'Tis well," he said, when he had read it. "'Tis very well. This will chime in most admirably with my instructions from Sir Richard Blunt. Mrs. Lovett I thank you. You shall have the nine o'clock batch. Oh, yes, you shall have them. I am all obedience. Alas, if she whom I loved had not been false to me, I might yet, young as I am, feel the sunshine of joy in the great world again. But I can never love another, and she is lost — lost to me for ever. Aye, for ever!"

With this the poor cook, who but a few moments before had been so elated by the thoughts of freedom, sat himself down, and in quite a disconsolate manner rested his head upon his hands, and gave himself up to bitter fancy.

"That she should be false to me," he said mournfully. "It does indeed almost transcend belief. She, so young, so gentle, so innocent, and so guileless. If an angel from Heaven had come and told me as much I should have doubted still; but I cannot mistrust the evidence of my own senses. I saw her. Yes, I saw her!"

The cook rose and paced the gloomy place to and fro in the restlessness of a blighted heart, and no one to look at him could for a moment have supposed that he was near his freedom from an imprisonment of the most painful and maddening description to one of his impatient temperament. But so it is with

us all; no sooner do we to all appearance see the end of one evil, than with an activity of imagination worthy to be excited in better things, we provide ourselves with some real or unreal reason for the heartache.

"I will so contrive," said the cook, "that before I leave for ever the land of my birth, I will once more look upon her. Yes, I will once again drink in, from a contemplation of her wondrous beauty, most delicious poison; and then when I have feasted my eyes, and perchance grieved my heart, I will at once go far away, and beneath the sun of other skies than this, I will wait for death."

The more the poor cook thought of this unknown beauty of his, who surely had behaved to him very ill, or he could not have spoken of her in such terms, the more sorrow got upon his countenance, and imparted its sad sweetness to his tones. Surely the time had not been very far distant when that young man must have been in a widely different sphere of life to that limited one in which he now moved.

Suddenly, however, he was recalled to a consciousness of what he had to do, by the clock striking seven. He counted the strokes, and then pausing before one of the large ovens, he said—

"The time has now come when I must cease to be making preparations to obey the mandate of my imperious mistress. She will not now be content merely to have issued her orders, but she will keep an eye upon me to see that they are being executed, and unarmed as I am, and without the knowledge of what power of mischief she may have, I feel that it would not be safe yet to provoke her. No—no. I must seem to do her bidding."

With this, the cook set about the manufacture of the pies; and as it would really have been much more troublesome to sham making them than to make them in earnest, he really did manufacture a hundred of them.

But it was after all with a very bad grace that the poor imprisoned cook now made the pies; and probably so very indifferent a batch of those delicious pieces of pastry had never before found its way into the ovens of Mrs. Lovett. The cook was not wrong in his idea that his imperious mistress would take a peep at him before nine o'clock. At about eight, the little grating in the high-up door was tapped by something that Mrs. Lovett had in her hand, with which to attract the attention of the cook. He looked up, and saw her dimly.

"Are you busy?" she said.

"Yes, madam, as busy as the nine o'clock batch usually makes me. Do you not hear the oven?"

"I do—'tis well."

"Ah, madam," said the dissembling cook, "it will be well, indeed, if you keep your word with me, and set me to-night at freedom."

"Do you doubt it?"

"I have no particular reason to doubt it, further than that the unfortunate are always inclined to doubt too good news. That is all, madam."

"If you doubt, you will be agreeably disappointed, for I shall keep my word with you. You have done for me much better than I ever expected, and I will be grateful to you now that you are going. I have said that you shall not go without means, and you shall have a purse of twenty guineas to help you on your way wherever you wish."

"How kind you are, madam! Ah, I shall be able now to forgive you for all that I have suffered in this place—and, after all, it has been a refuge from want."

"It has. No one can be better pleased than I am to find you view things so reasonably. Send up the nine o'clock batch; and then wait patiently until I come to you."

"I will."

"Till then, good-night!"

Mrs. Lovett left the grating; and as she went up to the shop, she muttered to herself—

"They will, when they find him here, suspect he is an accomplice. Well, let them hang him, for all I care. What can it matter to me?"

CHAPTER CXII.

MRS. LOVETT FINDS THAT IT IS EASIER TO PLAN THAN TO EXECUTE.

IT WANTS FIVE MINUTES TO NINE, and Mrs. Lovett's shop is filling with persons anxious to devour or to carry away one or more of the nine o'clock batch of savoury, delightful, gushing gravy pies.

Many of Mrs. Lovett's customers paid her in advance for the pies, in order that they might be quite sure of getting their orders fulfilled when the first batch should make its gracious appearance from the depths below.

"Well, Jiggs," said one of the legal fraternity to another, "how are you to-day, old fellow? What do you bring it in?"

"Oh! I ain't very blooming. The fact is, the count and I, and a few others, made a night of it last evening; and somehow or another I don't think whiskey-and-water, half-and-half, and tripe, go well together."

"I should wonder if they did."

"And so I've come for a pie just to settle my stomach; you see I'm rather delicate."

"Ah! you are just like me, young man, there," said an elderly personage; "I

have a delicate stomach, and the slightest thing disagrees with me. A mere idea will make me quite ill."

"Will it, really?"

"Yes; and my wife, she —"

"Oh, bother your wife! It's only five minutes to nine, don't you see? What a crowd there is, to be sure. Mrs. Lovett, you charmer, I hope you have ordered enough pies to be made to-night? You see what a lot of customers you have."

"Oh, there will be plenty."

"That's right. I say, don't push so; you'll be in time, I tell you; don't be pushing and driving in that sort of way — I've got ribs."

"And so have I. Last night I didn't get a pie at all, and my old woman is in a certain condition, you see, gentlemen, and won't fancy anything but one of Lovett's veal pies; so I've come all the way from Newington to get one for —"

"Hold your row, will you? and don't push."

"For to have the child marked with a pie on its —"

"Behind there, I say; don't be pushing a fellow as if it were half price at a theatre."

Each moment added some new comers to the throng, and at last any strangers who had known nothing of the attractions of Mrs. Lovett's pie-shop and had walked down Bell Yard, would have been astonished at the throng of persons there assembled — a throng that was each moment increasing in density, and becoming more and more urgent and clamorous.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine! Yes, it is nine at last. It strikes by old St. Dunstan's church clock, and in weaker strains the chronometical machine at the pie-shop echoes the sound. What excitement there is to get at the pies when they shall come! Mrs. Lovett lets down the square moveable platform that goes on pullies in the cellar; some machinery, which only requires a handle to be turned, brings up a hundred pies in a tray. These are eagerly seized by parties who have previously paid, and such a smacking of lips ensues as never was known.

Down goes the platform for the next hundred, and a gentlemanly man says —

"Let me work the handle, Mrs. Lovett, if you please; it's too much for you I'm sure."

"Sir, you are very kind, but I never allow anybody on this side of the counter but my own people, sir. I can turn the handle myself, sir, if you please, with the assistance of this girl. Keep your distance, sir, nobody wants your help."

"But my dear madam, only consider your delicacy. Really you ought not to be permitted to work away like a negro slave at a winch handle. Really you ought not."

The man who spoke thus obligingly to Mrs. Lovett, was tall and stout, and the lawyers clerks repressed the ire they otherwise would probably have given utterance to at thus finding any one quizzing their charming Mrs. Lovett.

"Sir, I tell you again that I don't want your help; keep your distance, sir, if you please."

"Now don't get angry, fair one," said the man. "You don't know but I might have made you an offer before I left the shop."

"Sir," said Mrs. Lovett, drawing herself up and striking terror into the hearts of the limbs of the law. "Sir! What do you want? Say what you want, and be served, sir, and then go. Do you want a pie, sir?"

"A pie? Oh, dear no, I don't want a pie. I would not eat one of the nasty things on any account. Pah!" Here the man spat on the floor. "Oh, dear, don't ask me to eat any of your pies."

"Shame, shame," said several of the lawyers' clerks.

"Will any gentleman who thinks it a shame, be so good as to step forward and say so a little closer?"

Everybody shrunk back upon this, instead of accepting the challenge, and Mrs. Lovett soon saw that she must, despite all the legal chivalry by which she was surrounded, fight her battles herself. With a look of vehement anger, she cried —

"Beware, sir, I am not to be trifled with. If you carry your jokes too far, you will wish that you had not found your way, sir, into this shop."

"That, madam," said the tall stout man, "is not surely possible, when I have the beauty of a Mrs. Lovett to gaze upon, and render the place so exquisitely attractive; but if you will not permit me to have the pleasure of helping you up with the next batch of pies, which, after all, you may find heavier than you expect, I must leave you to do it yourself."

"So that I am not troubled any longer by you, sir, at all," said Mrs. Lovett, "I don't care how heavy the next batch of pies may happen to be, sir."

"Very good, madam."

"Upon my word," said a small boy, giving the side of his face a violent rub with the hope of finding the ghost of a whisker there, "it's really too bad."

"Ah, who's that? Let me get at him!"

"Oh, no, no, I — mean — that it's too bad of Mrs. Lovett, my dear sir. Oh, don't."

"Oh, very good; I am satisfied. Now, madam, you see that even your dear friends here, from Lincoln's Inn — Are you from the Inn, small boy?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Very good. As I was saying, Mrs. Lovett, you now must of necessity perceive, that even your friends from the Inn, feel that your conduct is really too bad, madam."

Mrs. Lovett was upon this so dreadfully angry, that she disdained any reply to the tall stout man, but at once she applied herself to the windlass, which worked up the little platform, upon which a whole tray of a hundred pies was

wont to come up, and began to turn it with what might be called a vengeance.

How very strange it was — surely the words of the tall stout impertinent stranger were prophetic, for never before had Mrs. Lovett found what a job it was to work that handle, as upon that night. The axle creaked, and the cords and the pullies strained and wheezed, but she was a determined woman, and she worked away at it.

"I told you so, my dear madam," said the stranger; "it is more evidently than you can do."

"Peace, sir."

"I am done; work away ma'am, only don't say afterwards that I did not offer to help you, that's all."

Indignation was swelling at the heart of Mrs. Lovett, but she felt that if she wasted her breath upon the impertinent stranger, she should have none for the windlass; so setting her teeth, she fagged at it with a strength and a will that if she had not been in a right royal passion, she could not have brought to bear upon it on any account.

There was quite an awful stillness in the shop. All eyes were bent upon Mrs. Lovett, and the cavity through which the next batch of those delicious pies were coming. Those who had had the good fortune to get one of the first lot, had only had their appetites heightened by the luxurious feast they had partaken of, while those who had had as yet none, actually licked their lips, and snuffed up the delightful aroma from the remains of the first batch.

"Two for me, Mrs. Lovett," cried a voice. "One veal for me. Three porks — one pork."

The voices grew fast and furious.

"Silence!" cried the tall stout man. "I will engage that everybody shall be fully satisfied; and no one shall leave here without a thorough conviction that his wants in pies has been more than attended to."

The platform could be made to stop at any stage of its upward progress, by means of a ratchet wheel and a catch, and now Mrs. Lovett paused to take breath. She attributed the unusual difficulty in working the machinery to her own weakness, contingent upon her recent immersion in the Thames.

"Sir," she said between her clenched teeth, addressing the man who was such an eye-sore to her in the shop. "Sir, I don't know who you are, but I hope to be able to show you when I have served these gentlemen, that even I am not to be insulted with impunity."

"Anything you please, madam," he replied, "in a small way, only don't exert yourself too much."

Mrs. Lovett flew to the windlass again, and from the manner in which she now worked at it, it was quite clear that when she had her hands free from that job, she fully intended to make good her threats against the tall stout man. The young beardless scions of the law, trembled at the idea of what might happen.

MRS. LOVETT'S COOK ASTONISHES HER CUSTOMERS RATHER.

And now the tops of the pies appeared. Then they saw the rim of the large tray upon which they were, and then just as the platform itself was level with the floor of the shop, up flew tray and pies, as if something had exploded beneath them, and a tall slim man sprung upon the counter. It was the cook, who from the cellars beneath, had laid himself as flat as he could beneath the tray of pies, and so had been worked up to the shop by Mrs. Lovett!

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I am Mrs. Lovett's cook. The pies are made of human flesh!"

We shrink, we tremble at the idea of attempting to describe the scene that

ensued in the shop of Mrs. Lovett contingent upon this frightful apparition, and still more frightful speech of the cook; but duty — our duty to the public — requires that we should say something upon the occasion.

If we can do nothing more, we can briefly enumerate what did actually take place in some instances.

About twenty clerks rushed into Bell Yard, and there and then, to the intense surprise of the passers-by, became intensely sick. The cook, with one spring, cleared the counter, and alighted amongst the customers, and with another spring, the tall impertinent man, who had made many remarks to Mrs. Lovett of an aggravating tendency, cleared the counter likewise in the other direction, and, alighting close to Mrs. Lovett, he cried —

"Madam, you are my prisoner!"

For a moment, and only for a moment, the great — the cunning, and the redoubtable Mrs. Lovett, lost her self-possession, and, staggering back, she lurched heavily against the glass-case next to the wall, immediately behind the counter. It was only for a moment, though, that such an effect was produced upon Mrs. Lovett; and then, with a spring like an enraged tigress, she caught up a knife that was used for slipping under the pies and getting them cleanly out of the little tins, and rushed upon the tall stranger.

Yes, she rushed upon him; but for once in a way, even Mrs. Lovett had met with her match. With a dexterity, that only long practice in dealings with the more desperate portion of human nature could have taught him, the tall man closed with her, and had the knife out of her hand in a moment. He at once threw it right through the window into Bell Yard, and then, holding Mrs. Lovett in his arms, he said —

"My dear madam, you only distress yourself for nothing; all resistance is perfectly useless. Either I must take you prisoner, or you me, and I decidedly incline to the former alternative."

The knife that had been thrown through the window was not without its object, for in a moment afterwards Mr. Crotchet made his appearance in the shop.

"All right, Crotchet," said he who had captured Mrs. Lovett; "first clap the bracelets on this lady."

"Here yer is," said Crotchet. "Lor, mum! I had a eye on you months and months agone. How is you, mum, in yer feelin's this here nice evening? — Eh mum?"

"A knife — a knife! Oh, for a knife!" cried Mrs. Lovett.

"Ex-actly, mum," added Crotchet, as he with professional dexterity slipped the handcuffs on her wrists. "Would you like one with a hivory handle, mum? or would anything more common do, mum?"

Mrs. Lovett fell to the floor, or rather she cast herself to it, and began voluntarily beating her head against the boards. They quickly lifted her up; and

then the tall stranger turned to the cook, who, after leaping over the counter, had sat down upon a chair in a state of complete exhaustion, and he said —

"Do you know the way to Sir Richard's office, in Craven-street? He expects you there, I believe?"

"Yes, yes. But now that all is over, I feel very ill."

"In that case, I will go with you, then. Crotchet, who have you got outside?"

"Only two of our pals, Muster Green; but it's all right, if so be as you leaves the lady to us."

"Very well. The warrant is at Newgate, and the governor is expecting her instant arrival. You will get a coach at the corner of the yard, and be off with her at once."

"All's right," said Crotchet. "I knowed as she'd be nabbed, and I had one all ready, you sees."

"That was right, Crotchet. How amazingly quick everybody has left the shop. Why — why, what is all this?"

As the officer spoke, about half a dozen squares of glass in the shop window of the house were broken in, and a ringing shout from a dense mob that was rapidly collecting in the yard, came upon the ears of the officer. The two men whom Crotchet had mentioned, with difficulty pressed their way into the shop, and one of them cried —

"The people that were in the shop have spread the news all over the neighbourhood, and the place is getting jammed up with a mob, every one of which is mad, I think, for they talk of nothing but of the tearing of Mrs. Lovett to pieces. They are pouring in from Fleet-street and Carey-street by hundreds at a time."

CHAPTER CXIII.

THE ROUTE TO NEWGATE — MRS. LOVETT'S DANGER FROM THE MOB.

MRS. LOVETT, UPON HEARING THESE WORDS, turned ghastly pale, but she did not speak. The officers looked at each other with something like dismay, and then before either of them could say another word, there arose a wild prolonged shout from without.

"Out with her — out with her! Kill her! Tear her to bits and hang her on the lamp-post in the middle of Bell Yard! Out with her! Drag her out! Hang her! hang her!"

"The coach you say is waiting, Crotchet?" said the officer, who had been intrusted by Sir Richard Blunt with the conduct of the whole business connected with Mrs. Lovett's capture.

"It were," said Crotchet, "and that coachman ain't the sort of fellow to move on till I tell him. I knows him."

"Very good, then we must make a dash for it, and get her away by main force, it must be done, let the risk and the consequences be what they may, and the sooner the better, too. Come on, madam."

"Death — death!" said Mrs. Lovett. "Kill me here, some of you, kill me at once; but do not let me be torn to pieces by a savage mob. Oh, God, they yell for my blood! Save me from them, and kill me here. A knife! oh, for a knife!"

"And a fork too, mum," said Crotchet; "in course, if you wants 'em. I tells you what it is, Mr. Green, that there mob is just savage, and we have about as much chance of getting her down to Fleet-street with her head on her shoulders, as all of us have of flying over the blessed house-tops."

"We must. It is our duty, and if we fail, they must kill us, which I don't think they will do. Come on."

"I will go with you," said the cook, starting up from the chair upon which he had on account of his weakness been compelled to seat himself, "I will go with you, and implore the people to let the law take its course upon this woman."

"In the cupboard, in the parlour," said Mrs. Lovett, speaking in a strange gasping tone, "there is a letter addressed by me to Sir Richard Blunt. It will be worth your while to save it from the mob. Let me show you where to lay your hands upon it, and if you have any wish to take a greater criminal than I, go to the shop of one Sweeney Todd, a barber, in Fleet-street. His number is sixty nine. Seize him, for he is the head of all the criminality you can possibly impute to me. Seize him, and I shall be content."

"The man you mention," said Mr. Green, "has been in Newgate an hour nearly."

"Newgate?"

"Yes. We took him first, and then attended to you."

"Todd — captured — in Newgate — and I in fancied security here remained wasting the previous moments upon which hung my life. Oh, fool — fool — dolt — idiot. A knife! Oh, sirs, I pray you to give me the means of instant death. What can the law do, but take my life? What have you all come here, and plotted and planned for, but to take my life? I will do it. Oh, I pray you to give me the means, and I will satisfy you and justice, and die at once."

Another loud roar from the infuriated people without, drowned whatever the officer might have said in reply to this appeal from Mrs. Lovett, and again arose the wild shouts of —

"Out with her! — Out with her! — Hang her! — Hang the murderess! — Hang her in the yard! — Out with her!"

MRS. LOVETT'S ESCORT TO THE GALLOWS.

"Forward!" cried Mr. Green. "To hesitate is only to make our situation ten times worse. Forward!"

"Hold a bit," cried Crotchet, "let me speak to the people; I knows how to humour 'em. Only you see if I don't get her along. Come, mum, just step this a-ways if yer pleases. Open the door, Mr. Cook, and let me out first."

The cook opened the door, and before the mob could rush into the place, Crotchet stepped on to the threshold of the shop, and in a tremendous voice that made itself heard above all others, he cried —

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Nothing is easier than to throw a cry into a crowd, and to get it echoed to your heart's content; and so some couple of hundred voices now immediately cried — "Hurrah!" and when the vast volume of sound had died away, Crotchet in such a voice that it must have been heard in Fleet-street quite plainly, said —

"My opinion is, that Mrs. Lovett ought to be hung outright, and at once without any more bother about it."

"Hurrah! — Hang her! — Hang her!" shouted the mob.

"And," added Crotchet, "I propose the lamp-post at the top of Fleet Market as a nice public sort of place to do the job in. She says she won't walk, but I have a coach in Fleet-street, and we will pop her into that, and so take her along quite snug."

"Yes, yes," cried the people. "Bring her along, that will do."

"Oh, will it?" muttered Crochet to himself. "What a precious set of ninnies you are. If I get her once in the coach, and she gets out again except to step into the stone jug, may I be hanged myself."

"I think you have managed it, Crotchet," whispered Mr. Green, "I think that will do."

"To be sure it will, sir. All's right. Bless your heart, mobs is the stupidest beasts as is. You may do anything you like with them if you will only let them have their own way a little, but if so be as you trys to fight 'em, they is all horns and porkipines, quills and stone walls, and iron rails, they is!"

"You are right enough, Crotchet; and now then let Smith stay here and mind the house, and shut it all up snug till the morning; when it can be thoroughly searched, and you and I and Simmons here will go with Mrs. Lovett."

"And I too," said the cook. "We can go to Sir Richard's afterwards."

"So we can — so we can. Come on, now."

"You will deliver me up to the mob," screamed Mrs. Lovett. "Mercy! Mercy! I shall be torn limb from limb. Oh, what a death! Are you men or fiends that you will condemn me to it? Mercy! — mercy!"

This sudden passion of Mrs. Lovett's was the very thing the officers would have desired, inasmuch as it materially helped to deceive the mob, and to prevent any idea upon the part of the infuriated people, that there was any collusion between the officers and Mrs. Lovett, for the purpose of getting her safely to prison.

They dragged her out into Bell Yard, and then the shouts that the mob set up was truly terrific.

"Lights! Links!" cried a voice. "Let's show her the way!"

In a moment an oil-shop opposite to Mrs. Lovett's was plundered of a score or two of links, and being lighted with great rapidity from the solitary oil-lamp that there stood in the middle of Bell Yard, they sent a bright lurid glare upon the sea of heads, that seemed so close they might have been walked upon all the way to Fleet-street. Another shout echoed far and near, and then Crotchet took hold of one of Mrs. Lovett's arms, and Mr. Green hold of the other, and the cook and the other officers following, they all began slowly to make way through the mob.

"Let's get along with her," cried Crotchet. "I have her tight. She won't get away. Some of you get a good stout rope ready, and make a noose in it. We will hang her on the lamp-post at the top of the market. Bring her along. Make way a little. Only a little!"

Mrs. Lovett shrieked as she saw the sea of angry faces before, behind, and on all sides of her. She thought that surely her last hour was come, and that a far more horrible death than any she had ever calculated upon in her worst moments of depression, was about to be hers. Her eyes were blood-shot — she bit her under lip through, and the blood poured from her mouth — she each moment that she could gather breath to do so, raised a fearful shriek, and the mob shouted and yelled, and swayed to and fro, and the links were tossed from hand to hand, flashing, and throwing around them thousands of bright sparks, and people rapidly joined the mob.

CHAPTER CXIV.

THE COOK WAITS UPON SIR RICHARD BLUNT AND HEARS NEWS.

IT TOOK A QUARTER OF AN HOUR to reach the coach from the door of Mrs. Lovett's shop, a distance that in twenty steps any one might have traversed; and, oh! what a quarter of an hour of horrible suffering that was to the wretched woman, whose crimes had so infuriated the populace, that with one voice they called for her death!

The coach door was opened, and Crotchet pushed his prisoner in. Mr. Green, and the other officer and the cook followed her.

"I will go on the box," said Crotchet.

"Very well," said Green, "but be mindful of your own safety, Crotchet."

"All's right. There ain't any more o' my sort in London, and I know I am rather a valuable piece o' goods. Has anybody got the rope ready for the lady?"

"Here you are," said a man, "I have one."

"You get up behind then," said Crotchet, "for of course you know we shall soon want you."

"Yes, I will. That's right! It's all right, friends. I am to get up behind with the rope. Here's the rope!"

"Three cheers for the rope!" cried somebody, and the cheers were given with deafening violence. What will not a mob give three cheers for — aye, or any number of cheers you like to name? A piece of poor humanity in tinsel and fine linen, called a king or queen — a popular cry — a murderess — a rope — anything will suffice. Surely, Mr. Crotchet, you know something of the people!

"Now," said Crotchet to the coachman, "are you as bold as brass, and as strong as an iron file?"

The coachman looked puzzled, but Mr. Crotchet pursued his queries.

"Will these 'osses, if they is frightened a bit, cut along quick?"

"Rather," said the coachman. "The blessed fact is, that they won't cut along unless you do frighten them a bit; and as for me being an old file and having lots o' brass, I doesn't consider as I'm a bit worser nor my neighbours."

"You is as hignorant as a badger!" said Crotchet. "Make yourself easy and give me the reins. The mobs o' people thinks as we is a going to hang the woman at the corner of Fleet Market, but if I lives another ten minutes, she will be in Newgate. There may be something of a scuffle, and if anything happens to you, or to the coach or the 'osses, the county will pay handsomely, so now give me the reins. You may not like to whip through them, but I haven't the least objection."

The coachman looked scared and nervous, but he gave up the reins and the whip to Crotchet, and then leaning back on the box, he waited with no small trepidation the result of the expected disturbance, while he had only Mr. Crotchet's word that the county would pay for handsomely.

The short distance from the corner of Bell Yard to the end of Fleet Market was rapidly traversed, and when that interesting point was reached, the dense mass of people set up another shout, and began to surround the lamp-post that was there, and to fill up all the avenues.

"Get the rope up," said Crotchet.

"Yes, yes. Hurrah! hurrah! Pull her out, and hang her!"

The highly interesting process of getting the rope fixed upon the little projecting piece of iron, upon which the lamplighter was wont to rest his ladder, had the effect that Crotchet expected, namely, to attract general attention; and then, taking advantage of the moment, he seized the whip and used it with such effect upon the horses, that, terrified and half maddened, they set off with the coach at a tearing gallop.

For a moment or two — and in that moment or two Mr. Crotchet with his prisoner got to the corner of the Old Bailey — the mob were so staggered by this unexpected elopement of the hackney-coach, that not a soul followed it. The idea that the horses had of their own accord started, being probably

alarmed at the links, was the first that possessed the people, and many voices called out loudly —

"Pull 'em in — pull 'em in! Saw their heads off!"

But when they saw Mr. Crotchet fairly turn into the Old Bailey, the trick that had been played upon them became apparent; and one yell of indignation and rage burst from the multitude.

The pursuit was immediate; but Mr. Crotchet had too much the start of the mob, and long before the struggling infuriated people, impeding each other as they tore along, had reached the corner of the Old Bailey, Mrs. Lovett was in the lobby of the prison, and the officers safely with her.

She looked like a corpse. The colour of her face was that of soiled white wax.

But mobs, if they cannot wreak their vengeance upon what may be, for distinction's sake, called the legitimate object of their displeasure, will do so upon something else; and upon reaching the door of Newgate, and finding there was no sort of chance of getting hold of Mrs. Lovett, they took the horses out of the hackney-coach, and started them off through the streets to go where they liked; and then, dragging the coach to Smithfield, they then and there made a bon-fire of it, and were very much satisfied and delighted, indeed.

"Now, mum," said Crotchet to Mrs. Lovett, "didn't I say I'd bring yer to the old stone jug as safe as ninepence?"

She only looked at him vacantly; and then, glaring around her with a shudder, she said —

"And this is Newgate!"

"Just a few," said Crotchet.

The governor at this moment made his appearance, and began to give orders as to where Mrs. Lovett should be placed. A slight change of colour came over her face, as she said —

"Shall I see Todd?"

"Not at present," said the governor.

"I should like to see him to forgive him; for no doubt it is to him that I owe this situation. He has betrayed me!"

The look which she put on when she uttered the words "I should like to see him to forgive him," was so truly demoniac, that it was quite clear if she did see Todd, that whether she were armed or not, she would fly upon him, and try to take his life; and although in that she might fail, there would be very little doubt but that, in the process of failure, she would inflict upon him some very serious injury.

It was not likely, though, that the officials of Newgate would indulge her with an opportunity.

"You had better all of you wait here," said the governor to Mr. Crotchet, and the officers, and the cook, "until the mob is gone."

"The street is quite clear, sir," said a turnkey, "They have taken the coach to knock it to pieces, I suppose, sir."

"And I'm done up at last!" said the coachman, wringing his hands, for he had, in fear for his own safety, made his way into the lobby of Newgate along with Mr. Crotchet; "I'm done up at last!"

"Not at all," said the governor. "We would not have lost such a prisoner as this Mrs. Lovett, for the worth of fifty coaches. Every penny of your loss will be made good to you. There is a guinea, in the meantime — go home, and do not distress yourself upon the subject, my good fellow."

Upon this the coachman was greatly comforted, and with Mr. Crotchet and the officers, he left the lobby of Newgate at the same moment that Mrs. Lovett was led off into the interim of that gloomy and horrible abode.

The object of the officer was now to get to the private office of Sir Richard Blunt as soon as possible, and let him know of the successful capture of Mrs. Lovett. Sir Richard, too, it will be remembered, had left a special message with the cook to repair to his office as soon as he could after his release from his bondage in Bell Yard, so that the liberated cook, who felt that he owed that liberation to the advice and assistance of Sir Richard, did not scruple to obey the directions of the magistrate at once.

The private-office of Sir Richard, it will be recollected, was in Craven-street, at the bottom of the Strand.

Upon the route there, Mr. Crotchet and the cook held a long and very serious discourse about the proceedings of Mrs. Lovett, and if the cook was able to tell the active and enterprising Crotchet much that was curious regarding the underground operations at Mrs. Lovett's, he, in return, received some curious edifying information concerning the lady's business connexion with Sweeney Todd, with the particulars of which the cook had been completely ignorant.

By the time they reached Craven-street, therefore, the cook's eyes were considerably opened, and many matters that had been to him extremely obscure, became all at once quite clear, so that he was upon the whole far from sorry for the companionship of the eccentric Crotchet on the road down the Strand to the magistrate's private office.

Sir Richard was at home, and anxiously expecting them, so that upon the first hint of their presence they were introduced to him, and he received the report of the officer with evident satisfaction.

"Thank God," he said, "two of the greatest malefactors the world ever saw are now in the hands of justice."

"Yes," said Crotchet. "They are cotched."

"You may depend all of you," added Sir Richard, "that your conduct and great skill in exertions in this affair shall be by me communicated to the Secretary

of State, who will not leave you unrewarded. Pray wait for me in the outer room, I have some private business with this gentleman."

The officers were a little surprised to hear Sir Richard Blunt call Mrs. Lovett's cook, "this gentleman;" but they of course took no notice of the circumstance while in the presence of their principal, and in a few moments the magistrate was alone with the cook.

From a cupboard in his room, then Sir Richard Blunt took wine and other refreshments, and laid them before the cook, saying —

"Refresh yourself, my friend; but for your own sake, as your fare has been but indifferent for some time, I beg you to be sparing."

"I will, sir. I owe you much — very much!"

"You are free now."

"I — am — sir."

"And yet you are very unhappy."

The cook started and changed colour slightly. He filled, for himself, a glass of wine, and after drinking it he heaved a sigh, as he said —

"Sir, I am unhappy. I do not care how soon the world and I part, sir. The hope — the dream of my life has gone from me. All that I lived for — all that I cherished as the brightest expectation of joy in this world has passed away like a vapour, and left not a rack behind. I am unhappy, and better, far better, would it have been for me if Sweeney Todd had taken my life, or if by some subtle poison, Mrs. Lovett had shuffled me out of the world — I am unhappy."

"Indeed! And you really think you have nothing in this world now to live for?"

"I do. But it is not a thought only. It is a knowledge — it is a fact that cannot be gainsaid or controverted. I tell you, sir, that I can never now hope to realise the happiness which was the day-dream of my existence, and which has passed from me like a dream, never — never to come again. It was in the despair contingent upon such thoughts and feelings, that I went to Mrs. Lovett and became her slave; but now I will be off far away from England, and on some foreign shore I will lay my bones."

"But, my good sir, you will be wanted on the trial of your old friend, Mrs. Lovett."

"Cannot you hang the woman without my help?"

"Yes, I think we might, but so material a witness to her infamy as yourself cannot be dispensed with. Of course I do not pretend to be a conjuror, or to say to any man — 'You shall be happy in spite of all your prognostications to the contrary;' but from what you have told me of your story, I must confess that to my perception you take much too gloomy a view of your condition."

"Too gloomy!" exclaimed the cook, as he filled himself up another glass of wine. "Too gloomy! My dear, sir, you don't know how I loved that girl — you don't know how I — I — But it is no matter now — all that is past. Oh God!

that she should be false to me — she of all persons in the great world!"

"And so you will let this little disappointment of the heart, place you in your youth quite beside all possible enjoyment? Is this wise, sir? Is it even manly?"

The poor cook was silent for a few moments, and then in a voice of deep emotion, he said —

"Sir, you don't know how much I loved her. You do not know how I pictured to myself happiness with her alone. You do not know, sir, how, even when death stared me in the face, I thought of her and her only, and how — But no matter — no matter, sir. She is false, and it is madness to speak of her. Let her go, sir. It is just possible that in the time to come, I may outlive the despair that now fills my heart."

"You surely will."

"I do not think it. But I will hope that I may."

"And have you really no hope — no innate lurking supposition in your mind, that you may be doing her an injustice in your suspicions of her faith?"

"Suspicions?"

"Ay, sir, suspicions, for even you must admit that you know nothing."

"Know nothing, sir?"

"Absolutely nothing. You will find, if you come to consider the affair, that, as I say, you know nothing, but suspect much; and so upon mere suspicion you will make your future life miserable. I would not so bend to circumstances if the whole world stood up before me, and told me I was right in my dread thoughts of one whom I had loved."

The poor cook glanced at Sir Richard Blunt, and for the space of about half a minute, not one word passed between them. Then in a low voice, the cook said —

"You have read *Romeo and Juliet*, sir?"

"Yes — what then?"

"There is one line there, in which we read that —

"'*He jests at scars who never felt a wound.*'"*

"Well, how would you apply that line to the present circumstances?"

"I would say you have never loved, sir, and I have loved."

"A broad assumption that, my friend," said Sir Richard Blunt, "a very broad assertion, indeed. But come, I have to spare a short time. Will you, in recompense for what I have done for you, relate to me more fully than you have done, how it is that you suspect her whom you loved of falsehood to you?"

"Do not say loved, sir; I love her still."

"I am glad to hear it. I pray you to go on, and tell me now all, if you feel

* *Act II Scene II.*

that you can have sufficient confidence in me, and that you can view me with a sufficient friendly feeling."

"Oh, sir, why do you doubt me? Do I not owe to you my life? Do I not owe it to you that I escaped the death that without a doubt was designed for me by Todd? and was it not by your persevering, that at length I had patience enough to wait until the proper time had come for my release, when it could be accomplished without the shadow of a doubt as to the result?"

"Well," said Sir Richard Blunt, with a smile, "I hope then that I have established some claim upon you; so now tell me your story, my friend, and at the end of it I will, from my experience, do what I can to bring you substantial comfort."

"You shall hear all, sir," said the cook, "but comfort and I have parted long since, I fear, from each other for ever."

CHAPTER CXV.

THE COOK BECOMES A VERY IMPORTANT PERSONAGE.

At this last declaration of Mrs. Lovett's late cook, regarding the tender adieu that he and comfort had taken of each other, Sir Richard Blunt only smiled faintly, and slightly inclined his hand as much as to say —

"That is all very well, but I am waiting to hear your story, if you please."

"Well, sir," added the cook. "You already know that I am not exactly what I seem, and that my being in that most abominable woman's employment as a cook, was one of those odd freaks of fortune, which will at times detract the due order of society, and place people in the most extraordinary positions."

"Exactly."

"I am, sir, an orphan, and was brought up by an uncle with every expectation that he would be kind and liberal to me as I progressed in years; but he had taken his own course and had made up his mind as to what I was to be, how I was to look, and what I was to say and to do, without asking himself the question, if nature was good enough to coincide with him or not. The consequence was then, that directly he found me very different from what he wished me to be, he was very angry indeed, and then I put the finishing stroke to his displeasure, by committing the greatest crime that in his eyes I could commit: I fell in love."

"Humph!"

"Yes, sir, that was just what he said at first, when some officious friend told of it, and sending for me he said — 'You must give up all love nonsense if you wish to preserve my favour,' upon which I said — 'Sir, did you never love?' — 'That is not the question,' he said. 'It is of your follies now, not mine, that we are speaking,' and so he turned me out of the room."

"And what did you do? Did you give up your love?"

"No, sir; if he had asked me to give up my life that would have been much easier to me."

"Go on. What then happened?"

"Why, sir, my uncle and I met very seldom, but there was one upon my track that he paid to follow me, and to report my actions to him; and that spy — oh, that I had caught him! — that spy made my uncle acquainted with the fact, that I continued, despite his prohibition, to meet with the only being who ever awakened in my bosom a tender feeling; and so I was abandoned by my relative, and left penniless almost."

"But you had youth and health?"

"I had, and I resolved to make use of those advantages as best I might, by endeavouring while they lasted, frail and fluttering possessions as they are, to make a home for myself and for her whom I loved."

"The feeling, I presume, was reciprocal?"

"I thought so."

"Was it only a thought, then?"

"Alas! no. It was a certainty; and if an angel with wings fresh spread from Heaven, and carrying upon them the soft light of an eternal world, had come to me and told me that she would be false to me, I would not have believed as much."

"And yet — "

"And yet, as you say, I have found her false. Well — well, Sir Richard — let me proceed. The thought of her unmans me at moments, but in time I may recover from such feelings."

"Most unquestionably you will; and then you will look to your present condition of mind with such a smile of incredulity, and only a faint faith in your own memory that paints you such feelings."

"I cannot say, sir, that it will not be so, but I do not think so. To proceed, however. I heard that an expedition was about to start to explore some rich islands in the Southern Sea. If successful, every one who took part in it would be enriched; and if unsuccessful, I could not lose my life in a better cause then in trying to make a happy home for her whom I love. I at once embraced the proposition, and became one of the adventurers, much against the inclination of the gentle girl whom I loved, and who in imagination pictured to herself a thousand dangers as involved in the enterprise."

"You went?"

"I did, and with every hope of returning in about a year an independent man. I thought little of the perils I was about to encounter in my voyage. I and the fair girl upon whom I had fixed my best hopes and affections parted, after many tears and protestations of fidelity. I kept my faith."

"And she?"

"Broke hers."

"As you think — as you think. You cannot be too cautious, my young friend, in making assertions of that character."

"Cautious, sir? Am I to believe the evidence of my own eyes, or am I not?"

"Not always," said Sir Richard Blunt, calmly. "But I pray you go on with your narrative."

"I will. The principal object of the voyage failed entirely; but by pure accident I got possession of a String of Pearls, of very great value indeed, which, provided I could get home in safety, would value in Europe quite a sufficient sum to enable us to live in comfort. But the dangers of the deep assailed us. We were wrecked; and fully believing that I should not survive, I handed the pearls to a stronger comrade, and begged him to take them to her whom I had loved, to tell herself my fate, and to bid her not weep for me, since I had died happy in the thought that I had achieved something for her; and so, my friend and I parted. I was preserved and got on board a merchant vessel bound for England, where I arrived absolutely penniless. But I had a heart full of hope and joy; for if I could but find my poor girl faithful to me, I felt that we might yet be happy, whether my comrade had lived to bring to her the pearls or not."

"And you found her?"

"You shall hear, sir. I walked from Southampton to London, subsisting on the road as best I could. Sometimes I met with kind treatment at farm-houses, and sometimes with quite the reverse, until at length I reached London tolerably exhausted, as you may suppose, and in anything but a good plight."

"Well, but you found your girl all right, I suppose?"

"No. I walked up the Strand; and as some of our happiest interviews had taken place in the Temple Gardens, I could not resist turning aside for a moment to look at the old familiar spot, when what do you think was the sight that met my eyes?"

"I really can't say."

"I will tell you, sir. I saw her whom I loved — the young and beautiful girl for whom I had gone through so much — the being upon whose faith and constancy I would at any time have staked my life — the, as I thought, most innocent, guileless creature upon the face of the earth — "

"Well, well, my good friend, what did you see this paragon of perfection about?"

"You will not believe it, sir."

"Oh, yes, I shall — do not be afraid of that — I shall believe it. Your narrative

bears too much the stamp of truth about it for me to doubt it for a moment. I pray you to go on."

"I will then. The first object that met my eyes in that Temple Garden was the being whom I loved so fondly leaning upon the arm of a man in a military undress — leaning, did I say, upon his arm? she was almost upon his breast, and he was actually supporting her with one of his arms round her waist."

"Well?"

"What, sir! Is that all you can say to it? Would you say 'Well?' if you saw the only creature you ever loved in such a situation, sir? Well, indeed!"

"My dear friend, do not get excited, now."

"Oh, sir, it would excite a stick or a stone."

"Excuse me, then, for having said 'Well,' and go on with your story. What did she say to excuse herself to you?"

"'Tis well, sir — of course, I cannot expect others to feel as I do upon such an occasion. I did not speak to her, sir. The sight of such perfidy was enough for me. From that moment she fell from the height I had raised her to in my imagination, and nothing she could say, and nothing I could say, would raise her up again."

"And you, then, only walked away?"

"That is all. With such a pang at my heart at the moment as I wonder did not kill me, I walked away, and left her to her own conclusions."

"Then — then, my young friend, you did the very reverse of what I should have done, for you should have gone up to her, and politely taken leave of her, so as to let her know at all events that you were aware of her perfidy. I should not have been content to let her have the satisfaction of thinking I was at the bottom of the sea while she was enjoying a flirtation with her officer; but, of course, different people take different courses upon emergencies. There is one thing, however, that I wonder you did not inquire about."

"What was that?"

"Your String of Pearls. How could you tell but that your friend had got to London, and had actually given her the Pearls with your message appended to them? I really am surprised that you did not step forward and say, 'Oblige me, miss, with my pearls, if you no longer favour me with your affections!'"

"No, no. To tell the truth, I was too heart-broken at the time to care about anything in all the world; I had lost her who was to me the greatest jewel it had ever contained, and I cared for nothing else. I do believe I was a little mad, for I walked about the rest of that day, not knowing where I went to, and at last I found myself, tired, worn out, famishing, opposite to Mrs. Lovett's shop-window, and the steam of those abominable pies began to tempt me, so much that I went into the shop, and after some talk, I actually accepted the situation of cook to her, and there, but for you, I should have breathed my last."

"Not a doubt of it. And now, my young friend, you know that I am a police-magistrate, and I dare say you have heard a great deal about my sources of information, and the odd way in which I find out things when folks think they keep them a profound secret. You have told me all your history, but you have thought proper, as you were, if you pleased, quite justified in doing, to withhold your name."

"I have done so, but I hardly know why. I will tell it to you, however, now."

"Hold, I know it."

"You know it, sir?"

"Yes, your name is Mark Ingestrie!"

"It is, indeed. But how you came to know that, sir, is to me most mysterious."

"Oh, I know more than that. The name of the young lady who, you believe, played you such a trick, is Johanna Oakley."

Mark Ingestrie, for it was indeed no other, sprang to his feet, exclaiming —

"Are you man or devil, that you know what I have never breathed to you?"

"Don't be surprised, my young friend. I can tell you a little more than that even. The friend to whom you intrusted your String of Pearls, was named Francis Thornhill; and his dog — let me see — Oh, his large dog was called Hector."

Mark Ingestrie trembled excessively, and sinking back in his seat, he turned very pale.

"This must be a dream," he said, "or you, sir, get your information from the spirits of the dead."

"Not at all. But have you faith in my inspiration now sufficient to induce you to believe anything that I may tell you?"

"In good truth, I have; and I may well have, for after what you have already told me, your power of knowledge cannot by me be for one moment doubted."

"Very well, then. In the first place, Mr. Francis Thornhill reached London in safety."

"He did?"

"I tell you so. He arrived in London with your String of Pearls in his pocket. He fully believed you were dead. Indeed, he fancied that he had seen the last of you, and was quite prepared to say as much to Miss Johanna Oakley."

"And he did? That will be some excuse for her, if she thought that I was gone."

"No, he did not. On his route he turned into the shop of Sweeney Todd to be shaved, and there he was murdered."

"Murdered!"

"Yes, most foully murdered; and the String of Pearls got into the possession of that man, proving ultimately one of the means by which his frightful villainous crime came to light. The dog remained at Todd's door seeking for its master, to the great discomfiture of the murderer, who made every effort within his

power for its destruction, in which however he did not succeed."

"Gracious Heaven! my poor friend Thornhill to meet with such a fate! Oh God! and all on account of that fatal String of Pearls! Oh, Thornhill — Thornhill! rather would I have sunk for ever beneath the wave, than such a dreadful end should have been yours."

"The past cannot be recalled," said Sir Richard. "It is only with the present, and with the future that we have anything to do now. Would you like to hear more?"

"More? Of whom? Is he not dead? — my poor friend?"

"Yes, he is dead; but I can tell you more of other people. I can tell you that Johanna Oakley was faithful to you. I can tell you that she mourned your loss as you would wish her to mourn it, knowing how you would mourn hers. I can tell you that the gentleman's arm she was leaning upon was only a dear friend, and that the fact of her having to be supported by him at the unlucky moment when you saw this was solely owing to the deep grief she was plunged into upon your account."

"Oh no — no — no!"

"I say yes. It was so, Mr. Ingestrie; and if you had at that moment stepped forward, you would have saved yourself much misery, and you would have saved her such heart-breaking thoughts, and such danger, as it will frighten you to listen to."

CHAPTER CXVI.

JOHANNA IS AMPLY PAID FOR HER BRIEF SERVICE AT TODD'S.

UPON HEARING ALL THIS, POOR MARK INGESTRIE turned very faint and fell back in his chair, looking so pale and wan, that Sir Richard Blunt was compelled to go across the room to hold him up. After giving him a glass of wine, he recovered, and with a deep sigh he said —

"And so I have wronged her after all! Oh, my Johanna, I am unworthy of you!"

"That," said Sir Richard, "is a subject entirely for the young lady's own consideration. — N. O. W."

Mark Ingestrie looked curiously in the face of Sir Richard Blunt, as with marked emphasis upon each letter he said, "N. O. W!" But he had not to wait long for an explanation of what it meant. A door at the back of the room was

THE MEETING OF MARK AND JOHANNA.

flung open, and Johanna sprung forward with a cry of joy. In another moment she was in the arms of Mark Ingestrie, and Sir Richard Blunt had left the room.

It would be quite impossible, if we had the will to attempt it, for us to go through the scene that took place between Johanna Oakley and Mark Ingestrie in the magistrate's parlour. For about half an hour they quite forgot where they were, or that there was any one in the world but themselves. At the end of that period of time, though, Sir Richard Blunt gently walked into the room.

"Well," he said, "have you come to any understanding about that military man in the Temple Gardens?"

Johanna sprang towards the magistrate, and placing her arms upon his breast, she kissed him on the cheek.

"Sir," she said, "you are our very dear friend, and I love you as I love my father."

"God bless you!" said Sir Richard, "You have, by those few words, more then repaid me for all that I have done. Are you happy?"

"Very, very happy."

"So very happy, sir," said Ingestrie, as his eyes glistened through tears of joy, "that I can hardly believe in its reality."

"And yet you are both so poor."

"Ah, sir, what is poverty when we shall be together?"

"We will face that foe, Mark, I think," said Johanna, with a smile, "and he shall not extort a tear from us."

"Well," said Sir Richard, as he opened his desk, "since you are not to be knocked down by poverty, what say you to riches? Do you know these, Mr. Ingestrie?"

"Why, that is my String of Pearls."

"Yes. I took this from Todd's escritoire myself, and they are yours and Johanna's. Will you permit me always to call you Johanna?"

"Oh, yes — yes. Do so. All who love me call me Johanna."

"Very well. This String of Pearls, I have ascertained, is worth a sufficient sum to place you both very far above all the primary exigences of life. It will be necessary to produce them at the trial of Sweeney Todd, but after that event they will be handed to you to do what you please with them, when you can realise them at at once, and be happy enough with the proceeds."

"If my poor friend, Thornhill," sighed Mark Ingestrie, "could but have lived to see this day!"

"That, indeed, would have been a joy," said Johanna.

"Yes," said the magistrate; "but the grave has closed on his poor remains — at least, I may say so figuratively. He was one of Todd's victims, one of his numerous victims; for I do believe that, for a long time, scarcely a week passed that did not witness some three or four murders in that man's shop."

"Horrible!"

"You may well use that expression, in speaking of the career of Sweeney Todd. It has been most horrible; but there cannot be a doubt of his expiating his crimes upon the scaffold, together with his partner in guilt, Mrs. Lovett."

Mark Ingestrie gave a shudder as that woman's name was mentioned, for it put him in mind of the cellar where he had lived so long, and where it was only by the most good fortune that he had not terminated his career.

Before they could say any more, one of the officers in attendance upon Sir Richard, announced Colonel Jeffery.

"Ah, that is your dreadful military rival," said Sir Richard to Ingestrie.

"That is the gentleman whom you saw in the garden of the Temple with Johanna."

"I have much to thank him for. His conduct to Johanna has been most noble."

The colonel smiled when he saw Mark Ingestrie and Johanna, for he well knew, from private information he had got from the magistrate, that Mark Ingestrie and Mrs. Lovett's cook were identical; and holding out his hand to the young man, he said —

"Accept of my best and sincerest wishes, Mr. Ingestrie."

"And you, sir," said Mark, "accept of my best thanks. Our gratitude is largely due to you, sir."

"I am quite repaid by this very happy result; and I have the pleasure of informing you, Sir Richard, that poor Tobias is very much better indeed."

"Which I am rejoiced to hear," said Sir Richard. "And now, my dear Johanna, it is time for you to go home. You will hear from me in the morning, for I intend to do myself the pleasure of calling upon your father, and explaining all to him; for there are some circumstances that he is yet in ignorance of, and particularly concerning Mr. Ingestrie."

"I will walk with you to your door, Johanna," said Mark rising and tottering.

"No," said Sir Richard Blunt; "that must not be to-night. Do not let him, Johanna. He is by far too weak and unwell to do anything of the kind. A calm and long night's rest here will do him a world of good. Business prevents me from leaving the office; but I daresay the colonel will see Johanna in safety."

"With pleasure," said Colonel Jeffery, "if Mr. Ingestrie has no objection to my doing so."

"Sir," said Mark, "there is no one in all the world that I would more cheerfully see protecting my Johanna. I feel that I am in too great a state of exhaustion to go out. I leave her to your care, sir."

"That is right," said Sir Richard Blunt. "Now, good-night, Johanna, and God bless you. You will see me in the morning, recollect."

Mark Ingestrie took a parting embrace of Johanna, and then she went off with the colonel, who, on their road home, told her how he and Arabella had got so far as to fix their wedding day, and how he should not feel at all happy unless both she and Mark Ingestrie were at the ceremony.

"Indeed, he hoped," he said, "that they might give the parson only one trouble, by being married upon the same occasion."

Johanna warded this last part of the colonel's speech; but she was fervent in her hopes that he and Arabella would be so very happy, and in her praises of her young friend; so in very pleasant discourse indeed, they reached the old spectacle-maker's shop, and then the colonel shook hands with Johanna, and bade her a kind and friendly adieu, and she was let in by — to her immense surprise — her mother!

Mrs. Oakley fell upon Johanna's neck in a passion of tears, crying —

"Come, my child — come to your mother's heart, and tell her that you forgive her for much past neglect and unkindness."

"Oh, mother," said Johanna, "do not speak so. There is nothing to forgive; and if you are happy and we are all good friends, we will never think of the past."

"That's right, my dear," said Mr. Oakley, from the passage; "that's right, my love. Come in, both of you."

But it is necessary that we should briefly state how it was that this wonderful change in the behaviour of Mrs. Oakley came about, and for that purpose we must retrace our steps a little.

THE READER WILL BE SO GOOD AS TO RECOLLECT that the last time Mrs. Oakley was introduced to his notice she was encumbered by Mr. Lupin, and had the pleasure of introducing that gentleman to the notice of Big Ben the beef-eater, who had quickly put all idea of escape out of the question, as regarded that highly religious personage.

At that point the presence of other events compelled us to leave the lady, and repair to Todd's shop, and to Mrs. Lovett's little concern in Bell Yard.

The appearance of Lupin's face when he found that he was in the grasp of Big Ben, would have been quite a study for a painter. It transcended all description, and for the moment seemed as if he were bidding farewell to this world and to all his iniquities in it, without the intervention of the law. But in a few moments he recovered from this condition, and sliding on to his knees, and in a whining tone, he cried —

"Mercy, Mercy! Oh, let me go!"

"At the end of a rope," said Big Ben. "Easy does it. What has he been and done, Mrs. O.?"

"Murder, murder!"

A crowd of people soon began to collect around them, and then Lupin made an effort to thrust himself out of the grasp of Big Ben, but the only result of the effort was very nearly to strangle himself.

"You are killing the man, you great brute!" cried a woman. "You are throttling the poor man."

"He will be murdered," shouted another female. "Oh, you great wretch, do you want to take his life?"

"Listen to me," said Mrs. Oakley. "He has murdered his poor wife, and that is the reason I have asked that he should be held tight."

"Murdered his wife!" exclaimed about twelve females in chorus. "Murdered his wife? Then hanging is a great deal too good for him. Hold him tight, sir, do. Oh, the wretch!"

The tide of popular feeling fairly turned against Mr. Lupin, and Big Ben had as much difficulty now in preserving the half dead wretch from popular fury as if he had been accused of any other crime, he might have had to prevent popular sympathy from aiding his escape.

"Oh!" cried one lady, of rather extensive proportions, who was the wife of a baker, "I should like to have him in a brisk oven for an hour and a half."

"And I," said the lady of a butcher, "would see him slaughtered without so much as winking at him."

"And serve him right, the wagabone!" cried Big Ben. "Come along, will you, you ill-looking scarecrow! Easy does it. Will you walk? Oh, very well, don't. Who are you?"

A little man with a constable's staff in his hand, rushed before Ben, crying out —

"What is it? what is it? I'm a constable. What is it?"

"Murder!" said Mrs. Oakley. "I give that man in charge for murdering his wife. I saw him do it."

"That will do," said the constable. "Give him to me. I'll take him. He dare not resist me. I'll have him."

Big Ben looked at the constable and then he shook his head, as he said very gravely —

"I tell you what it is, my little man, you ain't fit to tussle with such a fellow as this — I'll take him along for you. Where is he to go?"

"To the round-house, in course; but I'm a constable. I must take him — I will take him! Give him to me, sir, directly — I will have him — I must go with him!"

"Wait a minute," said Ben. "Easy does it! You must go with him, you say? Very good — easy does everything!"

With this, Ben grasped Mr. Lupin round the middle, and placed him under his left arm, and suddenly pouncing, then, upon the constable, he caught him up and placed him under the right arm; and then away he walked, to the admiration of the populace, and paying about as much attention to the kicking of the constable and the kicking of Mr. Lupin, as though they were two dogs that he was carrying home.

And so the murderer was taken to the round-house, where Mrs. Oakley duly preferred the charge against him, and promised to substantiate it before a magistrate when called upon so to do.

CHAPTER CXVII.

SHOWS HOW MRS. OAKLEY RECONCILED HERSELF TO EVERYBODY AT HOME.

When Ben and Mrs. Oakley had thus disposed of Mr. Lupin, and left him to his solitary and not very pleasant reflections in a cell of the round-house, they found themselves together in the open street, and Ben, as he cast a woeful glance at her, said —

"Well, how does yer feel now? Easy does it! Oh, you ain't a-been and behaved yourself properly lately — you is like the old bear as we calls Nosey. He's always a-doing what he shouldn't, and always a-never doing what he should."

"Ben?"

"Well, blaze away. What is yer going to say now?"

"I feel, Ben, that I am a very different woman from what I was — very different."

"Then you must have gained by the exchange, for you was, I will say it, anything but a pleasant bit o' goods. There's poor old Oakley a-making of spectacles all days, and a-wearing of his old eyes out — and there's Miss Johanna, bless her heart! as wise a little bit o' human nature as you'd wish to see, whether she's in petticoats or the other things; and yet you neglects 'em both, all for to run arter a canting snivelling wagabone like this Lupin, that we wouldn't have among the beasteses at the Tower, if so be he'd come and offer himself."

"I know it, Ben — I know it."

"You know it! Why didn't you know it before?"

"I don't know, Ben; but my eyes are open now. I have had a lesson that to my dying day I shall never forget. I have found that piety may only be a cloak with which to cover up the most monstrous iniquity."

"Oh, you have made that discovery, have you?"

"I have, indeed, Ben."

"Well, I knowed as much as that when I was a small baby. It only shows how back'ard some folks is in coming for'ard with their edication."

"Yes, Ben."

"Well, and what is you going to be arter now?"

"I wish to go home, and I want you to come with me, and to say a kind word for me; I want you to tell them how I now see the error of my ways, and

how I am an altered woman, and mean to be a very — very different person than I was."

Here Mrs. Oakley's genuine feelings got the better of her, and she began to weep bitterly; and Ben, after looking at her for a few moments, cried out —

"Why, it's real, and not like our hyena that only does it to gammon us! Come, mother Oakley, just pop your front paw under my arm, and I'll go home with you; and if you don't get a welcome there, I'm not a beef-eater. Why, the old man will fly right bang out of his wits for joy. You should only see what a house is when the mother and the wife don't do as she ought. Mother O., you should see what a bit of fire there is in the grate, and what a hearth."

"I know it — I ought to know it."

"You ought to know it!" added Ben, putting himself into an oratorial attitude. "You should only see the old man when dinner time comes round. He goes into the parlour and he finds no fire; then he says — 'Dear me!'"

"Yes — yes."

"Then he gives a boy a ha'penny to go and get him something that don't do him no sort of good from the cook's shop, and sometimes the boy nabs the ha'penny and the shilling both, and ain't never heard of again by any means no more."

"No doubt, Ben."

"Then, when tea comes round, it don't come round at all, and the old man has none; but he takes in a ha'porth of milk in a jug without a spout, and he drinks that up, cold and miserable, with a penny-loaf, you see."

"Yes — yes."

"And then at night, when there ought to be a little sort of comfort round the fireside, there ain't none."

"But Johanna, Ben — there is Johanna?"

"Johanna?"

"Yes. Is she not there to see to some of her father's comforts? She loves him — I know she does, Ben!"

Ben placed his finger by the side of his nose, and in an aside to himself, he said —

"Now I'll touch her up a bit — now I'll punish her for all she has done, and it will serve her right." Then, elevating his voice, he added — "Did you mention Johanna?"

"Yes, Ben, I did."

"Then I'm sorry you did. Perhaps you think she's been seeing to the old man's comforts a little — airing his night-cap, and so on — Eh? Is that the idea?"

"Yes, I know that she would do anything gladly for her father. She was always most tenderly attached to him."

"Humph!"

"Why do you say, Humph, Ben?"

"Just answer me one question, Mrs. O. Did you ever hear of a young girl as was neglected by her mother — her mother who of all ought to be the person to attend to her — turning out well?"

"Do not terrify me, Ben."

"Well, all I have got to say is, that Johanna can't be in two places at once, and as she isn't at home, how, I would ask any reasonable Christian, can she attend to the old man?"

"Not at home, Ben?"

"Not — at — home!"

"Oh, Heaven! why did I not stay in that dreadful man's house, and let him murder me! Why did I not tell him at once that I knew of his crime, and implore him to make me his next victim! Oh, Ben, if you have any compassion in your disposition you will tell me all, and then I shall know what to hope, and what to dread."

"Well," said Ben, "here goes then."

"What goes?"

"I mean I'm a-going to tell you all, as you seem as if you'd like to know it."

"Do! Oh, do!"

"Then of course Johanna being but a very young piece of goods, and not knowing much o' the ways o' this here world, and the habits and manners o' the wild beasteses as is in it, when she found as the old house wasn't good enough for her mother, she naturally enough thought it wasn't good enough for her, you know."

"Oh, this is the most dreadful stroke of all!"

"I should say it were," said Ben, quite solemnly. "Take it easy though, and you'll get through it in the course of time. Well then, when Johanna found as everything at home was sixes and sevens, she borrowed a pair of what do call 'ems of some boy, and a jacket, and off she went."

"She what?"

"She put on a pair of thingumys — well, breeches then, if you must have it — and away she went, and the last I saw of her was in Fleet-street with 'em on."

"Gracious Heaven!"

"Very likely, but that don't alter the facts of the case, you know, Mrs. O. On she had 'em, and all I can say is that you might have knocked me down flat to see her, that you might. I didn't think I should ever have got home to the beasteses in the Tower again, it gave me such a turn."

"Lost! Lost!"

"Eh? What do you say? What have you lost now?"

"My child! My Johanna!"

"Oh! Ah, to be sure. But then you know, Mrs. O, you ought to have staid

at home, and gived her ever so much good advice, you know; and when you saw she was bent upon putting on the boy's things, you as a mother ought to have said, 'My dear, take your legs out of that if yer pleases, and if yer don't, I'll pretty soon make you,' and then staid and gived the affair up as a bad job that wouldn't pay, and took to morals."

"Yes — yes. 'Tis I, and I only, who am to blame. I have been the destruction of my child. Farewell, Ben. You will perhaps in the course of time not think quite so badly of me as you now do. Farewell!"

"Hold!" cried Ben as he clutched the arm of Mrs. Oakley only the more tightly in his own: "What are you at now?"

"Death is now my only resource. My child is lost to me, and I have driven her by my neglect to such a dreadful course. I cannot live now. Let me go, Ben. You will never hear of me again."

"If I let you go may I be — Well, no matter — no matter. Come on. It's all one, you know, a hundred years hence."

"But at present it is madness and despair. Let me go, I say. The river is not far off, and beneath its waters I shall at least find peace for my breaking heart. Let my death be considered as some sort of expiation of my sins."

"Stop a bit."

"No — no — no."

"But I say, yes. Things ain't quite so bad as you think 'em, only it was right o' me, you know, just to let you know what they might have been."

"What do you tell me?"

"Why that there ain't a better girl than Johanna in all the world, and that if all the mothers that ever was or ever will be, had neglected her and set her all their bad examples in the universal world, she would still be the little angel that she is now, and no mistake."

"Then she is not from home? It is all a fable?"

"Not quite, Mrs. O. just you trot on now comfortably by the side of me, and I will tell you the whole particulars, and then you will find that there ain't no occasion to go plumping into the river on Johanna's account."

Poor Mrs. Oakley, with delight beaming upon every feature of her face, now listened to Ben while he explained the whole matter to her, as far as he himself was cognisant of it; and if he did not offer to be very explicit in minor details, she at all events heard from him quite enough to convince her that Johanna was all that the tenderest mother could wish.

"Oh, Ben," she said, as the tears coursed each other down her cheeks, "how could you torture me as you have done?"

"All for your own good," said Ben. "It only lets you see what might have happened if Johanna had not been the good little thing that she is, that's all."

"Well, perhaps it is for the best that I should have suffered such a pang, and I only hope that Heaven will accept of it as some sort of expiation of my

wickedness. If you had not held me, Ben, I should certainly have taken my life."

"Not a doubt about it," said Ben; "and a pretty kittle of fish you would then have made of the whole affair. However, that's all right enough now, and as for old Oakley, all you have got to do is to go into the shop and say to him. 'Here I am, and I am sorry for the past, which I hope you will forgive, and for the future I will strive to be a good wife.'"

"Must I say that, Ben?"

"Yes, to be sure. If you are ashamed to say what's right, you may depend upon it you haven't much inclination to do it."

"You have convinced me, Ben. I will humble myself. It is fit and proper that I should. So I will say as nearly as I can recollect just what you have told me to say."

"You can't do better; and here we are at the corner of the street. Now if you would rather go in by yourself without me, only say the word, and I'm off."

Mrs. Oakley hesitated for a moment and then she said —

"Yes, Ben, I would rather go alone."

"Very good. I think it's better too, so good-bye; and I'll call to-morrow and see how you are all getting on."

"Do so, Ben. No one can possibly be more welcome than you will be. You will be sure to come to-morrow?"

"Rather."

With this Ben walked away, and Mrs. Oakley entered the house. What then passed we do not feel that we ought to relate. The humiliations of human nature, although for the best of purposes, and for the ultimate happiness of the parties themselves, are not subjects for the pen of the chronicler. Suffice it, that Mr. and Mrs. Oakley were perfectly reconciled, and were happy upon that day.

CHAPTER CXVIII.

TAKES A PEEP AT TOBIAS AT THE COLONEL'S HOUSE.

THE MORE STIRRING EVENTS OF OUR STORY, have compelled us in some measure to neglect poor Tobias. He had suffered very much from that visit of Todd's to the colonel's house, and it had a very prejudicial effect upon his mind too, inasmuch as it deprived him of that feeling of security, which had before possessed him beneath that roof.

TOBIAS AND MINNA REJOICE AT THE CAPTURE OF TODD AND MRS. LOVETT.

The colonel felt this very acutely, and he could not help perceiving by Tobias's manner, that the faith he put in his assurance that Todd could not possibly again come near him, was not full and complete. Under these circumstances, then, it was a very great satisfaction to the colonel to be able to make the gratifying communication he had it in his power to make to Tobias, on the morning following the arrest of Todd and Mrs. Lovett.

The illness contingent upon the fright that Todd had given the poor boy, or the relapse as we might call it, had in a great measure worn off, and if

Tobias's mind could have been quite at ease, his recovery would have been as rapid as any one could possibly have wished or expected.

As soon as he was up and about upon the following morning, then, after the arrests, the colonel sought Tobias's room, and with a cheerful smile upon his face he said —

"Well, Tobias, I come to bring you good news."

"Indeed, sir?" said Tobias his colour coming and going in flushes. "I am very weak, and — and if —"

"Come, come, Tobias. What I am going to tell you will strengthen you, I know. Todd is in Newgate!"

Tobias drew a long breath.

"Todd is in Newgate?" he replied. "Todd is in Newgate? The walls are very thick. I am safe now."

"Yes, you are, indeed, Tobias. The walls of Newgate are thick, and the doors are massive and well-guarded. Be assured that Todd will never issue out at them but to his execution. Your old cunning enemy is at length more powerless by a great deal than you are, and from this moment you may completely banish all fear from your mind upon his account."

"And the woman, sir, Mrs. Lovett?"

"She is in Newgate likewise."

"Both, both, and their crimes then are all known at last, and there will be no more murders, and no more poor boys driven mad as I was! Oh, God be thanked, it is indeed all over now, all over."

With this Tobias burst into tears, and relieved his surcharged heart of a load of misery. In the course of about five minutes he looked up with such a great smile of happiness upon his face, that it was quite a joy to see it.

"And you, sir, you," he said, "my dear friend have done all this!"

"Not all, Tobias. I have helped in every way that lay in my power to bring the affair about, but it is Sir Richard Blunt the magistrate, who has toiled day and night almost in the matter, and who has at last brought it to so successful an issue, that the guilt of both Todd and Mrs. Lovett can be distinctly and clearly proved, without the shadow of a doubt."

"Unhappy wretches!"

"They are, indeed, Tobias, unhappy wretches, and may Heaven have mercy upon them. Some other old friends of yours, too, will, before nightfall I think, find a home in Newgate."

"Indeed, sir, whom mean you?"

"The folks at the madhouse at Peckham. Sir Richard would have had them apprehended some time ago, but he was afraid that it might give the alarm to Todd, before the affair was ripe enough to enable him to be arrested, with a certainty of his crimes being clearly understood and brought home to him. Now, however, that is all over, and they will be punished."

"They are very, very wicked. I think, sir, they are almost worse than Sweeney Todd."

"They are, if anything; but they will meet with their deserts, never fear; and as Minna Gray is expected every moment, so your mother tells me, I will not deprive you of the gratification of giving her the piece of news yourself. Of course, all the town will know it soon through the medium of the press; and Sir Richard Blunt, too, will be here in the course of the morning, to arrange with you concerning your evidence."

"My evidence? Shall I be wanted?"

"Yes, Tobias. Surely you would not like so notorious a criminal to find a loop-hole of escape, from the want of your evidence?"

"Oh, no, no — I will go. I have only to tell the truth, and that should never be denied for or against. I will go, sir."

"You are right, Tobias. It is a duty you owe to society. If some one long ago, and before you even had the evil fortune to go into his shop, had found out and exposed the iniquities of Sweeney Todd, how much misery would have been spared in this world both to you and to others!"

"Ah, yes, sir; and yet —"

"Yet what, Tobias?"

"I was only thinking, sir, that what at times seems like our very worst misfortunes, at times turn out to be the very things that are the making of us."

"Indeed, Tobias?"

"Yes, sir. If I had not been Sweeney Todd's boy, and if he had not persecuted me in the way he did, I should never have known what it was to have the friend I now have in you, sir; and perhaps she whom I love so dearly, would not have thought so much of me, if she had not deeply pitied me for all that I suffered."

"There is profound philosophy in what you say, my poor boy," replied the colonel; "and if we could only bring ourselves to think, when things apparently go wrong with us, that after all it is for the best, we should be much happier than we are now; but with our short-sighted wisdom, we hastily take upon ourselves to decide upon matters concerning the issues of which we know nothing, and so by anticipation we make ourselves pleased or sorrowful, when the precise contrary may be the real result."

"Yes, sir," said Tobias, "I have had time to think of that, and of many other strange things, as I lay here."

"Then you have done yourself some good, Tobias. But I hear a light footstep upon the stairs, and I will now leave you, for I can guess by that heightened colour that you hear it likewise, and I know that two may be good company but three none."

Tobias would have said something deprecatory of the colonel leaving him, and he did begin, but with a smile his kind and hospitable friend took his leave, and Tobias soon had the satisfaction of relating to the young girl, whom he

was so tenderly attached to, that nothing further was now to be feared from Sweeney Todd or from Mrs. Lovett.

We may now leave Tobias in good company; and it was really surprising to those who have not made a habit of noting the intimate connection there is between the mind and the body, to see how from the very moment that he felt assured there was nothing further to apprehend from Sweeney Todd, Tobias's health picked up and improved. The absolute dread with which that bold impious bad man had inspired the boy, had been the sole cause of keeping him in so delicate a state. His dreams had been all of Todd; but now that word Newgate, in conjunction with Todd's name, was a spell that brought with it peace and security.

Tobias, as he sat with the hand of the young and fair girl who had pleased his boyish fancy in his own, was now truly happy.

When Johanna got home, after being escorted from Sir Richard Blunt's house in Craven-street by Colonel Jeffery, she found her mother at home, and not a little surprised was she to find herself suddenly clasped in that mother's arms, a most unwonted process for Mrs. Oakley to go through.

"Oh, my child, my dear child!" sobbed the now repentant woman. "Can you forgive me as your father has done?"

"Forgive you, mother? Oh, do not speak to me in such a way as that. It is quite a joy to find you — you are really my mother?"

"You might well doubt it, my dear child; but the future is before us all, and then you will find that it was only when I could not have been in my right mind, that I preferred any place to my own home."

Old Oakley wiped his eyes as he said to Johanna —

"Yes, my darling, your mother has come back to us now in every sense of the word, and all the past is to be forgotten, except such of it as will be pleasant to remember. Your good friend, and I may say the good friend of us all, Sir Richard Blunt, sent us a letter to say that you would be here to-night, and God bless him my child, for watching over you as he did."

"Oh, how perilous an enterprise you went upon, my darling," said Mrs. Oakley.

The door of the adjoining room was partially open, and from it now stepped forward Arabella, saying —

"It is I who ought to ask pardon of you all for advising that step; and you will grant me that pardon I am sure, if upon no other ground, upon that that I have suffered greatly for my folly and precipitation."

"My dear Arabella," said Johanna, "you must not blame yourself in such a way. How pleased I am to find you here, my dear friend. Ah! at one time how little did we ever expect to meet all thus, in this little room!"

Johanna and Arabella embraced each other, and while they were so

occupied, big Ben came out of the room from whence Arabella had proceeded, and flinging his arms round them both, he made a great roaring noise, in imitation of the largest of the bears in the Tower collection.

At the moment, Johanna was alarmed, and could not conceive what it was; but Arabella, who knew that Ben had been in the room, waiting for some opportunity of coming out in a highly practical manner, only laughed, and then Johanna knew in a moment who it was, and she cried —

"Ben, it is you!"

"Yes, it's me," said Ben, "and I'm only astonished at you two girls fancying I was going to be quiet, and see all that kissing and hugging going on, and not come in for any of it. Don't kick now, for I must kiss you both, and there's an end of it. It's no use a-kicking."

To the credit of both Arabella and Johanna we may state, that they neither of them kicked, but very quietly let Ben kiss them both.

"Well," said Ben as he plumped himself down upon a chair after the salute. "Well! — Murder! Where am I going to now?"

"Dear me," said Mrs. Oakley. "All four legs of the chair are broken off, and Ben is on the floor."

"Really, Ben," said Mr. Oakley, "you ought to be perfectly careful when you sit down."

"Easy does it," said Ben. "I really thought I was going to kingdom come. Pull me, Johanna, my dear. Pull me up."

Johanna shook her head, and declined the Herculean attempt, so that Ben had to scramble to his feet the best way he could, and then as he sat down upon the sofa which was sufficiently strong to withstand any shocks, Mrs. Oakley asked him what it was he had been upon the point of saying, when the chair had so very unceremoniously given way with him; but Ben had quite forgotten it, only he said he recollected something else that was quite as good, and that was that he ordered to come about that hour a foaming tankard of mulled wine, and then he winked at Mrs. Oakley and hoped she had no medicine in the house to put in it.

"Oh, no, Ben," she said, "and if there isn't a knock at the door; and if you ordered it at the Unicorn's Tail, you may depend that's it."

"Very good," said Ben, and then he proceeded to the door and found that it was the boy from the Unicorn's Dorsal Appendage with the spiced wine; and after whispering to bring a similar quantity in half an hour, and to keep on at it every half hour until further orders, Ben took it into the parlour, and a happier party than was there could not have been found in all London.

CHAPTER CXIX.

THE CRIMINALS IN NEWGATE. — TODD'S ATTEMPT AT SUICIDE.

IT IS GRIEVOUS TO TURN FROM THE CONTEMPLATION of so pleasant and grateful a scene as that that was taking place at the old spectacle-maker's house, to dive into the interior of Newgate. But thither it is that now we would conduct the reader.

The state of mind that Todd was in after his arrest, was one that such a man with such strong passions as he had was exceedingly unlikely to come to. It is difficult to describe it, but if we say that he was mentally stunned, we shall be as near the mark as language will permit us to be.

He walked, and looked, and spoke very much like a man in a dream; and it is really doubtful whether, for some hours, he comprehended the full measure of the calamity that had befallen him on his apprehension.

At Newgate they are quite accustomed to find this unnatural calmness in great criminals immediately after their arrest, so they take their measures accordingly.

Sir Richard Blunt had given some very special instructions to the Governor of Newgate concerning his prisoner, when he should arrive and be placed in his custody, so everything was ready for Todd. How little he suspected that for two days and two nights the very cell he was to occupy in Newgate had been actually pointed out, and that the irons in which his limbs were to be encompassed were waiting for him in the lobby!

He was placed in a small stone room that had no light but what came from a little orifice in the roof, and that was only a borrowed light after all, so that the cell was in a state of semi-darkness always.

Into this place he was hurried, and the blacksmith who was in the habit of officiating upon such occasions, riveted upon him, as was then the custom, a complete set of irons.

All this Todd looked at with seeming indifference. His face had upon it an unnatural flush, and probably Todd had never looked so strangely well in health as upon the occasion of the first few hours he spent in Newgate.

"Now, old fellow," said one of the turnkeys, "I'm not to be very far off, in case you should happen to want to say anything; and if you give a rap at the door, I'll come to you."

"In case I want to say anything?" said Todd.

"Yes, to be sure. What, are you asleep?"

"Am I asleep?"

"Why, he's gone a little bit out of his mind," said the blacksmith, as he gathered up his tools to be gone.

The turnkey shook his head.

"Are you quite sure you have made a tight job of that?"

"Sure? Ay, that I am. If he gets out of them, put me in 'em, that's all. Oh, no! It would take — let me see — it would take about half a dozen of him to twist out o' that suit of armour. They are just about the best we have in the old stone jug."

"Good."

"Yes, they are good."

"I mean very well. And now Mr. Sweeney Todd, we will leave you to your own reflections, old boy, and much good may they do you. Good-night, old fellow. I always says good-night to the prisoners, cos it has a tender sort o' sound, and disposes of 'em to sleep. It's kind o' me, but I always was tender-hearted, as any little chick, I was."

Bang went the cell door, and its triple locks were shot into their hoops. Todd was alone.

He had sat down upon a stool that was in the cell; and that stool, with a sort of bench fastened to the wall, was the only furniture it contained; and there he sat for about half an hour, during which time one of the most extraordinary changes that ever took place in the face of any human being, took place in his.

It seemed as if the wear and tear of years had been concentrated into minutes; and in that short space of time he passed from a middle aged, to be an old man.

Then reflection came!

"Newgate!" he cried as he sprang to his feet.

The chains rattled and clanked together.

"Chains — Newgate — a cell — death! Found out at last! At the moment of my triumph — defeated—detected! Newgate — chains — death!"

He fell back upon the stool again, and sat for the space of about two minutes in perfect silence. Then he sprang up again with such a wild yell of rage and mental agony, that not only the cell, but the whole of that portion of the prison, echoed again with it.

The turnkey opened a small wicket in the door, which when it was opened from without, still was defended by iron bars across it, and peering into the cell, he said —

"Hilloa! What now?"

"Hilloa!" shouted Todd. "Air — air!"

"Air? Why what do you mean by gammoning a fellow in that sort o' way

for, eh? Haven't you got lots o' air? Well, of all the unreasonable coves as ever I comed across, you is the worstest. Be quiet, will you?"

"No — no! Death — death! Give me the means of instant death. I am going mad — mad — mad!"

"Oh, no yer ain't. It's only yer first few hours in the stone-jug that has comed over you a little, that's all, old fellow. You'll soon pick up, and behave yourself like any other Christian. All you have got to do is never to mind, and then it's nothink at all, old chap."

Clap went shut the little wicket door again.

"Help! Help!" shouted Todd. "Take these irons off me. It is only a dream after all. Back, back you grinning fiends — why do you look at me when you know that it is not real? No — no, it cannot be, you know that it cannot be real."

"Be quiet will you?" shouted the turnkey.

"Keep off, I say. All is well. Mrs. Lovett dead — quite dead. The boy to die too. The house in a blaze — all is well arranged. Why do you mock and joke at me?"

"Well, I never!" said the turnkey. "I do begin to think now that he's getting queer in the upper story. I have heard of its driving some of 'em mad to be bowled out when they didn't expect it, more 'special when it's a hanging affair. I wonder what he will say next? He's a regular rum 'un, he is."

"What have I done?" shouted Todd. "What have I done? Nothing — nothing. The dead tell no tales. All is safe — quite safe. The grave is a good secret keeper. I think Tobias is dead too — why not? Mrs. Lovett is dead. This is not Newgate. These are not chains. It is only the nightmare. Ha! ha! ha! It is only the nightmare — I can laugh now!"

"Oh, can you?" said the turnkey. "It's rather an odd sort o' laugh though, to my thinking. Howsomdever, there's no rule agin' grinning, so you can go on at it as long as you like."

"Mercy!" suddenly shrieked Todd, and then down he fell upon the floor of the cell, and lay quite still. The turnkey looked curiously in at him, through the little grating.

"Humph!" he said, "I must go and report him to the Governor, and he will do whatsomdever he likes about him; but I suppose as they will send the doctor to him, and all that 'ere sort o' thing, for it won't do to let him slip out o' the world and quite cheat the gallows; oh dear no."

Muttering these and similar remarks to himself, the turnkey went, as he was bound in duty to do upon any very extraordinary conduct upon the part of any prisoner in his department, to report what Todd was about to the Governor.

"Ah!" said that functionary, the surgeon, "and I will soon come to him. I fully expected we should have some trouble with that man. It really is too bad,

that when people come into the prison, they will not be quiet. It would be just as well for them, and much more comfortable for me."

"Werry much, sir," said the turnkey.

"Well — well, he shall be attended to."

"Werry good, sir."

The turnkey went back and took up his post again outside Todd's door, and in the course of ten minutes or so, without making the least hurry of the subject, the Governor and the jail surgeon arrived and entered the cell.

Todd was picked up, and then it was found that he had struck his head against the stone floor, and so produced a state of insensibility, but whether he had done it on purpose or by accident, they could come to no opinion.

"Lay him on the bench," said the surgeon, "I can do nothing with him. He will come to himself again in a little while, I daresay, and be all right again in the morning."

"He seems really, indeed, to be a very troublesome man," said the Governor to the surgeon.

"Very likely. Have you a mind for a game of cribbage to-night, Governor? I suppose this fellow will hang?"

"Yes, I don't mind a game. Yes, they will tuck him up."

With this they left Todd's cell, and the turnkey closed the door, and made the highly philosophical remark to himself of —

"Werry good."

Todd remained until the morning in a state of insensibility, and when he awakened from it he was very much depressed in strength indeed. He lay for about two hours gazing on the ceiling of his cell, and then the door was opened, and the turnkey appeared with a basin of milk-and-water and a lump of coarse bread.

"Breakfast!" he cried.

Todd glared at him.

"Breakfast; don't you understand that, old cock? However, it's all one to me. There it is — take it or leave it."

Todd did not speak, and the not over luxurious meal was placed on the table, or rather upon the end of the bench upon which he lay, and which served the purpose of a table.

The moment Todd heard the door of the cell closed behind the turnkey, he rose from his recumbent posture, and, although he staggered when he got to his feet, he seized the basin, and at once, without tasting any of its contents, broke it against the corner of the bench to fragments.

"I shall elude them yet!" he said. "They think they have me in their toils — but I shall elude them yet!"

He selected a long jagged piece of the broken basin, and dragging down his cravat with one hand, he was upon the very point of plunging it into his

throat with the other, when the turnkey sprang into the cell.

"Hold a bit!" he cried. "We don't allow that sort of thing here with any of our customers. You should have thought of those games before you got into the stone jug!"

With one powerful blow, the turnkey struck the piece of the broken basin from the hand of Todd, and with another he felled him to the floor.

"None o' your nonsense," he said; and then he carefully collected the pieces of the broken basin.

"Why should you grudge me the means of death," said Todd, "when you know that you have brought me here among you to die?"

"Contrary to rules."

"In mercy, I ask you only to give me leave to take my own life, for I have failed in the object of my living."

"Contrary to rules."

The turnkey left the cell, then, as coolly as if nothing had happened, and carefully locked the door again, while he went to report the attempted suicide of the prisoner to the proper quarter.

Foiled, then, in every way, Todd looked round the cell for some means of ridding himself of his life and his troubles together; but he found none. He then paced the cell to and fro like a maniac, as he muttered to himself—

"All lost — lost — lost — all lost! Foiled, too, at the moment when I thought myself most secure — when I had made every preparation to leave England for ever! Oh, dolt that I was, not to have done so long ago, when I had half — aye, when I had only a quarter of the sum that I should this day have fled with! In my dreams I have seen myself as I am now, and the sight has shaken me, but I never thought to be so in reality. Is there any hope for me? What do they know? — what can they know?"

Upon these questions, Todd paused in his uneasy walk in the cell, and sat down upon the low stool to think. His head rested upon his breast, and he was profoundly still.

CHAPTER CXX.

A LUNCHEON AT SIR RICHARD BLUNT'S. — THE DOG AND HIS OLD FRIEND.

We willingly leave Todd to his own reflections upon the disastrous state of his affairs, while we solicit the attention of our readers to the private house

TODD IN NEWGATE, TRIES TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

and office of Sir Richard Blunt again, in Craven-street.

The worthy magistrate had quite a party to lunch on that day, and he had fixed the hour as eleven when he wished to see his friends.

Those friends consisted of Johanna Oakley, Mark Ingestrie, Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, Colonel Jeffery, Arabella Wilmot, and Big Ben, who was, at the special request of Johanna, gladly included in the party.

A happier party than that could not very well have been found throughout the whole length and breadth of London; and there was but one slight shade

of disquietude upon the face of Johanna, when she at times thought that at one o'clock she would have to attend the police-office at Bow-street to give her testimony against Todd the murderer.

"Well," said Ben, "here we are alive — all alive, and as merry as so many grigs; and all I can say is, my tulips, that I will show the wild beasteses to anybody as likes to come to the Tower, free, *gratis* and for nothing. Take it easy, Mr. Ingestrie, and don't be casting sheep's-eyes at Johanna. The little love of a thing ain't at all used to it — indeed, she ain't; and the only person as she lets love her above a bit, and takes it easy with, is me; so don't come any nonsense."

"But, Mr. Ben," said Mark, "I may look sometimes?"

"Yes, now and then, if you take things easy."

Old Mr. Oakley had got on his spectacles, and seemed as if he could not be done looking at Mark Ingestrie; and more than once, or twice, or thrice, the old gentleman would shake hands with him, telling him that he looked upon him quite as one risen up from the dead, in a manner of speaking.

"Yes, sir, you may well, indeed, look upon me as such; but I hope now for long life and happiness."

A glance at Johanna was sufficiently expressive of with whom he hoped for happiness — and that glance was returned with one of those sweet endearing looks that only those who truly love can cast one upon another.

"And I, too," said Colonel Jeffery, "put in my claim to the happiness of the future, for am I not blessed with one whom I feel that I can love!"

"Stop!" said Arabella. "We won't have any conversation of this sort before company, Colonel, if you please; so I will trouble you to be quiet."

"I am all submission," said the colonel; "and I hope my humble conduct upon this occasion will be to you all, ladies and gentlemen, a good example of what I shall be when I am married."

This was said in so comical a manner that the whole party laughed amazingly, and then Sir Richard Blunt said rather gravely —

"I expect two old friends here this morning."

"Old friends?" said everybody, in surprise.

"Yes. The one is the captain of the ship which brought poor Mr. Thornhill and his dog home, and who has been to Hamburg with his vessel, and the other is the dog himself."

At this moment an officer, for Sir Richard was quite wholly attended upon by the police at that private office of his, came in to say that a gentleman wanted to see him.

"It is the worthy captain," said Sir Richard; "show him in at once."

"If you please, Sir Richard," added the officer, "there is a man, too, with a great dog who wishes to see you, and the dog has been in the hall once, and walked off with a plate of cheese-cakes and a pickled tongue that were coming in to your worship."

A roar of laughter testified to the amusement which this freak of Hector's caused, and Sir Richard said —

"Well, I don't know any one who was so much entitled to be invited to lunch as Hector, and no doubt he thought so too; and as we had not the courtesy to open the door for him, and properly accommodate him, he has helped himself on the road, that's all."

"Shall I admit him, sir?"

"Yes, and the man who is with him. He is one of the witnesses who I trust will help to bring Todd to justice. Show them all in."

In a very few minutes the captain of the vessel, with whom the reader had some slight acquaintance at the beginning of this most veritable narrative, made his appearance, and Colonel Jeffery warmly shook hands with him. The dog knew the colonel and the captain likewise, and was most vociferous in his joy to see them.

It was an affecting thing then to see the creature pause suddenly in his manifestations of delight, and look sad and solemn, after which he uttered a dismal howl, and catching the colonel by the skirt of his coat, he tried to pull him towards the door of the room.

"Poor fellow," said the captain, "he does not forget his master yet, I see."

"No," said Colonel Jeffery, "nor never will. If he had his own way now, and we would follow him, I lay any wager he would take us to Sweeney Todd's shop."

"In course he would, sir," said the ostler. "In course he would. Lord bless you, gemmen, if this here dog as I calls Pison, cos why he was pisoned, was only to get hold of Todd, I would not give much for his chances. You sees, gemmen, as I have kept him in good condition."

"He does look well," said the captain.

"Indeed it does you great credit," said Colonel Jeffery; "but his keep must cost something. There is my guinea towards it."

The colonel placed a guinea in the ostler's hand, and his example was followed by all present, so that the ostler found himself growing quite a man of substance when he least expected it.

"Lor, Pison," he said, "you'll be a fortin for a fellow yet, you will. But I hope, gemmen, as you don't mean to take him away, cos if that's the caper, here's the money agin, and I'd rather keep Pison. He's got fond o' me by this time, poor fellow, and I have got fond on him, as I hav'nt no other brothers and sisters or family of my own."

"It would indeed be unfair," said the colonel, "to deprive you of him. But tell me, are you comfortable in your situation?"

"Lor bless you, sir, it ain't much of a situation. Lots of hard work, and werry little for it."

"Well, if you like to come into my service and bring Hector with you — you are welcome."

"Oh, won't I, sir, above a bit. Why, Pison, we is promoted, old fellor. We is a going to a new place, where there will be no end of grub, old chap."

"You shall not have any complaints to make in that department," said the colonel.

"So then," said the captain, "it is quite clear that Mr. Thornhill was murdered by that rascal of a barber?"

"Quite," replied Sir Richard Blunt, "and it is for that murder we mean to try Todd. If, however, by any chance, he should escape conviction upon that, we will be provided with two more indictments against him, so that he is tolerably well cared for; but the murder of Mr. Thornhill is what we mean ostensibly to go upon."

"That's right, sir," said the ostler, "and I'll bring Pison as a witness to all the blessed facts. He'll settle the business, even if the jury is half as stupid agin as usual."

"He will be committed for trial this morning," said Sir Richard Blunt, "for the murder of Mr. Thornhill; and that woman, Mrs. Lovett, will be arraigned as an accessory before the fact, so that there can be very little doubt of the fate of both of them; and if ever two notorious criminals deserved that the last dread sentence of the law should be carried out against them, Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett are those two."

"They could not be worse," said the captain.

"No, that would be impossible," remarked the colonel. "I shall be glad when this gloomy tragedy is over though. The public mind will soon be filled with it, and we shall hear of nothing but of Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett, with all their sayings and doings, for the next few months to come."

"That is true enough," said Sir Richard Blunt. "But I don't think you will find any but one feeling upon the subject, and that will be one of universal condemnation."

"Not a doubt of it."

"There is another too who will suffer the just reward of his crimes," said the magistrate glancing at Mrs. Oakley.

She shook her head and sighed, for she shrunk naturally from the awfully responsible share she was condemned to have in the conviction of Mr. Lupin.

"I will do my duty," she said, "in that dreadful piece of business. The guilt of Lupin, although not so extensive as Todd's, is to the full as great."

"It is indeed, madam."

"Ah, yes!" said Ben. "They are a bad lot altogether, and the sooner they are hung up like a rope of ingions the better. Bless me, I always was delicate, and so was obliged to take things easy; but I have more than once looked into that horrid pie shop in Bell Yard, and thought I should like a smack of about fifteen or twenty of them, just to stay my stomach till I got home to the Tower; and what a mercy it was I never bought 'em."

"It was, indeed, my friend," Sir Richard said.

"Yes, you may say that, my dear, sir — you may say that. With my very delicate stomach, I should have been as good as done brown if I had had 'em. I should have fallen a victim to the wild beasteses, the very next time as I went a-near 'em; and all I can say is, as I shall be uncommon glad to show these creatures to any of this company, as will come to the Tower at feeding time."

Ben had made this liberal offer so often that the company left off thanking him for it; but the ostler whispered to him —

"I'll come and bring Pison."

"No, will you though?" said Ben.

"Yes, to be sure I will. Who knows but he'd like to see them wild beasteses, as perhaps he has only heard of 'em in a wery promiscous sort o' way."

"Not a doubt of it," cried Ben, "not a doubt of it — only when he does come you must tell him to take things easy, and not be discomposed at any of the roaring and bellowing, as the creatures sets up at times."

"Oh, I'll hold him."

"You needn't go for to hold him. Just you impress upon him afore he comes that easy does it, that's all you need do, and then he'll know very well what to do."

"Won't I!"

The conversation was rather breaking up into small fragments, when the magistrate rose from his seat.

"Now then," said Sir Richard Blunt, "it is time for us to go to Bow-street, where I appear as a witness to-day, instead of as a magistrate."

As he spoke, the clock in the office sounded the half-past twelve.

All the guests of the magistrate rose, for they knew that his duties were imperative. There was a tone of great gravity now about Sir Richard Blunt as he spoke —

"I fully expect," he said, "that Todd will be committed for trial and Mrs. Lovett likewise. Already she has made repeated applications to her attendants in prison, to be permitted to become evidence against Todd."

"Which will surely not be permitted?" said the colonel.

"Certainly not; the evidence against him is quite clear enough without the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, while the proofs of her criminality with him, are of too strong a character for her to be given any chance of escape."

"She is a dreadful woman."

"She is, indeed; but you will all of you soon see how she conducts herself now, for she will be brought up with Todd."

CHAPTER CXXI.

TODD IS COMMITTED FOR TRIAL, AND EXPECTS THE WORST.

BY THE TIME THE POLICE OFFICE at Bow-street opened upon the morning, a wild, vague, and uncertain sort of rumour had spread itself over London, concerning the discoveries that had been made at Todd's house in Fleet-street, and at Mrs. Lovett's in Bell Yard, Temple Bar.

Of course, the affair had lost nothing from many-tongued rumour, and the popular belief was, that Todd's house had been found full of dead bodies from the attics to the cellars, while Mrs. Lovett had been actually detected in the very act of scraping some dead man's bones, for tid-bits to make a veal pie of.

A dense crowd had assembled in Fleet-street, to have a look at Todd's now-shut-up house, and that thoroughfare very soon, in consequence, became no thoroughfare at all. Bell Yard too was so completely blocked up, that the lawyers who were in the habit of using it as a short cut from the Temple to Lincoln's Inn, were forced to take the slight round of Chancery Lane instead; and the confusion and general excitement in the whole of the neighbourhood was immense.

But it was in Bow-street, and round the doors of the police-office, that the densest crowd, and the greatest excitement prevailed. There it was only with the greatest difficulty that the officers and others officially connected with the public office could get in and out of it as occasion required; and the three or four magistrates who thought proper to attend upon that occasion, had quite a struggle to get into the court at all.

By dint of great perseverance, our friends, with Sir Richard Blunt, at length succeeded in forcing a passage through the crowd, to the magistrates private entrance, and having once passed that, they were no longer in the smallest degree incommoded.

"Well, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, as he encountered that individual, "Have you been to Newgate this morning?"

"Rather, Sir Richard."

"Any news?"

"No. Only that Todd has been a trying it on a little, that's all."

"What do you mean?"

"Why he's only petikler anxious to save Jack Ketch any trouble on his account, that's all, Sir Richard; so he's been trying to put himself out o' this here world, and shove himself into t'other, without going through all the trouble of being hung, that's all, sir."

"I fully expected that both Todd and Mrs. Lovett would make some such attempts; but I hope the governor of Newgate has been sufficiently careful to prevent the possibility of either of them succeeding."

"It's all right," added Crotchet. "I seed 'em both, and they is as lively as black beetles as has been trod on by somebody as isn't a very light weight."

The doors of the court had not been opened, but when they were, the struggle for admission was tremendous, and it required the utmost exertions of the officers of the establishment to keep anything like a semblance of order. The few night charges were rapidly disposed of, and while a gentleman who looked very foolish, was fined five shillings for being drunk and disorderly the evening previous, a roaring shout from the mob in the street proclaimed the arrival of the two important prisoners from Newgate.

Up to some time after his arrest, Todd, notwithstanding some stray words that would indicate a contrary state of things, fully believed that he had succeeded in murdering Mrs. Lovett, and it was not until the morning that he became aware of her escape from drowning in the Thames.

It did not require a conjuror to tell the authorities that there would be some trouble in getting the prisoners to Bow-street, so it was thought better to make one job of it, and to place Todd and Mrs. Lovett in the same coach along with four officers.

With this intent the coach was brought close to the wicket-gate of Newgate, and Todd and Mrs. Lovett, well guarded, were brought to the lobby at the same moment. The moment Todd caught sight of Mrs. Lovett, a kind of spasm seemed to shake his frame, and pointing to her, he cried—

"Does that woman indeed live, or is she but some fiend in the shape of such a one come to torment me?"

"That is Mrs. Lovett," said the Governor.

"Oh, no—no—no," added Todd, "it is not so—it cannot be. The dark rolling river cannot so give up its dead."

"You were well disposed that it should not," said Mrs. Lovett, bending upon Todd a most ferocious glance.

"She is saved!" gasped Todd.

"Yes, I am saved to your confusion. I call you all to witness," she then added in a loud voice, "that I had no idea of the extent of Todd's iniquity; but what I do know I will freely tell as evidence for the crown against him."

Mrs. Lovett looked peculiarly at the Governor while she uttered these words, for she was anxious to know what he thought of them; but that functionary took not the remotest notice.

At this moment one of the warders announced the sheriff, and one of the

Sheriffs of London with his gold chain of office on, appeared in the lobby. To him Mrs. Lovett immediately turned, saying—

"Sir, I offer myself as king's evidence. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly, madam; but I have nothing to do with the matter."

"Nothing to do, sir? Then why do you wear that bauble?"

"My office, so far as you are concerned, madam, will be to keep you in safe custody, and see that the sentence of the law is carried into effect upon you, in case you should be convicted of the crimes laid to your charge."

"But I turn king's evidence. It is quite a common thing that you have all heard of that often enough."

"Now, madam, the coach is ready," said a turnkey.

"Where are you going to take me? Is not this Newgate?"

"Yes, but you must undergo an examination at the police-office in Bow-street."

Without any further ceremony, Mrs. Lovett was handed into the coach, and Todd after her. She was at first placed in the seat immediately opposite to him, but she insisted upon changing it, saying, that she could not bear to look at him all the way that she went, and as it was a matter of no moment which way she sat, the officers so far indulged her as to permit her to change her place.

In this way then, both of them upon the same seat, while three officers sat opposite to them, and one with them, dividing them, they arrived at Bow-street, and were met by that roaring shout, that everybody had heard, from without the court.

Of course every precaution had been taken to prevent the mob from wreaking their vengeance upon the criminals, which they were well-disposed to do. A number of people were knocked down and some of the officers rather roughly treated; but the result was, that Todd and Mrs. Lovett were got into the office in safety.

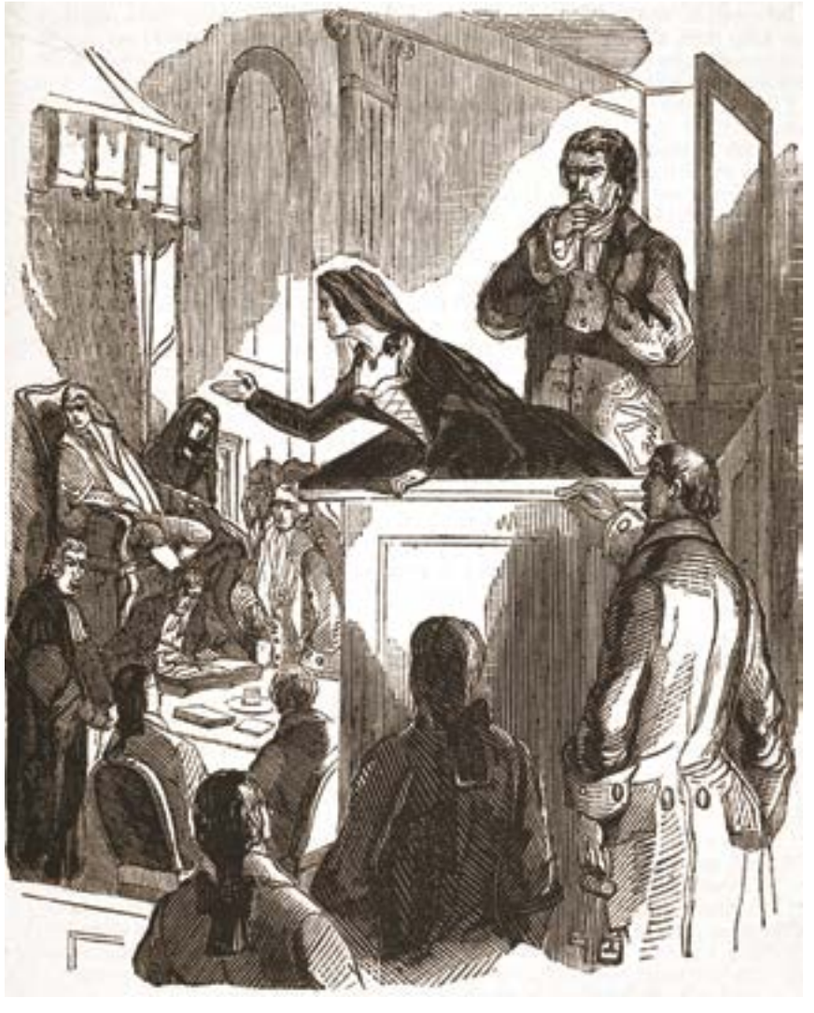
Sweeney Todd, as he ascended the steps of the office, turned his head for a moment, and looked at the sea of angry faces that was in the street. He shuddered and passed on. Mrs. Lovett did not look round at all.

With great difficulty the door of the office was closed, and then in a few moments Todd and Mrs. Lovett were placed side by side at the bar of justice.

There was one person sitting on the bench near to Sir Richard Blunt, upon whom Todd fixed his eyes in amazement. That person was Johanna Oakley. The features came at once to his recollection, and as though he really doubted if he were awake or not, he more than once pressed his hand upon his eyes.

His and every one else's attention were, however, speedily taken up by the conduct of Mrs. Lovett. The moment comparative order was restored in the crowded court, so that what she said could be distinctly and clearly heard, she spoke—

"I am willing to turn king's evidence upon this occasion, and to declare all



TODD AND MRS. LOVETT AT BOW STREET POLICE OFFICE.

I know of Todd's nefarious transactions. I am quite willing to tell all—I don't perhaps know the full extent of Todd's guilt, but I repeat I will turn king's evidence, and tell all I do know."

A gentleman, plainly dressed in black, rose new, and in a calm, assured voice, said—

"Upon the part of the crown I reject the offer of the female prisoner. Anything she may say will be used as evidence against her, if it bear that construction."

"Reject?" cried Mrs. Lovett. "And pray, sir, who are you that you dare reject such a proposition for furthering the ends of justice?"

"That, madam, is the Attorney-General," said an officer.

"Oh," said Mrs. Lovett, "and am I to understand that I am accused of any participation in Todd's crimes?"

"You will find by the evidence that will be adduced against you of what you are accused," said the magistrate. "You, I believe, Sir Richard Blunt, give these people in charge?"

"Yes," said Sir Richard rising. "I charge them with, in the first place, the willful murder of Charles James Thornhill. If your worship should think fit, from the evidence that will be brought forward, to commit them upon that charge, I shall not at present trouble you with any others, although I am fully prepared with several."

"What is the meaning of all this?" cried Mrs. Lovett. "I will be heard."

Sir Richard Blunt paid no manner of attention to her, but brought before the magistrate quite sufficient evidence to warrant him in committing both the prisoners for trial.

The only great effect that the proceedings seemed to have upon Todd consisted in his surprise when Johanna Oakley came forward, and to her examination he listened attentively indeed. When she related how, under the name of Charles Green, she had taken the situation of errand boy at Todd's shop, and been in daily communication with Sir Richard Blunt, Todd dashed his clenched fist against his own head, crying —

"Dolt — Idiot — idiot! and I did suspect it once!"

Johanna went on then to state how in hunting over Todd's shop and house for some vestige of Mark Ingestrie, the sleeve of a seaman's jacket was found, which she had thought belonged to him, but which would be identified by the captain of the ship as having been part of Mr. Thornhill's apparel when he went on shore upon that fatal morning of his murder, no doubt by Todd.

The evidence against Mrs. Lovett consisted of the fact of there being an underground communication all the way from the cellars of Todd's house to her cooking concern; and Mark Ingestrie had quite enough to tell of that to make it tolerably clear they acted in concert.

Of course there could be but one opinion in the minds of all present of the guilt of the prisoners; but it was necessary that that guilt should be legally as well as morally proved, and hence the evidence was very carefully arranged to meet the exigencies of the case.

"Have you any legal adviser?" said the Magistrate to Todd.

"No," was the brief response.

The same question was put to Mrs. Lovett, but she did not answer, and the death-like paleness of her countenance sufficiently testified that it was

out of her power to do so. In another moment, overcome by dread and chagrin, she fainted.

"Is she dead?" said Todd.

No one replied to the question, and he added —

"Look to her well or she will yet baffle you. If ever the spirit of a fiend found a home in any human brain it is in that woman's. I say to you, look to her well, or she will still baffle you all by some rare device you little dream of."

Mrs. Lovett in her insensible state was carried from the court, and a surgeon was in prompt attendance upon her. It was found that there was nothing the matter with her; she had merely fainted through sheer vexation of spirit at finding that her overtures to be evidence against Todd were not attended to in the way she had wished; for now, with the loss of everything but life, how glad she would have been to back out of those odious transactions which clung to her.

Todd was asked if he had anything to say.

"Really," he said. "I do not know what it is all about. I am a poor humble man, who get but a scanty living by shaving any kind customer, and all this must be some desperate conspiracy against me on the part of the Roman Catholics, I think."

"The Roman Catholics?"

"Yes, your worship. I never would shave or dress the hair of a Roman Catholic if I knew it, and more than one of that religion have sworn to be avenged upon me."

"And is this your defence?"

"Yes, exactly; it is all I can say; and if I perish, it will be as one of the most innocent of men who ever was persecuted to death."

"Well," said the magistrate, "I have heard many a singular defence, but never one like this."

"It's — it's truth," said Todd, "that staggers your worship."

"Well, you can try what effect it will have upon a jury. I commit you for trial on the charge of willful murder."

"Murder of whom?"

"Charles James Thornhill."

"Oh, your worship, he is alive and well, and now in Havannah. If I have murdered him, where is the body?"

"We are prepared," said the Attorney General, "with that objection. At the trial we will tell the jury where the body is."

Mrs. Lovett, now having sufficiently recovered, was brought into court to hear that she was committed for trial, but she made no remark upon that circumstance whatever; and in the course of a few moments another shout from the multitude without announced that the prisoners were off to Newgate.

CHAPTER CXXII.

A LARGE PARTY VISITS BIG BEN AND THE LIONS IN THE TOWER.

ON THE MORNING FOLLOWING THE COMMITTAL of Mrs. Lovett and Sweeney Todd to Newgate for trial, a rather large party met at the office of Sir Richard Blunt, in Craven-street, Strand. The fact was that after the proceedings at the police-office, Big Ben had earnestly besought them all to name the day to visit him and the lions in the Tower, and as no day was so convenient to Sir Richard as that immediately following, it was arranged that they were all to meet at the private office in Craven-street, and go there by water to the Tower.

The sun shone beautifully; and to look at that party no one would have supposed that there had ever been such persons as Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett in the world.

The party consisted of Colonel Jeffery, Tobias, Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, Minna Gray, Johanna, Mark Ingestrie, Arabella Wilmot, and the fruiterer's daughter from Fleet-street, who had been so kind to Johanna during that very sad and anxious time that she had passed while in the temporary service of Todd.

So happy-looking and smiling a party surely could not have been found in all London, as they made up. It will be seen that there were no less than three couples intent upon matrimony, for although it was understood that Tobias was to wait two years yet before he married, he looked as happy as the rest.

A large eight-oared barge was at the stairs at the bottom of the street to convey them, and as they all walked to it arm-in-arm, and in couples, everybody who met them would have it that it was a wedding, and many jocular remarks were made to them by the way.

"Upon my word," said Sir Richard, "I shall be considered a match-maker, and folks will say that I keep this office of my own only as a matrimonial speculation."

"You certainly," said the colonel, "have been the cause of two or three matches, at all events, for, but for you, I doubt if any of us would have felt as we feel to day, Sir Richard."

"He has restored Mark Ingestrie to me," said Johanna.

"And my Johanna to me," said Ingestrie.

"And my dear Minna to me," cried Tobias.

"Stop — stop!" cried Sir Richard.

"And I am quite certain," said the colonel, "that I owe to him the joy of calling Arabella mine."

Sir Richard Blunt came now to a halt, as he said —

"Stop, all of you, or I will not go one step further. If we get into this kind of talk, who is to say where it will end? Let us enjoy ourselves, and make it a rule to say anything but revert to the past. It has its joys and its sorrows, but it had better upon this occasion be left to itself."

"Agreed — agreed," said everybody.

The barge was a very handsome one. Indeed Sir Richard Blunt had borrowed it of one of the city companies for the occasion, and beneath the gay awning they could all sit with perfect ease.

And now in the course of another five minutes they were going down the river, quite at a slashing pace, towards the old Tower; and as they were animated by the many pleasing sights upon the river, their conversation soon became animated and spirited.

"What is that? — A wherry coming towards us from the Temple-stairs," said the colonel.

All eyes were bent upon the wherry, which shot out from the little landing-place by the side of the Temple Gardens, and presently they, with one accord, cried out —

"It's Hector!"

In truth Hector was there, but with him was the colonel's new groom, the late ostler, who had been so efficient a protector to the dog, and the captain of the ship, whom he knew so well.

"Barge a-hoy!" cried the captain.

"Aye-aye!" shouted Ingestrie in reply, and the wherry shot alongside the barge.

"Well," said the captain, "I do think for you all to go on such a party as this, and not ask me and Hector, is too bad."

"But," said Sir Richard Blunt, "you told me you were going to be very busy at the docks."

"So I did, but I found our owner had not come to town, and I have nothing to do to-day. I called at your house, colonel, hoping to be in time to come with you, but you had gone. Hector, however, saw me, and made such a racket I was forced to bring him."

"And no one can be more glad to see you and Hector than I," cried the colonel.

"And I didn't like, sir," said the ostler, "not for to come for to go, when Pison said as he'd like to come."

"Very good," said the colonel smiling. "Come on board."

The waterman who was with the wherry laid it alongside the barge, and

having been liberally paid for his freight, rowed off again, leaving with the barge party, his two customers and the dog.

The Tower was soon in sight, for at that time there were not by any means so many obstructions to the navigation of the River Thames as are to be found now, and the stream too was very much clearer than now it can boast of being. The host of manufactories that have since risen upon its banks were not then thought of.

"I do think," said Colonel Jeffery, "that I can see our friend Ben at the landing place. Look, Mr. Oakley, is that not Ben?"

"Bless you, sir," said Mr. Oakley, "I couldn't see so far if you would make me king of England for doing so. Johanna, my love, you have young eyes, and know Ben well."

"Yes, pa, it is Ben, and he is waving his hand to us, and looks so pleased."

"He is a most worthy honest fellow," said Sir Richard Blunt. "I like him very much, from what little I have seen of him. He has the simplicity of a child."

"Yes," added the colonel, "and the candour and honesty of a lover of human nature. I believe a better heart than Ben's never beat in human bosom."

"I am quite sure of it," said Johanna. "I love Ben very much indeed. He has been ever a kind and indulgent friend to me."

"Do you hear that, Mr. Ingestrie?" said Arabella.

"Yes," laughed Mark, "but I decline investing Ben with any of the attributes of a rival. Now, I love you, Miss Wilmot very much indeed, because you have always been such a dear kind friend to Johanna; and I daresay the colonel will permit me to do so."

"To be sure I will — at a distance," said the colonel.

Everybody laughed at this, and then, as the rowers increased their exertions to come in to the Tower stairs with some *eclat*, the barge soon was safely moored at the landing place.

"Here you are all of you," cried Ben, capering in his huge delight. "Here you all are. Come along. Oh, how hungry I am."

"That sounds as if you meant to eat us, Ben," said Sir Richard, as he stepped from the barge.

"Oh, dear no. Only I have got a little bit of lunch ready for you all, and as I helped to place it on the table it made me so hungry that I've been half mad ever since, and I'm as thirsty too as can be. Oh, Mr. Jeffery, I often think if the Thames were only strong ale, what a place the Tower would be."

"You may depend," said Sir Richard, "if it were, the government would pretty soon bottle it all off."

Johanna was going to step on shore, but Ben made a dash at her, and lifting her up as you would some little child, he seated her on his left arm, and so fairly carried her into the Tower.

"You wait, Miss Arabella," he cried. "I'll come for you."

This so alarmed Miss Wilmot that she sprang on shore in a moment, and all the party laughed heartily to see Mark Ingestrie flying along after Ben, and shouting as he went —

"Put her down — put her down! Ben! — Ben! She'd rather walk. Put her down!"

Ben paid no manner of attention to any of these remonstrances, but carried Johanna right into the Tower before he set her upon her feet again, which he then did as tenderly as though she had been some infant, only just learning to walk.

"Mind how you go," he said. "Take it easy. Easy does it."

"But I can walk, Ben."

"Very good. Mind how you does, you nice little thing. Oh, I likes you a great deal better in the petticoats and not the breeches."

"Well, Ben," said Mark Ingestrie, "I am certainly very much obliged to you — very much, indeed."

"Don't mention it, my boy," replied Ben, totally oblivious of the manner in which Mark Ingestrie uttered the words — a manner which betrayed some little pique upon the occasion. The laughter of Johanna and his friends, however, soon chased away the temporary cloud.

"Where's the t'other little one?" said Ben.

"I am here," cried Arabella, laughing.

"Oh, you got on without me, did you? Very good: only if you had only waited, I shouldn't have thought it no trouble at all, whatsomedever. Easy does it, you know."

"Thank you, Ben. I'd just as soon walk, and a little rather, perhaps, of the two. It was quite amusing enough to see you carry Johanna."

"Well — well, there ain't much gratitude in this world. Come on, all of you, for you must be famished; and as for me, I haven't had a bit of anything to eat for a whole hour and a half, and then it was only a pound and three quarters of beef-steak, and a half quartern loaf!"

"But we are none of us hungry," said Johanna.

"Never mind that," replied Ben, "you don't know what you may be; so always eat when you can get it. That's my maxim, and I find it answers very well. Plenty to eat and drink, and taking things easy, is how I get through the world, and you'll all on you find it the best in the long run."

"There are worse philosophies than that going," said Sir Richard Blunt to Colonel Jeffery.

"Very much worse," laughed the colonel.

Ben now led the way along a narrow arched passage, and through two rather gloomy corridors to a stone room, with a grand arched roof, in the ancient fortress; and there, sure enough, they found the little snack, as he called it, laid out very nicely for their reception.

A table ran along the centre of the room, and at one end of it there was placed an immense round of corned beef. At the other was a haunch of mutton, weighing at least thirty pounds. Somewhat about the middle of the table was an enormous turkey; and those dishes, with a ham and four tongues, made up a tolerable repast.

Six half-gallon flagons, filled with old Burton Ale*, stood at regular distances upon the table.

"It's only," said Ben, "a slight snack, after all; but I hope you will be just able to find enough."

"Enough!" cried Sir Richard. "Why, there's enough for fifty people."

"There's almost enough for a regiment!" said the colonel.

"Oh, you are joking," said Ben; "but come, sit down. You, father Oakley, sit here by this little bit of mutton, and I'll cut up the beef."

After considerable laughing they were all seated; and then Ben, finding that Johanna was on one side of him, and Miss Wilmot on the other, declared that he was quite satisfied.

He cut, first of all, a cold tongue in halves down the middle lengthways, and placed one half upon a plate for Johanna, and the other on a plate for Arabella. Then upon the tongue in each plate, he placed about a pound of ham.

"Take that, my little dears," he said, "to begin with, and don't be sparing now, for there's the turkey and the mutton, you know, to fall back upon. Easy does it."

The room resounded with shrieks of laughter at the looks of utter distressful dismay which Johanna and Arabella cast upon their plates; and Ben looked from one face to another in perfect astonishment, for he could not see any joke for the life of him.

"Dear Ben," said Johanna, "do you really imagine we can eat a tenth part of all this?"

"Do I imagine? — In course I does. Only you begin. Lord bless you, that ain't much. Come — come, you want your ale, I suppose. So here it is."

Upon this, Ben poured them each out about a quart of the strong ale, and requested them to take an easy pull at that.

They found that it was of no use requesting Ben to diminish the quantity he helped them to; so they just, as he advised, took it easy, and ate what they had a mind to do.

As for Ben himself, he cut one large slice off the round of beef, and then placed upon it two slices of ham, so that the thickness — for he was not a delicate carver — was about three inches; and so he set to work, every now

** Burton Ale is a dark, sweet, very strong ale in the "barleywine" style. Half a gallon of it would supply as much alcohol as half of a 750-millilitre "fifth" bottle of 80-proof whiskey.*

and then taking up one of the half-gallon ale flagons, and pledging the company all round.

Probably, rough and homely as was Ben's lunch, not one of them present had ever enjoyed such a meal more than they this did; and if we might judge by the loud laughter that echoed about the old arched roof, a merrier hour was never spent than in the Tower with Big Ben.

But it was a sadness to Ben to find that such little progress was made in the consumption of his eatables and drinkables; and he uttered many groans as he watched Johanna and Arabella.

CHAPTER CXXIII.

THE BEASTS AT THE TOWER.

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST HAVE AN END, and Ben's lunch in the Tower was not any exception to the rule. At last even he was satisfied that nobody would eat any more, although he was very far indeed from being satisfied that they had had enough.

"Won't anybody be so good," he said, "as just to try and pick a little bit of something?"

"No — no!" was the general response.

"Indeed, Ben," said Colonel Jeffery, "if we take any more we shall positively be ill, and I'm sure you don't wish that."

"Oh, dear, no," groaned Ben; "but it's quite clear to me, of course, that you don't like the lunch, or else you could not have took it so very easy."

With one accord upon this, everybody declared that they had liked it amazingly well.

"Then you will all try a drop more ale?"

Upon this, they rose from the table, for they had a well-grounded suspicion that if they staid any longer, Ben would try to force something down their throats, whether they would or not.

"Ah, well," said Ben, with a sigh, when he found that they would not be prevailed upon to take anything else. "Then we may as well go and see the lions in the Tower."

"Oh, yes," added Johanna, "I have heard so much of them, that I quite long to see them."

"Should you, my duck?" cried Ben; "then come along."

Here Ben would have carried Johanna again, for somehow he had got the idea fixed in his head that the kindest thing he could possibly do as regarded Johanna was to prevent her from using her feet; but Mark Ingestrie interposed, saying —

"Ben, she would much rather walk. You forget, my kind friend, that she is no longer now a child."

"Oh, dear," said Ben, with a look of profound wisdom, "if you come to that, we are all children. Look at me, I'm only a fine baby."

Everybody laughed at this sally of Ben's, as well they might; and then, being fully convinced that no more eating nor drinking was at all practicable, Ben proceeded to lead the way to the lions.

"Is there any danger?" said Arabella. "I hope you will not let any of them out of their cages, Mr. Ben."

"Oh, dear, no, there's no danger, and we don't let any of them out. We only pokes them up a bit with a long pole, to make 'em rather lively to visitors."

"And have no accidents ever happened?" said Johanna.

"Lord bless you, no. To be sure one of the warders, who was rather a new hand, would put his hand in between the bars of the lion's den and get it snapped off; and once a leopard we had here broke loose, and jumped on the back of a sentinel, and half eat him up; but we haven't had any accidents."

"Why, what do you call them, Ben?"

"Oh, nothing at all."

"I dare say," said Sir Richard Blunt, "that the poor warder and the sentinel would have called those little incidents something."

"Well, perhaps they might," said Ben. "In course people will think of themselves before anybody else; but, howsomdever, don't you be after going to be afeard, my little dears; and if any of the beasteses was to get out, always recollect that easy does it, and it's no use making a fuss."

"I suppose you think, Ben, that if we are to be eaten up by a lion or a leopard, there's no such thing as avoiding our fate," said the colonel. "Is that your idea?"

"Well, I hardly know," said Ben. "But one day we had a young chap — a new warder — who came here out of the country, and he said he had had a dream the night before he came that he should be devoured by a wolf. Now we hadn't a wolf in the Tower collection at all, so, in course, we all laughed at him, and told him he would have to go to foreign parts to bring his dream true. But you'd hardly believe it, that very day afore the young fellow had been one hour in the Tower, there comes a boat to the stairs, with an officer, and he asks to see the keeper of the beasts, and he says to him — 'My ship is lying at the Nore, and we have brought from Friesland one of the largest wolves as ever was known for the Tower collection,' says he, 'and he's in a large bag we made

on purpose to hold him in the boat.' Well, when the young warder heard this he said — 'That's my wolf. He has come for me!' and off he set a trembling like anything. The wolf was brought in in a coal sack, and we got him into an empty den that was shut up with a chain and a staple only; but as all the fastenings were out of his reach, he could not interfere with it if he was ever so cunning. Well, night came, and we all took it easy, and went to bed; but in the middle of the night what should we hear but the most horrid howling that ever you could think of, and when we ran to the Lion Tower, where it came from, we found the iron door of the wolf's den open, and the young warder lying, half in and half out of it, stone dead. The wolf had had him by the throat."

"And what became of the wolf?" said Johanna.

"He was gone, and we never so much as heard of him from that day to this."

"Well, Ben," said the colonel, "that is a very good story of the lions in the Tower, and here we are, I think, close to them."

A terrific roar at this moment proved the colonel's words to be tolerably true.

"Ah, they are feeding some on 'em," said Ben. "It just the time, and they will not be convinced as easy does it."

"It is hard enough, Ben," said Sir Richard Blunt, "to convince human beings of that piece of philosophy, to say nothing of lions and tigers."

"Oh, but," said Ben, with great gravity, "lions and tigers is generally much more reasonable than human beings."

Another roar from the menagerie joined in as bass to the laugh with which this piece of philosophy from so unlikely a person as Ben was received.

"Come on," he said; "come on. They can make a noise, but that's just about all they can do. Come on, my little dears — and if you fell at all afeard, all you have got to do is to take hold of the lion by the nose, and then you'll find he looks upon you as one of them as takes things easy, and he won't say another word to you anyhow."

"We will leave that to you, Ben," said Johanna, "and in the meantime, I will keep close to you, you know."

"Do, my little duck; and I'll just carry you."

"No — no — no!"

Johanna darted away; for if she had not done so, Ben would inevitably have had her up in his arms by way of showing his affection for her. It was a fixed idea of his, and was not to be shaken by any denials or remonstrances.

And now in a few minutes, after traversing the highly picturesque and antique passages of the Tower, the little party arrived at where the lions were kept.

The colonel gave a caution to the late ostler of the inn in Fleet-street to keep an eye over Hector, who not being accustomed to an introduction to such

animals as he was about to see, might fancy himself called upon to do something out of the way upon the occasion.

"Oh, I'll watch him, sir," said the man. "Come here, Pison, will you? and don't you be after going and interfering with wild beasteses. Lor bless you, sir, he'll be quite glad to see 'em, and will go on speaking of 'em for ever afterwards — I know he will."

"Here you are," said Ben, as he halted opposite the door of a lordly lion. They all looked at the immense creature with a vast amount of interest, for such creatures were rather rarities at that time in London.

While our friends are thus examining the king of the forest, as he crunches a huge beef bone with his formidable jaws, we may give a brief account of the wild creatures that in old times were kept in the tower. There was Pedore, a beautiful lioness, brought from Senegal, and presented to the king by Governor V. Harora.

Cæsar, brother to Pedore, brought from the same place, and presented to his majesty, by Captain Haycraft. He has been in the Tower about eight months, is three years and a half old, and supposed to be the finest lion ever seen in England. His looks strike the stoutest beholder with astonishing awe. His head is large, being covered with a long shagged mane that reaches to his shoulders, and adds rather to the terror than majesty of his countenance; for his eyes being very fiery, and darting, as it were, a kind of red flame through his long, shaggy, and dishevelled hair, raises such an idea of fierceness as cannot be excited in a mind unaccompanied with fear, nor can we conceive it possible for human courage to encounter a creature of such a dreadful aspect, without the intervention of some lucky circumstance, notwithstanding the stories that have been related of men killing lions in equal combat. His mouth opens wide, and discovers a frightful set of teeth; and when he roars he may be heard at a great distance.

Miss Jane, a beautiful lioness, about six years old, brought from the coast of Barbary, by Sir Jacob Wyatt.

Phillis, a large wolf, brought from Boulogne, in France, and presented to his majesty by Colonel Hollingworth. It is in form not unlike a dog of a mixed breed, and has been in the Tower about five years. These are very ravenous creatures, which inhabit the immense forests in France and other parts, and are a terror to men and cattle. In the severe season of the year they come from the woods and fall ravenously upon every living thing they meet, and have been known to enter houses in search of food.

Sukey, a North American bear, brought over by Lord Bruce. She has been in the Tower about twelve months.

Hector, a most beautiful lion, sent from the Emperor of Morocco as a present to His Majesty. He is fourteen years old, and has been in the Tower about ten. He greatly resembles Cæsar.

Helena, companion to Hector, a very handsome lioness, and presented also by the Emperor of Morocco.

Miss Gregory, a beautiful leopardess, about twenty years of age. She was sent to his late majesty by the Dey of Algiers, and presented by the late Algerine Ambassador.

Sir Robert, a fine leopard, of a shining yellow colour intermixed with bright spots. He was brought from Senegal by — Touchit, Esq. He has been in his present situation about eight years, during which he has had seven young ones by two different leopardesses. The young, however, all died soon after being whelped, except one which lived about ten months.

Miss Nancy, a very beautiful lioness, brought from Senegal, and presented to his majesty by — Brady, Esq. She has been here only about nine months, is not quite two years old, and seems very tractable.

A lion monkey. This beast is of a black colour, with very shaggy hair. It was brought from the Cape of Good Hope, and has been here about four months.

An American black bear, lately brought over by Colonel Clarke.

A raccoon, brought from Norway by Colonel Clarke. This is a very small beast, and exceedingly harmless. It lives on the sea-sands, and chiefly on shell fish, which it takes in a very safe and dexterous manner; for whenever the fish opens its shell to receive either air or nourishment, this creature, we are told, puts a small pebble in, so that the shell may not close again, and picks out the fish with its claws.

Rose, a large Norway wolf, presented about four years since by Herr Widderman. He is about six years old, and appears very fierce and ravenous.

Miss Sally, a beautiful leopardess, presented by the Emperor of Morocco, and brought over in the same ship with Hector.

These were the principal inhabitants of what was called the Lion's Tower; and Ben, who was never so much in his glory as when he was describing the creatures and commenting upon them, went through the list of them with commendable accuracy.

It was quite impossible but that the party should very much admire these wild inhabitants of the woods and wastes of nature, and Ben was wonderfully gratified at the fearless manner in which both Johanna and Arabella approached the dens.

The inspection of the beasts lasted more than an hour, and then, as Sir Richard Blunt had no more time at his disposal, they all again proceeded to the barge that was waiting for them. Ben accompanied the party from the Tower, as the Oakleys had invited him to dine with them.

"Ah," he said, "by the time we get to your house, cousin Oakley, I shall be half famished. Thank goodness! I have ordered something to eat to be put on board the barge, in case we should be sharp set."

CHAPTER CXXIV.

RETURNS TO NEWGATE, AND THE PROCEEDINGS OF MRS. LOVETT.

WHILE THOSE PERSONS, IN WHOSE HAPPINESS we and our readers, no doubt, likewise feel a kindly interest, are thus in the happy society of each other, compensating themselves for many of the mischances and deep anxieties of the past, some events were taking place in Newgate of a character well worth the recording.

Mrs. Lovett, when she found that her proposition to turn evidence against Todd would not be listened to, but that it was the fixed determination of the authorities to include her in the prosecution, became deeply despondent. Upon being taken back to Newgate, she did not say one word to any one; but when she was placed in her cell, she paced to and fro in its narrow confines with that restless perturbed manner which may be noticed in wild animals when caged.

After about an hour, then, she called to one of the attendants of the prison, saying —

"I wish to speak to some one who has authority to hear what I may choose to relate."

"The chaplain will come," was the reply.

"The chaplain!" repeated Mrs. Lovett with a burst of rage, "what do I want with chaplains? Do I not know perfectly well that when a person is found too idiotic for ordinary duties he is made a chaplain of a jail? No! I will not speak to any of your chaplains."

"Well, I never!" said the turnkey. "Our chaplain for certain ain't a conjuror, but I never heard afore that he was sent here on account of being weak in the upper story. It's likely enough though for all that. Perhaps Mrs. Lovett, you'd like to see the Governor?"

"Yes, he will do much better."

"Very good."

Such a prisoner as Mrs. Lovett could command an interview with the Governor of Newgate at any reasonable period; and that functionary having been apprised of her wish to see him, together with what she had said of the chaplain, repaired to her cell with an ill-concealed smile upon his face, for in his heart he perfectly agreed in Mrs. Lovett's estimation of jail chaplains.

"Well, madam," he said. "What have you to say to me?"

"In the first place, sir, I am here without other clothing then that which I

now wear. Is it inconsistent with your regulations for me to have a box of clothes brought me from my home?"

"Oh no — you can have them. I will get an order from the committing magistrate for you to have your clothes brought here. Of course they will be scrupulously examined before they reach you."

"What for?"

"It is our custom, that's all."

"You are afraid that I should escape?"

"Oh, no — no! No woman ever yet escaped from Newgate, and I don't think any man ever will again."

"Perhaps not. For my part, I care not how many men escape, so that you take good care Sweeney Todd does not."

"You may make yourself easy upon that score."

"Good — then when I get my clothes here, I will make a full confession of all I know, regarding Todd's crimes."

"And your own?"

"Yes, if you like. And my own. Be it so. But mark me, I will have no petti-fogging, prying, canting parsons in the cell. If you bring your chaplain here I am mute."

"Very well, I will say as much. Of course, if you are inclined to make a confession, you can make it to whom you please."

"I should presume so."

With this, the Governor left Mrs. Lovett, and she commenced again her uneasy pacing of the cell. In about two hours, a large box was brought to her with nearly the whole of her clothes from her house in Bell Yard. She selected a dress, with a number of heavy flounces, and put it on, appearing to be much better satisfied than she had been.

"Ah," said the turnkey, "that's the way with women. Give them dress, and even in Newgate they feel comfortable, but make 'em go shabby, and you had much better hang them outright."

Another hour passed, and then the Governor, with a magistrate and writing materials, came to the cell of the wretched woman.

"If Mrs. Lovett," he said, "you still think proper to persevere in your intention of making a confession, this gentleman, who is a magistrate, will in his official capacity receive it, and I will witness it; but you do it entirely at your own risk and peril."

"I know it," replied Mrs. Lovett, "and I likewise do it to the risk of the peril of Sweeney Todd."

"You can make what statement you please. How far it will be taken as evidence against another, will depend entirely upon how it is in essentials corroborated by others," said the magistrate.

"I am content. Now, sir, will you listen to me?"

"Most certainly."

The Governor arranged his writing materials, and while the magistrate listened, Mrs. Lovett said in a calm clear voice —

"Believing that I am upon the brink of the grave, I make this statement. Todd first connived the idea of that mutual guilt which we have both since carried out. He bought the house in Bell Yard, as likewise the one in Fleet-street, and by his own exertions, he excavated an underground connection between the two, mining right under St. Dunstan's church, and through the vaults of that building. When he had completed all his arrangements, he came to me, and cautiously made his offer; but he did not tell me that those arrangements were then complete, as that he doubtless thought would have placed him too much in my power, in the event of my refusing to co-operate with him in his iniquity.

"He need not have given himself that amount of trouble; I was willing. The plan he proposed was, that the pie-shop should be opened, for the sole purpose of getting rid of the bodies of people, whom he might think proper to murder, in or under his shop. He said that fearing nothing, and believing nothing, he had come to the conclusion, that money was the great thing to be desired in this world, inasmuch as to it he had found that all people bowed down. He said that after the murder of any one, he would take the flesh from the bones quickly, and convey to the shelves of the bake-house in Bell Yard the pieces, as materials for the pies. Minor arrangements he left to me. He murdered many. The business went on and prospered, and we both grew rich. He refused me my share of the spoil; and so I believe we both fell to our present state."

"Have you any more to add?" said the magistrate.

"Nothing. But I will answer you any question you may choose to ask of me upon the subject."

"No. It is not my province to ask anything. This is clearly a voluntary statement and confession. No questions need be, or ought to be, asked concerning it at all."

"Very well."

"You are aware that it will be used against you."

"And against Todd?"

"Yes, it is a strong corroboration of the evidence against him; and as such, if there had been any doubt, would have gone far towards making his conviction certain."

"Then I am satisfied, sir."

The magistrate slightly inclined his head and left the cell with the Governor. When they were outside he said to the latter —

"I would advise you to keep a sharp watch upon that woman. My firm opinion is, that she contemplates suicide, and that this statement is merely

MRS. LOVETT MAKES HER CONFESSION TO THE GOVERNOR OF NEWGATE.

made for the purpose of damaging Todd as much as possible."

"No doubt, sir. You may depend upon our keeping a good watch upon her. It is quite impossible she can do herself a mischief. There is literally nothing in the cell for her to convert to any such use; besides, I doubt if really great criminals ever have the courage to die by their own hands."

"Well, it may be so; of course your experience of these people is very considerable. I only tell you my impression."

"For which, sir, I am much obliged, and will be doubly cautious."

MRS. LOVETT, WHEN SHE WAS ONCE MORE ALONE, paced her cell in the same restless manner that she had done before. It was not then so much as it is now the custom in Newgate to keep such a strict watch upon prisoners before conviction, and with the exception that there was a man in the passage close at hand, boxed up in a sentry-box, and whose duty it was now and then to open the small square wicket in the cell door, and see that the prisoner was all right, Mrs. Lovett had no surveillance over her.

As she paced to and fro, she muttered to herself—

"Yes, I will do it. They think that I would go through the formal parade of a trial. They think that I will stand in one of their courts shrinking before a jury; but I will not—I will not. Oh no, Todd may do all that. It is fitting that he should; but I, having failed in my one great enterprise, will bid adieu to life."

She paused, for the man was at the wicket.

"Do you want anything?" he said.

"No, my friend. Only the poor privilege of being alone."

"Humph! I thought I heard you speaking."

"I was only rehearsing my defence."

"Oh, well; that's a new dodge anyhow. You take it easy, Ma'am Lovett, if anybody ever did."

"Innocence, my friend, should be composed."

The turnkey stared at her through the little bars that crossed even that small orifice in the door, and then closed it without another word. He was scarcely used to such an amount of cool effrontery as he found exhibited by Mrs. Lovett.

"Alone again," she said. "Alone again. I must be cautious, or they will suspect my purpose. I must only converse with myself in faint whispers. I would not be thwarted willingly in this my last and boldest act; and I am resolved that I will not live to look upon the light of another day. I am resolved, and wound up to my purpose. Oh, what poor fools they are to fancy they can prevent such a one as I am from dying when and how I wish! They have unwittingly supplied me with the ready means of death to-day."

These words were spoken so low, that if the turnkey had been listening with all his might on the other side of the door he could not possibly have overheard them. The recent visit of that functionary, if the peep through the little opening in the door could be called a visit, had taught Mrs. Lovett to be more cautious how she trusted the air of her cell with the secret resolves of her teeming brain.

But now that she had really and truly made up her mind to commit suicide, all the worst passions of her nature seemed to be up in arms and to wage wild war in her heart and brain; while amid them all was the intense hatred of Todd, and the hope that she should be revenged upon him, by his being brought to death upon the scaffold, triumphant over every other.

"I had hoped," she said; "oh, how I had hoped, that I might have had the satisfaction of witnessing such a scene—but that is past now. I must go before him; but still it is with the conviction that die he must. I feel, I know that he will not have the courage to do as I am about to do, and if he had, I am certain he has not provided himself with the means of success as I have provided myself."

These last words she scarcely whispered to herself, so very fearful was she that they might be overheard by the turnkey who was so close at hand.

And now a fear came over her that he was watching her through some little hole or crevice of the door, and the very thought was sufficient to make her wonderfully uneasy. If it were so, there was quite sufficient reflected light in the cell to make every one of her actions easily observable, and so her cherished design of taking her own life would be defeated completely.

In lieu of a piece of whalebone in the back of her dress, there was a small tin tube, soldered perfectly tight against the escape of any fluid, and made fast at each end. That tin tube had been in the dress she now selected for many months, and it was filled with a subtle liquid poison, a very few drops of which would prove certainly fatal.

She dreaded that she should be observed to take this ingenious contrivance from her dress and pounced upon before she could break it open and make use of its contents.

She sat down on the miserable kind of bench which served as a bed, and in a very low whisper to herself she said—

"I must wait till night—yes, I must wait till night!"

She knew well that the indulgence of a light would be denied to her, and she smiled to herself, as she thought how that mistaken piece of prison policy would enable her to free herself from what now was the bitter encumbrance of existence.

"The twilight," she muttered, "will soon creep into this gloomy place, and it will be my twilight, too—the twilight of my life before, and only just before, the night of death begins. That night will know no dawn—that long, long sleep which will know no waking! Yea, I will then escape from this strong prison!"

CHAPTER CXXV.

MRS. LOVETT SEES SOME TWILIGHT SPECTRES IN HER CELL.

AFTER SHE HAD SAT FOR SOME TIME in this state of feeling, and just before the darkness got so apparent that but little could be seen of the few articles that the place contained, she heard the door open.

A flash of light came into the place.

"Who is that?" she cried.

"Oh, you needn't think as it's robbers — it's only me," said a voice. "You are quite safe here, ma'am. That's one good of being in the stone jug: you needn't be afraid of thieves breaking into your place."

She saw that it was the turnkey whose duty it was to keep watch in the passage outside her cell.

"What do you want here?" she said. "Cannot I have the poor privilege of being left alone?"

"Oh, yes, only it's your rations' time, and here's your boiled rice and water, and here's your loaf, mum. In course, that ain't exactly the sort of thing you have been accustomed to; but it's all the county allows — only between you and me and the post, Mrs. Lovett, as they say you have got a pretty heavy purse, you can have just what you like."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, in a moderate way you know. You have only to pay, and you can have anything."

"Then even Newgate is like the rest of the world. Money rules even here, does it?"

"Why, in a manner of speaking, a guinea is worth twenty-one shillings here, just the same as it is outside, ma'am."

"Then how much will purchase my liberty?"

The turnkey shook his head.

"There, ma'am, you ask for an article that I don't deal in. My shop don't keep such a thing as liberty. What I mean is, that you may have just what you like to eat and drink."

"Very well. In the morning you can bring me what I order."

"Oh, yes — yes."

"I will pay handsomely for what I do order, for I have, as you say, a heavy purse. Much heavier, indeed it is, than any of you imagine, my friends."

MRS. LOVETT IN NEWGATE — IS CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN.

"Your humble servant, ma'am. I only wish Newgate was full of such as you."

"Ah, I hear a footstep. Who is it that is about to intrude upon me to-night?"

"It's the chaplain."

"The chaplain? I thought he understood that I declined his visits completely."

"Why, you see, ma'am, so you did, but it's his duty to go the round of all the cells before the prison shuts up for the night, so he will come, you see; and if I might advise you, ma'am, I should say be civil to him whatever you may think, for he can do you an ill turn if he likes in his report. He has more

underhanded sort of power than you are aware of, Mrs. Lovett; so you had better, as I say, be civil to him, and keep your thoughts to yourself. Where's the odds, you know, ma'am?"

"I am much obliged to you for this advice, and I will pay you for it. There is a couple of guineas for you as a slight remembrance of me, and let others say what they will, you at least will not accuse me of ingratitude for any benefit conferred upon me."

"That I won't, ma'am; but here he comes. Mum is the word about what I have said, or else my place would not be worth much, I can tell you."

"Depend upon me."

The turnkey, with a great show of respect, backed out of the cell as the chaplain entered it.

"Well, Mrs. Lovett," said the pious individual, "I hope to find you in a better frame of mind than upon my last visit to you."

"Sir," said Mrs. Lovett, "if you will come to me at your own hour in the morning, I shall then present myself to you in a different manner, and I shall no longer object to anything you may be pleased to say to me."

"What a blessed conversion. Really, now, this is very satisfactory indeed. Mrs. Lovett, of course you are a very great sinner, but if you attend to me, I can warrant your being received in the other world by ten thousand angels."

"I thank you, sir. Half the number would be quite sufficient, I feel assured, for my poor deserts."

"Oh no, ten thousand — ten thousand. Not one less than that number. But if you have any doubts about the reality of flames everlasting, I shall have great satisfaction in removing them, by holding your hand for a few moments in the flame of this candle."

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Lovett, "but I shall be quite as well convinced if you hold yours, as I shall then I hope see the agony depicted in your countenance."

"Humph! — ah! No, I would rather not exactly. But quite rejoicing that you are in so very pious a frame of mind, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock."

"That will do very well," said Mrs. Lovett.

The chaplain, thinking he had made quite a wonderful convert in Mrs. Lovett, and with serious thoughts of getting somebody to write a tract for him on the subject, left the cell, little suspecting how he was to be duped.

"Well, you did gammon him," said the turnkey, "I will say that for you."

"Can you not leave me a light?"

"Agin the rules. Can't do it; but I'll wait till you have put the mattress to rights, if you like."

"Oh, no. It will do very well. Good night."

"Good night, Ma'am Lovett, and thank you for me. They may say what

they likes about you, but I will stick up for you, so far that you are liberal with your tin, and that's a very good thing indeed. I ain't quite sure that it isn't everything, as this here world goes."

The door of the cell was closed, and the last rays of the turnkey's candle disappeared. Mrs. Lovett was alone again in her dreary cell.

The darkness now was very intense, indeed: for during the few minutes that she had been conversing with the chaplain, the twilight had almost faded away, dropping quite into night, so that not an object was visible in the cell. She heard the turnkey's footsteps die away in the distance, and then indeed she felt truly alone.

"And I shall not see the sunlight of another day," she said. "My pilgrimage is over."

She pronounced these words with a shudder, for even she could not at such a moment feel quite at ease. She held in her hands the means of death, and yet she hesitated — not that she had the remotest intention of foregoing her fixed resolve; but feeling that at any moment she had it in her power now to carry it out, she lingered there upon the shores of life.

"And it has come to this," she said. "After all my scheming — after all my resolves, it has come to suicide in a felon's cell. Well, I played a daring game, and for heavy stakes, and I have lost, that is all."

She covered her eyes with her hands for several minutes, and slowly rocked to and fro.

Who shall say what thoughts crossed that bold bad woman's soul at that time? Who shall say that in those few moments her memory did not fly back to some period when she was innocent and happy? — for even Mrs. Lovett must have been innocent and happy once; and the thought that such had been her blessed state, compared to what it was now, was enough to drive her mad — quite mad.

When she withdrew her hands from before her eyes she uttered a cry of terror. Memory had conjured up the forms of departed spirits to her; and now so strong had become the impression upon her mind in that hour of agony, that she thought she saw them in her cell.

"Oh, mercy — mercy!" she said. "Why should I be tortured thus? Why should I suffer such horrors? Why do you glare at me with such fiery eyes for, horrible spectres!"

She covered up her eyes again; but then a still more terrible supposition took possession of her, for instead of fancying that the spectres were in the darkness of the cell at some distance from her, she thought that they all came crowding up to within an inch of her face, gibing and mocking.

"Off — off!" she cried, as she suddenly stretched out her arm. "Do not drive me quite mad."

Her eyes glared in the darkness like those of some wild animal. They looked

phosphorescent, and for some time such was the agony and the thraldom of her feelings, that she quite forgot she had the means of death in her hands.

She began to question the spirits that fancy presented in the darkness as thronging her cell.

"Who are you?" she said. "I know you not. I did not kill you! Why do you glare at me? And you, with your face matted with blood, I did not kill you. Who are you, too, with those mangled limbs? I killed none of you. Go to Sweeney Todd — go to Sweeney Todd!"

She kept her hands stretched out before her, and she fancied that it was only by such an action that she kept them from touching her very face. Then she dropped upon her knees, and in the same wild half-screaming voice she spoke again, crying —

"Away with you all! Todd it was that killed you — not I. He would have killed me, too. Do you hear, that he tried to kill me? but he could not. What boy are you? Oh, I know you now. He sent you to the madhouse. You are George Allan. Well, I did not kill you. I see that there is blood upon you! But why do you all come to me and leave Todd's cell tenantless, except by himself? for you cannot be here and there both! Away, I say! Away to him! Do not come here to torture me!"

Tap — tap — tap came a sound on the door of the cell.

"Hush!" she said. "Hush!"

"What's the matter?" said the turnkey.

"Nothing — nothing."

"But I heard you calling out about something."

"It is nothing, my friend. All is right. I was only — only praying."

"Humph!" said the turnkey. "If you were, it is something rather new, I reckon. She can't do any mischief, that's one comfort; and many of the worst ones as comes here don't pass very nice, cosy, comfortable nights. They fancies they sees all sorts of things, they does. Poor devils! I never seed nothing worse than myself or my wife in all my time, and I don't think I ever shall."

Mrs. Lovett did not now utter one word until she was sure the turnkey was out of hearing. That slight interruption had recalled her to herself, and done much to banish from her disturbed imagination all those fancied monsters of the brain which had disturbed her.

"Why did I yield even for a moment," she said, "to such a load of superstition? I thought that even at such a moment as this I should be free from such terrors. How I should have smiled in derision of any one else who had been weak enough to give way to them — and yet how real they looked. How very unlike the mere creations of a disturbed brain. Could they be real? Is it possible?"

Mrs. Lovett shook a little as she asked herself these questions, and it was only at such a moment that she could or was at all likely to ask them, for our readers may well believe that such a woman could have had no sort of belief in a providence, or she never, with her active intellect, could have fallen into the mistake of supposing that she was compassing happiness by committing crime.

For awhile now the doubt that she had suggested to herself shook her very much. It was the very first time in all her wicked life that anything like a perception of a future state had crossed her mind; and each minute how fearfully to her the possibility, and then the probability, that there really was another world than this, began now to grow upon her.

That thought was more full of agony than the appearance of the spectres had been to her — those spectres which were only called into existence by her own consciousness of overpowering guilt and deep iniquity.

"I am going now," she said. "I am going. World that I hate, and all upon thee, farewell!"

She broke the tin case containing the poison, and applying one of the broken ends to her lips, she swallowed two drops of the deadly liquid, and fell dead upon the floor of her cell.

CHAPTER CXXVI.

SWEENEY TODD IS PLACED UPON HIS TRIAL.

IT WAS ABOUT EIGHT O'CLOCK in the morning that the officials of Newgate found their way to the cell of Mrs. Lovett. At first they thought that she was sleeping upon the floor of her prison, but when they picked her up, they soon became aware of what had really happened, and the alarm spread through the prison.

The governor was vexed, and the chaplain was vexed, and when the sheriff was sent for, he, too, was vexed, so they all revenged themselves upon the turnkey, whose duty it was to be in the passage adjoining the cell, and they fancied they met the justice of the case by discharging him.

Of course, in a very few hours the news of Mrs. Lovett's suicide became known all over London, with very many exaggerations; and there was not one person in the whole of the vast population of the great city who did not know the fact, save and except that man who would feel most interested in it. We, of course, allude to Sweeney Todd.

He, in his cell in Newgate, saw no newspapers, and held no conversation

with the world without; and as none of the persons in any way connected with the prison chose to inform him of what had happened, he had not the least idea but that Mrs. Lovett was, along with him, suffering all the terrors of suspense antecedent to her trial upon the serious charge impending over her.

Of course when the day of his, Todd's, trial should arrive, the fact could no longer be kept secret from him; and that day come at last to wither up any faint hopes that he might cling to.

Scarcely ever in London had such an amount of public excitement been produced by any criminal proceedings, as by the trial of Sweeney Todd. While he pursued a monotonous life from day to day in his cell, haunted by all sorts of fears, and the prey of the most dismal apprehensions, the public appetite had been fed by all sorts of strange and vague stories concerning him.

The most hideous crimes had been laid to his charge; and in the imagination of the people, the number of his victims was quadrupled, so that when the morning of his trial arrived, so great was the excitement, that business in the City was almost at a stand still, and sober-minded men who did not see any peculiar interest in the sayings and doings of a great criminal, were of course disgusted that the popular taste should run that way.

As regarded Todd himself, he had gone into Newgate with a fixed determination in his own mind to commit suicide if he possibly could; but he had not taken the precaution that Mrs. Lovett had long before, in providing the means of so doing; and consequently he was thrown upon the scanty resources that might present themselves to him in the prison.

That those resources would be few and limited enough, may be well imagined, for the most special instructions had been given by Sir Richard Blunt to prevent Todd from committing suicide; and since Mrs. Lovett had so disposed of herself despite the authorities, those precautions had been redoubled; so that Todd, after two or three abortive attempts, and thinking the matter over in every way, saw that there was no chance for him in that way, and he made up his mind to abide his trial, with the hope that he might, during the course of it, be able to say enough to make Mrs. Lovett's conviction certain, while he felt certain that he could not possibly make his own situation worse than it was.

He thought, too, that perhaps after conviction he might behave so cunningly as to deceive his jailer into an idea that he was full of contrition and resignation, and so, at some ungarded moment, achieve the object that now he felt to be impossible.

With these hopes and feelings, then, little suspecting that Mrs. Lovett had already removed her case to a higher tribunal, Sweeney Todd awaited his trial.

Probably he had no idea of the amount of excitement that his case had created outside the prison. The customary calm of the officials of the jail, had deceived him into a belief, that after all it was no such great matter; but he

TODD GOES TO TAKE HIS TRIAL.

quite forgot that that was a professional calm, with which the people had nothing to do, and in which it was not at all likely they would participate.

The Governor came into his cell about a quarter before nine o'clock on the morning fixed for his trial.

"Sweeney Todd," he said, "you are wanted in court."

"I am ready," said Todd.

He rose with alacrity, and accompanied the Governor and two turnkeys. It was the custom then to place prisoners accused of such heavy offences as fell to Todd's charge in irons, and if the authorities had any suspicion of violent

intentions upon the part of such prisoners, the irons accompanied them to the bar of the Old Bailey. Todd was so accompanied; and as he walked along, his irons made a melancholy clank together.

His imprisonment preceding his trial had been uncommonly short, but yet it had been sufficient to bring him down greatly in appearance. He had never been one of the fat order of mortals, but now he looked like some great gaunt ghost. Every patch of colour had forsaken his cheeks, and his eyes looked preternaturally lustrous.

Those who had not been accustomed to the sight of him during his imprisonment in Newgate, shrunk from him as he followed the Governor through the gloomy passages of the prison. Two well-armed officers keep close upon his heels, so that Todd could not complain of a want of attendants.

Even he recoiled when he was brought into the court of the Old Bailey, for it was a complete sea of heads; and from the dock he could hear the roar and the shout, and the shrieks of people outside, who were still struggling for admission.

It was then that the idea first seemed to strike him that the public, in him, had recognised one of those notorious criminals, that awaken in no small degree popular indignation by their acts. Indeed, upon his first appearance in the court, there was a strange kind of groan of execration, which was tolerably evident to all, and yet not defined enough for the judge to take any notice of.

The strife continued at the door of the court, and it was quite evident that the officers were engaged in a severe struggle with the crowd outside.

"Let the doors be closed," said the judge; "the court is already inconveniently crowded."

Upon this order, the officers redoubled their exertions; and being assisted by some of the spectators already within the court, who were fearful of being trampled to death if the crowd should once get in, the doors were made to shut, and fastened.

A yell of rage and disappointment came from the mob; and then a loud voice, that towered above all other noises, shouted —

"Bring Todd out and we will hang him at once without any further trouble. We only want Todd!"

The countenance of the prisoner turned as white as paper, and his glaring eyes were fixed upon the doors of the court.

"It is quite impossible," said the judge, "that the business of the court can be carried on under these circumstances; I hope that the civil power will be sufficient to repress this tumult without, otherwise it will be my duty to send for a guard of military, and then bloodshed may be the consequence, from which those who create this riot alone will be in any way answerable."

"Bring him out!" cried a hundred voices. "Out with him! Todd — Todd! We want Todd."

There was then such a furious hammering at the doors of the court, that it was quite impossible to hear what any one said. Sir Richard Blunt suddenly appeared on the bench, and leaning over to the judge, he said —

"My lord, I am collecting a force with which I shall be able to clear the entrances to the court."

"I wish you would, Sir Richard. This riot is most disgraceful."

"It is, my lord; but it shall be suppressed now with as much speed as may be."

With this, Sir Richard immediately retired. He collected together a force of fifty constables, and forming them into a sort of wedge, he suddenly opened a side door, and attacked the mob. The fight, for a hand-to-hand fight it now was, did not last more than ten minutes, when the mob gave way, and "every one for himself" became the cry. In five minutes more the party of officers had possession of all the avenues to the court, and a profound silence succeeded to the riot that had taken place.

"I think now," said the judge "we may proceed to business. This riot has been a most disgraceful one, and if the officers will bring any one before me who has taken part in it, I will commit him to prison at once."

"They are all dispersed, my lord," said Sir Richard.

"The court thanks you, sir," said the judge. "Let the proceedings commence at once."

Todd now glared about him, and his lips kept moving as though he were repeating something to himself in a whisper. The Governor of Newgate leant forward, and said —

"Do you wish to say anything?"

"Yes. Where is she?"

"Mrs. Lovett do you mean?"

"I do. Why am I here, and she not? Where is she? If she be innocent, why then so am I. I do not see her."

"She will not be here."

"Not here? How — why?"

"She is dead."

Todd nearly dropped to the floor, and from that moment a great portion of his courage, small as it was, departed, and he looked like a ghost rather than a living man. At times, he kept muttering to himself the word — "Dead—dead—dead!"

The usual formalities were gone through, and then Todd was roused up to plead to the indictment, charging him with the murder of Francis Thornhill.

The governor touched him on the shoulder.

"Plead to the indictment," he said.

"Dead!" cried Todd. "Why is she dead?"

"Prisoner at the bar," said the clerk of the arraign. "Do you plead guilty

or not guilty to the charge here made against you?"

"Not guilty!" cried Todd, as he roused himself up, and glared at the judge like an enraged tiger.

Government had entrusted the prosecution to the Attorney General of the time being, and that functionary was in court. He rose to open the case, and spoke as follows, amid the most breathless silence —

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury: —

"The prisoner at the bar was originally indicted along with a female named Lovett — "

"Where is she?" said Todd.

"Prisoner," said the judge, "at the proper time you will have an opportunity of making any observation you may think fit, but it is scarcely necessary for me to inform you that this is not the time."

"She is not dead!" cried Todd. "She has been let escape by some juggling, in order that all the vengeance of the law might be directed against me. It is not true that she is dead. Some of you are chargeable with allowing that woman to escape. I tell you that she is a fiend and not a woman. But she has had gold at her disposal, and she has bribed you all — I say she has bought you all."

"Prisoner," said the judge, "this cannot be permitted. You only deeply prejudice your own case by this conduct."

"That is impossible. I know that you are all in one large conspiracy against me, and you have let that woman escape, in order that the last drop should not be wanting to fill my cup of bitterness to the overflowing."

"It will be impossible," said the Attorney-General, "to proceed with the case, if the prisoner at the bar continues these interruptions."

"Prisoner," said the judge, "I, and all here present, are disposed to give any allowance and indulgence to a man in your situation; but let me beg of you to be silent."

"I am done," said Todd, "but it is false to say that she is dead. That fiend cannot die. She is a devil, I tell you all, and if there be any here who fancy that she is dead, I tell them that they are mistaken. She cannot be killed. I know that well. Go on with what you call your proceedings; I have no more to say to you."

CHAPTER CXXVII.

THE TRIAL OF SWEENEY TODD CONTINUED.

THIS EBULLITION OF FEELING UPON THE PART of Sweeney Todd was by some of the spectators looked upon as a vague indication of insanity, while some of the members of the bench looked very mysterious, and asked themselves if it were not the first step in the direction of some very clever defence. But then they were gentlemen who never exactly saw anything as the world in general agrees to see it.

The judge shook his head as if he rather doubted Sweeney Todd's implicit promise that he would not again interrupt the proceedings; and among the whole of the spectators of that most extraordinary trial, the most intense interest was evidently rather on the increase than the diminution.

The judge finding that Todd did not again say anything for a few moments, slightly inclined his head to the Attorney-General, as much as to say — "Pray get on, now that there seems an opportunity of so doing;" and that personage, learned in the law, accordingly rose again, and having adjusted his gown, addressed himself again to the case before him, with his usual skill.

"My lords, and gentlemen of the jury: —

"If this were only some ordinary everyday proceeding, I should not sit so calmly under the indecorous interruptions of the prisoner at the bar; but when I feel, in common with all here present, that that person has so great a stake as his life upon the issue of this investigation, I am disposed in all charity to allow a latitude of action, that otherwise would not, and could not, be endured.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I yet hope that these unseemly interruptions are over, and that I shall be permitted in peace to make those remarks to you, which it is my duty to make on behalf of the crown, who prosecutes in this serious case.

"Nothing can be further from my wish than to heighten by any strength of phraseology or domestic detail the case against the prisoner at the bar. I shall confine myself to a recital of the bare facts of the case, feeling that, while I cannot detract from them, they are of such a character of horror, as to require no adventitious aid from the art of the orator.

"Gentlemen, it appears that the prisoner at the bar is arraigned for the willful murder of Francis Thornhill. From what information we have been able to collect, the prisoner, Sweeney Todd, is a native of the north of England. He

came to London about eighteen years ago, and was in very great poverty, when he opened a small barber's shop in Crutched Friars. He remained in that shop about seventeen months, and then paid one hundred and twenty-five pounds for the lease of a house in Fleet-street, for which he was thus only to pay a rental to the Skinners' Company of seventeen pound ten per annum, he consenting to keep the premises in ordinary repair.

"The lower part of this house had been a small hosier's; but the prisoner at the bar altered it into a barber's shop, and he has there continued to reside until his arrest upon the serious charge which we are brought here to investigate.

"What were the pursuits of the prisoner during his occupancy of that house, it is not our province just now to inquire, as all our attention must be directed to a consideration of the one charge, to answer to which he stands at the bar of this court; and I shall, therefore, proceed to detail the evidence upon which the prosecution founds that charge:—

"It appears that upon the third day of August last, a ship of 400 tons burthen, called the *Star*, arrived in the London Docks. On board of that ship was the captain, and a crew of nine seamen, and two boys. As passengers, there was a Colonel Jeffery, and a Mr. Thornhill, whose death is the motive of the present proceedings. There was likewise a large dog named Hector on board the vessel, which was very much attached to Mr. Thornhill.

"Now, gentlemen of the jury, it had so happened that Francis Thornhill had been commissioned, during the progress of a wreck at sea, by a young gentleman named Mark Ingestrie, to take a certain String of Oriental Pearls, valued at somewhere about sixteen thousand pounds sterling, to a young lady in London, named Johanna Oakley; and this Francis Thornhill, fully believing that Mark Ingestrie had perished at sea, was most anxious to fulfill his request regarding this valuable and important String of Pearls.

"As early as possible he landed from the ship, taking the String of Pearls with him, and his faithful dog Hector accompanied him on shore."

At this moment, Hector, who was in court, having for the second time heard his name mentioned, began to think probably that something was going on concerning him, and he set up a loud bark of defiance.

The effect of this was greatly to interest some of the auditory, while it brought a smile to the faces of others. Todd turned deadly pale, and in a voice of alarm, he cried—

"Keep off the dog—keep off the dog, I say!"

"Bow!—wow!—wow!" barked Hector again.

"That dog," said the judge, "must be immediately removed from the court. Officers, see to it."

"I beg, my lord," said the Attorney-General, "that you will allow him to remain, for I assure your lordship that he is a witness in this most important case."

"A witness?"

"Yes, my lord; I speak advisedly, and as a favour I hope your lordship will permit him to remain."

"Will anybody keep him quiet?"

"Oh, yes, your worship," cried the ostler. "I'll keep Pison like a mouse as has fainted clean away."

"Who is that man, and what does he say?" said the judge.

"My lord," said the Attorney-General, "he says he can keep the dog quite quiet if you will allow him to remain."

"Oh, very well. Pray proceed, Mr. Attorney."

The Attorney-General then resumed.

"With the String of Pearls then, and the dog, which the jury have seen, Mr. Francis Thornhill went into the City to fulfil the request of Mark Ingestrie. The address he had was to Mr. Oakley, a spectacle-maker in the City, with whom Miss Oakley, who was to have the String of Pearls, resided.

"Gentlemen of the jury, neither Francis Thornhill nor the String of Pearls ever reach their destination. It appears that on his route, Thornhill went into the shop of the prisoner at the bar to be shaved, and no one ever saw him come out again. The dog, though, was found sitting at the door of the shop, and when Todd opened his shop-door, the dog rushed in and brought out his master's hat.

"Gentlemen, the captain of the ship and Colonel Jeffery, both became very anxious concerning the fate of Mr. Thornhill, and they made every inquiry. They questioned the prisoner at the bar, who at once admitted that he had shaved him, but stated that he had left his shop when that operation was over. The captain of the *Star* was compelled to go to Bristol with his ship, but Colonel Jeffery, in conjunction with a friend, pressed his inquiries about Mr. Thornhill without success. The matter appeared to be involved in the most profound mystery, and the only hope of an elucidation of it, consisted in the probability that such a valuable piece of property as the String of Pearls would be sure to turn up some day in some one's possession. Gentlemen, it did so turn up. It appeared that at Hammersmith resided a Mr. John Mundell, who lent money upon securities, and it will be deposed in evidence, that one evening the prisoner at the bar, magnificently attired, and in a handsome coach, went to this Mr. Mundell, and pawned a string of pearls for some thousands of pounds.

"It is to be regretted that this Mundell cannot be brought before the jury. He is dead, gentlemen; but a confidential clerk of his, who saw the prisoner at the bar, will depose to the facts.

"We thus then, gentlemen of the jury, commit the prisoner with the disappearance of Thornhill, and now we come to the strongest features of this most remarkable case.

"It appears that for a considerable time past, the church of St. Dunstan's

had become insufferable from a peculiar stench with which the whole of that sacred edifice appeared to be constantly filled, and it baffled all the authorities to account for it.

"No one had been entombed in any of the vaults beneath the church for a considerable time, and in fact, there was no apparent reason for the frightful miasmatic odour that upon all occasions filled the edifice, and day by day got worse instead of better. Scientific men, gentlemen of the jury, were consulted with regard to this stench in the church, and various very learned theories were broached upon the subject; but no one thought of making an accurate examination of the vaults beneath the church, until Sir Richard Blunt, the well-known magistrate, privately undertook it.

"Gentlemen, Sir Richard Blunt found that almost every vault was full of the fresh remains of the dead. He found that into old coffins, the tenants of which had mouldered to dust, there had been thrust fresh bodies with scarcely any flesh remaining upon them, but yet sufficient to produce the stench in the church, by the effluvia arising from them, and finding its way into the pews. In one vault, too, was found the contents of which were too horrid for description; suffice it that it contained what butchers, when speaking of slaughtered animals, call the offal. The stench in St. Dunstan's Church was no longer a mystery.

"Well, gentlemen of the jury, Sir Richard Blunt persevered in his investigations, and found that there was an underground connection from exactly beneath the shaving shop of the prisoner at the bar, and the cellarage of a house in Bell Yard, Temple-bar, which was his property; and which was in the occupation of a female, named Lovett, who this day would have stood at the bar by the side of the prisoner, had she not, despite every vigilance used to prevent such an act, succeeded in poisoning herself, while in prison in Newgate.

"Gentlemen of the jury, it will be shown in evidence that the way the larger portion of the flesh of Todd's victims was got rid of was by converting it into meat and pork pies upon the premises of Mrs. Lovett.

"Beneath Todd's shop was found a diabolical contrivance, by which he could make any one he pleased fall through the floor upon the chair they sat on to be shaved, while an empty chair, in all respects similar, took the place of the one that had been occupied by the unfortunate victim. If the unhappy man, thus betrayed in a moment of confidence, was not killed by the fall, he would, at all events, be sufficiently stunned to become an easy prey to Sweeney Todd, when he chose to go down and despatch him.

"And now, gentlemen of the jury, and you, my lord, I may be told that these wholesale murders have nothing to do with the indictment, which simply charges the prisoner at the bar with the willful murder of Francis Thornhill; but I reply that it was impossible to make apparent to the jury the mode by which Francis Thornhill came by his death, without going into these painful

details. Todd's house was found crammed with property and clothing sufficient for one hundred and sixty people!"

A thrill of horror pervaded the court at this announcement.

"Yes, gentlemen of the jury; and among that clothing is the sleeve of a jacket, which will be sworn to as having belonged to Francis Thornhill; but we have yet more cogent evidence of the fact that Thornhill met his death at the hands of the prisoner at the bar. His hat, gentlemen, will be identified by the dog now in court. But, gentlemen, is that enough? No, the law wisely looks for the body of a murdered man; and I do not call to mind an instance of a conviction following from murder where there has not been some satisfactory identification of the remains of the murdered man. We will produce that proof. Among the skeletons found contiguous to Todd's premises, was one which will be sworn to as being that of the deceased, Mr. Thornhill. One bone of that skeleton will be produced in court, and sworn to by a surgeon who had the care of it, when once fractured on board ship, and who, from repeated examinations such a surgeon only could make, knows it well."

This announcement on the part of the Attorney-General, produced an enormous amount of excitement in court, for many persons had come, prepossessed with the idea that the non-production of the dead body of the alleged murdered man would be a serious hitch in the prosecution.

Todd looked up, and in a loud clear voice he cried—

"No! no!"

"Yes," added the Attorney-General. "Yes. Gentlemen of the jury, that is all I have to say for the prosecution. The facts are as clear as light, and you will hear from the mouths of creditable witnesses the various particulars which it has been my duty on behalf of the prosecution to lay before you this day."

CHAPTER CXXVIII.

TODD'S TRIAL CONTINUES, AND GOES ALL AGAINST HIM.

The Attorney-General sat down.

It was quite clear now to the most superficial observer, that the case against Todd had been just picked out for convenience sake, and was one among many. From the moment that the Attorney-General had mentioned what facts he could prove, the fate of the murderer was certain to the minds of all. They looked upon him in every respect as a doomed man.

Of course the remarks of the Attorney-General occupied a much greater space than we have felt that, in justice to the other portion of our story, we could give to them; but what we have presented to the reader was the essential portion of what he said.

All eyes were turned upon Todd, to note how he took the statement for the prosecution; but there was little to be gleaned from his face. His eyes seemed to be wandering over the sea of faces in the court, as if he were in search of some one whom he was disappointed in not seeing.

There was a pause of some few moments duration, and then the Attorney-General called his first witness, who was examined by the Junior Counsel for the prosecution.

This witness's deposition was very simple and concise.

"I was master of the ship, *Star*," he said, "and arrived in the Port of London on the day named in the indictment against the prisoner at the bar. Mr. Francis Thornhill had mentioned to me and to Colonel Jeffery that he had a valuable String of Pearls to take to a young lady, named Johanna Oakley, and he left the ship with his dog, Hector, to deliver them. I never saw him again from that hour to this. I was anxious about him, and called at the barber's shop in Fleet-street, kept by the prisoner at the bar. The prisoner readily admitted that such a person had been shaved at his shop, and then had left it, but why the dog remained he could not tell. The dog named Hector was at the door of the prisoner's house. He had a hat with him. My name is Arthur Rose Fletcher, and I am forty-two years of age."

"Is this the hat that you saw with the dog in Fleet-street?"

The hat was produced.

"Yes, that is the hat. I will swear to it."

"Whose hat is it, or was it?"

"It belonged to Mr. Thornhill, who wore it on the day he left the ship to go into the city with the String of Pearls."

"That is all, then, Mr. Fletcher, that we need trouble you with at present."

The judge now interposed; and in a mild voice addressing Todd, he said—

"It is not too late for you to consent to the appointment of counsel to watch your case. I dare say some gentleman of the bar will volunteer to do so."

"With the prisoner's consent," said a counsel, who was sitting at the table below the judge, "I will attend to the case."

"Be it so," said Todd, gloomily.

Upon this the counsel rose, and addressing the captain of the ship, who had not yet left the witness-box, he said to him—

"Mr. Fletcher, how is it that you can so positively identify this hat of the alleged murdered Mr. Thornhill, after such a space of time?"

"By a remarkable flaw in the rim of it, sir. An accident occurred on board the ship, by which Mr. Thornhill's hat was burnt, and this is the same hat.

When he left the ship we joked him about it, and he said that perhaps he would buy a new one in the City."

"Indeed. Then he might have sold this one."

"He might, certainly."

"And so the dog seeing it left at some place where it was sold or given away, and not comprehending such transaction, might have taken possession of it."

"Of that I can say nothing."

"Very well, Mr. Fletcher. I don't think I need trouble you any further. This affair of the hat seems to fall to the ground most completely."

The Attorney-General did not say a word aloud, but he whispered something to the junior, who nodded in reply.

The next witness called was John Figgs, the groom at the coach office, who had rescued Hector from Todd's malevolence. His testimony was as follows:—

"I saw a crowd of people round the door of Todd's shop, and I went over to see what it was all about. The dog as I calls Pison, but as everybody else calls Hector, was trying to get into the shop. Some one opened the door, and then he came out with a hat in his mouth, after rummaging all over the shop and upsetting no end of things. I tried to coax him away, but he would not come by no means. At last, the next day I found him very bad, and that he had been pisoned, and so I calls him Pison, and took him to the stables and got him over it."

"What is it he says he calls the dog?" asked the judge, with a very perplexed look.

"Pison, my lord."

"But what is Pison?"

"He means Poison."

"Oh, is that it; then why don't he say Poison? It's very absurd for anybody to say Pison, when they mean Poison all the while."

"It's all the same," said the groom. "Pison is my way, and the t'other is yourn, that's all!"

"What became of the hat?" asked the junior counsel for the prosecution.

"I don't know. When I found the dog, in a wery bad state indeed, it was gone."

"Now, John Figgs," said Todd's counsel, "could you identify that hat again among five hundred hats like it?"

"Five hundred?"

"Yes, or a thousand."

"Well, I should say not. It wouldn't be an easy matter to do that, I take it. I could tell you a particular horse among any lot, but I ain't so well known in the way of hats."

"Is this the hat? Can you deliberately swear that this is the hat in question?"

"I shouldn't like to swear it."

"Very well, that will do."

John Figgs was permitted to go down upon this, and it was quite evident that some faint hope was beginning to quicken in the eye of Sweeney Todd, as he found that his self-appointed counsel began to make so light of the evidence of the hat. For the moment he quite forgot what proofs were still to come to fix the deed of murder upon him.

Colonel Jeffery was now called. He deposed clearly and distinctly as follows: —

"I knew Mr. Thornhill, and much regretted his loss. In company with Mr. Fletcher I went to Todd's shop to make some inquiry about him, to the effect that he had been shaved there, and had then left. I did not feel satisfied, and when Mr. Fletcher was found to be in London, I got the assistance of a friend of mine, named Rathbone, and together we prosecuted what inquiries we could. I picked up a hat from Todd's passage, and after putting myself into communication with Sir Richard Blunt, I delivered the hat to him. I have been in constant communication with Sir Richard Blunt upon the subject of this inquiry for a long time. We found that the prisoner at the bar had a sort of apprentice or errand boy in his shop, named Tobias Ragg, and we endeavoured to get some disclosures from that boy, when he suddenly disappeared. I found him again on a doorstep in the City, and he has made certain disclosures which he will repeat in evidence to the court to-day.

"On the 4th of last month I accompanied Sir Richard Blunt to a cellar beneath Todd's shop, and he showed me a contrivance in the roof by which any one could be let down. We took workmen with us and made certain alterations. I afterwards accompanied Doctor Steers of the ship *Star* to the vaults of St. Dunstan's, and I saw Doctor Steers take a bone from there."

"Pray look at that hat, Colonel Jeffery. Is it the same you found at Todd's door?"

"It is."

"Did you mark the bone that Doctor Steers took from the vaults of St. Dunstan's?"

"I did, and I may state to save trouble, that I placed upon the hat a private mark by which I am enabled to swear to it."

Todd's counsel rose, and in a very respectful voice, he said —

"Did you ever see this String of Pearls, about which so much fuss is made, colonel?"

"Yes; Mr. Thornhill showed it to me."

"Oh. Do you know a young lady named Johanna Oakley?"

"I had that pleasure."

"You had? Have you not now?"

"I have the honour of her acquaintance since her marriage; she is now Mrs. Ingestrie."

The counsel seemed to be a little staggered by this answer, but after a moment or two, he resumed saying —

"Do you know a young lady named Arabella Wilmot?"

"I did."

"What, colonel, did again? Is she married?"

"Yes; that young lady is now Mrs. Jeffery, my wife."

The counsel had evidently intended to make some point against the colonel's evidence, which was completely destroyed by the fact of the two marriages. But he resumed the attack by changing his ground.

"Colonel," he said, "do you know a boy named Tobias Ragg?"

"I do. He is a resident in my house."

"Will you take upon your self to swear that that boy, or lad, or whatever he may be called, is in his right senses?"

"I will."

"Will you swear that he was never confined in a lunatic asylum, from which he made his escape raving mad, and that since then you have not kept him to listen to his wild conjectures and dreamy charges against the prisoner at the bar?"

"I will swear that he is not mad, and — "

"Come, sir, I want an answer, yes or no."

"Then you will not get one. Your question involves three or four propositions, some of which may be answered in the negative, and some in the affirmative; so how can you get a reply of yes or no?"

"Come — come, sir. Remember where you are. We want no roundabout speeches here, but direct answers."

"It is impossible to give a direct answer to such a speech as you made. Nothing but ignorance or trickery could induce you to ask such a thing."

"We cannot allow such language here, sir. I call upon the court for its protection against the insolence of this witness."

"The court does not think proper to interfere," said the judge, quietly.

"Oh, very well. Then I am done."

"But I am not," said the colonel. "I can inform you, and all whom it may concern, that the proprietor of the lunatic asylum, in which the boy, Ragg, was so unjustly confined, is now in Newgate, awaiting his trial for that and other offences, and that I have succeeded in completely breaking up the establishment."

The counsel did not think proper to say anything more to the colonel, who was permitted, after firing this last shot at the enemy, to quit the witness-box.

Sir Richard Blunt was the next witness called, and as his evidence was

expected to be very important indeed, all attention was paid to it.

There was that buzz of expectation throughout the court, which is always to be heard upon such occasions, when anything very important is about to take place, and every one shifted his place, in order the more correctly to hear what was going on.

The Attorney-General himself arose to pursue the examination of Sir Richard Blunt.

It was evident that the appearance of this witness roused Sweeney Todd more than anything else had done since the commencement of the proceedings. His eye lighted up, and setting his teeth hard, he prepared himself, with his left hand up to his ear, to catch every word that should fall from the lips of the man who had been his great enemy, and who had wound around him the web in which he had been caught at last.

The appearance of Sir Richard Blunt was very attractive. There was always about him an air of great candour, and the expression of his features denoted generosity and boldness in a most astonishing degree.

CHAPTER CXXIX.

THE TRIAL OF SWEENEY TODD CONTINUED.

THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH Sir Richard Blunt had found out all the villany of Todd, and overtook him and Mrs. Lovett in the midst of their iniquities, were well-known to the people assembled in the court, and some slight manifestations of applause greeted him as he stood up in the witness-box.

This exhibition of feeling was not noticed by the court, and the Attorney-General at once began his examination in chief.

"Sir Richard," he said, "will you have the kindness to put into the form of a narration, what you have to say concerning the charge upon which the prisoner at the bar is arraigned?"

"I will do so," replied Sir Richard, and then after a moment's pause, during which you might have heard a pin drop in the court, so intense was the stillness, the magistrate gave his important testimony against the now trembling wretch at the bar of that solemn court:

"A considerable time ago," he said, "my attention was drawn to the circumstance that a number of persons had disappeared, who were residents about the neighbourhood of Fleet-street, and its vicinity. Such disappearances were

totally and perfectly unaccountable. Not a trace could be found of very many respectable men, who had left their houses upon various objects, and never returned to them.

"The most striking peculiarity of this affair was, that the men who disappeared were for the most part great substantial citizens, who were far from likely to have yielded to any of those temptations that at times bring the young and the heedless in this great City into fearful dangers.

"I saw the Secretary of State upon the subject; and it was agreed that I was to have a carte blanche, as regarded expenses, and that I was to give nearly the whole of my time and attention to the unravelling of the mystery. It was then, that after my careful inquiry I found that out of thirteen disappearances no less than ten had declared their intention to be to get shaved, or their hair dressed, or to go through some process which required them to visit a barber. I then, personally, called at all the barber's shops in the neighbourhood, but never alone. To this fact of having some one waiting for me in the shop, I no doubt owe my life, for I have been eight times shaved and dressed by the prisoner at the bar."

Todd uttered a deep groan, and looked at Sir Richard as though he would have said —

"Oh, that I had you the ninth time so much at my mercy!"

There was quite a sensation, and a shudder through the court, as Sir Richard then stated how many times he had run the fearful risk of death at the hands of such a man as Todd; and then Sir Richard went on with his narration, which deeply and powerfully interested the judge, counsel, jury, and spectators.

"I did not find anything suspicious in the shop itself of the prisoner at the bar; although each of these times that I was within it, I looked at it narrowly; but I did find that he always made an effort to get the person who was with me to leave the shop upon some pretext or another, which, of course, never succeeded; and then without, in the least, appearing vexed at the failure, he would go on with his shaving in the coolest possible manner.

"This, however, was only suspicion, and I could take no advantage of it, unless something else developed itself likewise; but that was not long in happening. My attention was directed to the peculiar odour in St. Dunstan's Church, and from the moment that it was so, I in my own mind connected it with Sweeney Todd, and the disappearances of the persons who had so unaccountably been lost in the immediate neighbourhood of Fleet-street. In the midst of all this then, I had a formal application made to me concerning the disappearance of Mr. Francis Thornhill, who had been clearly traced to the shop of the prisoner at the bar, and never seen by any one to leave it.

"From that moment I felt that it was in the prisoner's shop that the parties disappeared, but the means by which they were murdered remained a profound mystery, and I felt, that unless these means could be very distinctly proved, a

conviction would be difficult. I instituted a careful search of the vaults beneath St. Dunstan's Church, and I found a secret passage communicating with the cellar of the pie shop in Bell Yard, and afterwards I found a similar passage communicating with the cellar under the prisoner's shop.

"Upon reaching the latter cellar, the first object that presented itself to me was, a chair fixed to the roof by its legs. That chair I at once recognised as identically like the one in the shop, in which I had so frequently sat, and in a moment the whole truth burst upon me. The plank upon which the shaving chair rested, turned upon a centre, and could be so made to turn by a simple contrivance above, so that any unfortunate person could be let down in a moment, and the vacant or supplementary chair would come up and take the place of the one that had been above.

"Prosecuting my researches, I found the skeleton of many persons in the vaults, and much putrid flesh, which fully accounted for the odour in St. Dunstan's Church. I found likewise that no meat from any butcher or salesman ever found its way to the pie-shop in Bell Yard. So upon research actuated by that fact, I found that the supply of flesh was human, and that was the way the prisoner at the bar got rid of a great portion of his victims.

"Measures were taken to prevent any more murders, by some persons in my pay always following any one into the shop; and then, when the evidence was all ready by the finding and identification of Mr. Francis Thornhill's leg bone, I took measures to apprehend the prisoner at the bar. I shall, of course, be happy to answer any questions that may be asked of me."

The Attorney-General then spoke, saying—

"Have you found out by what means the shaving-chair in the shop of the prisoner was prevented from falling at the moment any one sat in it?"

"Yes. By a simple piece of mechanism which communicated with the parlour, he could release the swinging board or keep it firm at his pleasure. I have had a model of the whole of the apparatus and building, which will be laid before the jury. It is here in the hands of an officer."

"Here you is," said Crotchet, coming forward with a large parcel in his hands, which, upon being taken from its case, was found to be an accurate representation of Todd's house, with the diabolical contrivances he had got together for the purpose of murder.

The model was handed to the jury, and excited immense and well deserved commendation.

"I have no further questions to ask of you, Sir Richard," said the Attorney-General; "but I am sure the court and jury cannot but feel much indebted to you for the very lucid manner in which you have given your evidence."

"One moment, Sir Richard, if you please," said Todd's counsel as the magistrate was about to leave the witness box. "I will not detain you for long."

"I am quite at your service, sir," said Sir Richard Blunt.

"How was it then that after you felt convinced of the guilt of the prisoner at the bar, as you state that you were, although I think upon very insufficient grounds, that you did not at once arrest him? Does it not seem very strange that you permitted him for some weeks to go on just as usual?"

"I did not permit him to go on just as usual. I took every precaution to prevent him from adding to the list of his offences. It is well known that a person in my situation must not act upon his own convictions of the guilt of any party. It was absolutely necessary that I should be able to bring satisfactory proof before a jury of the guilt of the prisoner at the bar, and it would have been quite premature to arrest him until I had that proof."

"And pray, Sir Richard, when did you consider you had that proof?"

"When the surgeon was able to swear to a portion of the remains of Mr. Francis Thornhill."

"Oh, then I am to understand that you rest the case for the prosecution upon a bone?"

"I do not prosecute."

"But you took the prisoner into custody, sir; and am I to believe that you did so solely on account of the finding a bone in some of the vaults of St. Dunstan's?"

"You can conclude so."

"Oh, I can conclude so? Very well then. Gentleman of the jury, it appears that the whole case against the prisoner at the bar, my worthy and exemplary client, rests upon a bone. That will do, Sir Richard; we will not trouble you any further. Perhaps the court will stop the case, as it only rests upon a bone."

"Not exactly," said the judge.

The next witness was the surgeon, and his evidence was listened to with great attention. He said—

"I was in the vaults of St. Dunstan's church, and I looked over a great quantity of osteological remains. Among those remains I found a male femur."

"A what, sir?" said Todd's counsel.

"It would be better," said the judge, mildly, "if the witness would be so good as to give the vulgar names to what he may have to speak of, as the jury may well be excused for not being in possession of anatomical and scientific nomenclature."

"I will endeavour to do so," said the surgeon. "I beg to assure the court, that it was from no feeling of pedantry that I used the scientific terms; but they are so common professionally, that they are used without thinking that they are other than the terms in common use."

"That is just the way I view it," said the judge, "and the court had not the least idea of anything else. Pray go on, sir, with your evidence."

"I found, then, a large quantity of human bones," said the surgeon, "in the

vaults of St. Dunstan's, and among them a male thigh-bone, which I have with me."

Here he produced from his great-coat pocket the bone he spoke of, wrapped up in paper, and deliberately untying the string which bound the paper to it, he handed it to the jury. One of that body, more bold than the rest, took it, but several of the jurymen shrunk from it.

"Now, sir," said the Attorney-General, "can you upon your oath, without the slightest reservation, take upon yourself to say whose thigh-bone this was?"

"I can. It was the thigh-bone of Mr. Francis Thornhill."

"Will you state to the court and jury, the grounds upon which you arrive at that conclusion?"

"I will, sir. Mr. Thornhill met with an accident of a tedious and painful nature. The external condyle or projection on the outer end of the thigh-bone, which makes part of the knee joint, was broken off, and there was a diagonal fracture about three inches higher up upon the bone. I had the sole care of the case, and although a cure was effected, it was not without considerable distortion of the bone, and general disarrangement of the parts adjacent. From my frequent examination I was perfectly well acquainted with the case, and I can swear that the bone in the hands of the jury was the one so broken, and to which I attended."

"Very well, sir; that is all I wish to trouble you with."

The Attorney-General sat down, but Todd's counsel rose, and said —

"Did you ever have a similar case to that of Mr. Thornhill's under your treatment?"

"Never a precisely similar one."

"But you have heard of such cases?"

"Certainly."

"They are sufficiently common, not to be positively rare and curious in the profession?"

"They are not common, but still they do occur sufficiently often to lose the character of rarity."

"Of course. You have no other means of identifying the bone, but by its having been fractured in the way you describe?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, it may be the thigh-bone of any one who has suffered a similar injury."

With this remark, the counsel sat down, and the surgeon was permitted to retire. The bone was laid upon the counsel's table, and there it reposed a sad memento of poor Thornhill, and a mute but eloquent piece of evidence against the prisoner at the bar. Todd, however, did not seem to be at all moved at the sight of the relict of the murdered victim. Probably he had for too long a time been intimate with the remains of mortality, during the frightful trade he had carried on, for such a circumstance to touch him in any perceptible way.

The next witness called, was another medical man, who merely corroborated the ship's-surgeon, as to the fact of the bone produced having been fractured in the way described.

CHAPTER CXXX.

TODD ENTERTAINS SOME HOPES OF AN ACQUITTAL.

THE NEXT WITNESS WAS THE SEXTON of St. Dunstan's.

"Will you state to the jury, when the last entombment took place in the vaults of St. Dunstan's?" was the question asked of him.

"On the 30th. of January, five years ago," he replied, "a gentleman named Shaw, from Chancery Lane, was placed in a vault, but no one since then. The vaults were considered offensive to the living, and was not used."

"Let the medical men be called again," said the Attorney-General.

They were so called; and the question put to them was, as to the age of the bone produced in court. They both swore that it could not have been six months in its present condition. It had all the aspect of a fresh bone, and they entertained no sort of doubt upon the subject, but that the flesh had been roughly taken off it, and then the slight remainder had rapidly dried and decayed.

This, then, was the case for the prosecution, and it will be seen that the evidence or confession of Mrs. Lovett was not at all made use of or attended to, so that even in her dying hope of doing vast injury to Todd, she failed. The case was considered to be good enough without such testimony, and the lawyers, too, were of opinion that it would not be received by the judge, even if tendered, under all the circumstances.

The Attorney-General rose again, and said —

"That is the case, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury, for the prosecution; and we leave it in your hands to deal with as you shall think fit."

Todd's counsel now rose to commence the speech for the defence, and he spoke rather ingeniously, as follows —

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury: —

"I have, upon the part of my client, the prisoner at the bar, most seriously to complain of the vast amount of extraneous matter that has been mixed up with this case. To one grain of wheat, we have had whole bushels of chaff; and

gentlemen have been brought here surely to amuse the court with long-winded romances.

"Gentlemen, the prisoner at the bar is clearly and distinctly charged with the murder of one Francis Thornhill, and instead of any evidence, near or remote, fixing that deed upon him, we have nothing but long stories about vaults, and bad odours in churches, and moveable floor-boards, and chairs standing on their heads, and vaults, and secret passages, and pork pies! Really, gentlemen of the jury, I do think that the manner in which this prosecution has been got up against my virtuous and pious client, is an outrage to your common-sense."

Todd rather looked up at this. It was something to hear even an Old Bailey counsel call him virtuous and pious; and a gleam of hope shot across his heart that things might not be quite so hard with him after all.

"This, gentlemen of the jury," continued the counsel, "is an attempt, I must say, to take the life of a man from a variety of circumstances external to the real charge to which he is called upon here to plead. Let us examine the sort of evidence upon which it has been thought proper to put a fellow-creature to this bar upon a charge affecting his life.

"In the first place, we are told that a number of very respectable men went out from their various respectable houses, and never went back again. Pray, what has that to do with the death of one Francis Thornhill? Then we are told that the respectable men went to get shaved; and then that Sir Richard Blunt had a shave no less than eight times at the prisoner's shop, and yet here he is quite alive and well to give his evidence here to-day, and no one will say that Sir Richard Blunt is not a respectable man. Then we have a bad smell in the church of St. Dunstan's. Really, gentlemen of the jury, you might as well say that the prisoner at the bar committed felony, because this court was not well ventilated.

"We are told, to come more particularly to the evidence, such as it is, bearing upon the case, that Francis Thornhill left a certain shop intending to go into the City to a Miss Oakley, and that on the road he went into the prisoner's shop to be shaved, and from that we are asked to infer that he was murdered there, because nobody saw him come out. Really, this is too bad! Hundreds of people may have seen him come out, and no doubt did do so, but they happened not to know him, and so just because no one was passing who could say, 'Ah! Mr. Thornhill, how do you do? I see, you have had a clean shave to-day,' the prisoner at the bar is to be declared guilty of murder.

"Then we are told a long story about a bone, and that is declared to be a bone of the deceased. Gentlemen of the jury, what would you think of a man who should produce a brick, and swear that it belonged to a certain house? But this bone is to be identified on account of having been fractured, when the medical witness swears that such fractures are far from rare.

"Then again, a hat said to be the hat of the deceased is sworn to, as belonging to him, because of some injury it had received. Granted that it did belong to him. No doubt he sold it in Fleet-street and bought a new one, and there is no proof that that hat produced is the same one that is said to have been taken out of the prisoner's shop.

"I do think, gentlemen, that you will see upon what a string of sophistry the evidence against the prisoner at the bar rests. Who shall take upon himself to say that Mr. Thornhill is not now alive and well somewhere? We all know that persons connected with the sea are rather uncertain in their movements. But, gentlemen, the prisoner at the bar has a plain unvarnished tale to tell, which will clear him from any suspicions."

At this point, the learned counsel hitched up his gown upon his shoulders, and settled his wig upon his head, as though preparing for a grand effort, and then he continued —

"Gentlemen of the jury, my client is a religious man, as any one may see by the mild and gentlemanly look of his amiable countenance. He took the premises in Fleet-street in the pursuit of his highly useful calling; and he had no more idea that there was a moveable board in his shop, and that his shaving-chair would go down with any one, than the child unborn. Is it likely that a man who could stoop to such baseness as to make money by murder would occupy himself with such a trivial employment as shaving for a penny? The deceased gentleman, Mr. Francis Thornhill, if he be deceased at all, came into my worthy client's shop to be shaved, and was, at that time, a little the worse for some small drops that he had indulged himself with, no doubt, as he came along. The prisoner at the bar did shave him; and then he said that he had to go and see a young lady, and that he should buy a new hat as he went along. The dog, about which so much has been said, came into the shop along with his master, and while the shaving was going on found out, and actually devoured, half a pound of tripe, off which the prisoner at the bar was going to make his humble dinner.

"Oh! gentlemen of the jury, ask yourselves if a murderer is likely to make half a pound of tripe satisfy him for dinner! Ask your own consciences, and your own common-sense, that question.

"Well, gentlemen of the jury, when he was shaved, and after my client had had to turn this dog twice out of his shop, Mr. Thornhill left and went towards Fleet Market. The prisoner watched him from his door, and actually saw him begin fighting with a porter at the top of the market; and then as another person came in to be shaved, the prisoner at the bar returned into his shop to attend to that customer, and saw no more of Mr. Thornhill. In the course of a quarter of an hour, however, the dog pushed the door of the shop open, and brought in a hat in his mouth, but the prisoner turned him out again, and that is all he knows of the transaction.

"Gentlemen of the jury, the prisoner at the bar is well known for his benevolence and his piety. Even at a time when the bad odour in St. Dunstan's induced many of the parishioners to go elsewhere, he always attended his own church, and in the most pious and exemplary manner made the responses. I ask you as men, gentlemen of the jury, if you could do that with the consciousness that you had committed a murder?

"Gentlemen, it is for my client a most unfortunate thing that a person named Lovett, who kept the pie-shop in Bell Yard, is not now in the land of the living. If she were so, there is no doubt but that she would have told some true tale of how the vaults beneath the old church connected with her shop, and so have cleared the prisoner at the bar of all participation in her crimes.

"That murder has been committed in conjunction with that woman, who committed suicide rather than come forward and clear the prisoner at the bar, against whom she had a spite, there can be no doubt; but, gentlemen, it is the wrong man who now stands at this bar. The real murderer has yet to be discovered; and therefore it is that I call upon you, in the sacred name of justice, to acquit my client."

With this the counsel sat down, and Todd looked positively hopeful. He drew a long breath or two, and ventured a keen glance towards the jury-box.

"Do you call any witnesses," asked the junior counsel, "for the prosecution?"

"No — no — no. Witnesses! Innocence is its own best safeguard."

"I waive my right of reply, my lord," said the Attorney-General.

Upon this, nothing remained for the judge to do but to sum up the evidence; and after arranging his notes, he proceeded to do so, in that clear and lucid style, for which some of our judges are so famous.

"The prisoner at the bar, Sweeney Todd, stands charged with the willful murder of Francis Thornhill. It appears that Francis Thornhill left a certain ship for the purpose of proceeding to a Miss Oakley in the City of London, with a String of Pearls, which had been confided to him to deliver to that lady by a Mr. Mark Ingestrie.

"We have it in evidence, that Francis Thornhill on his route down or along the northern side of Fleet-street, went into the shaving shop, kept by the prisoner at the bar, and from that instant he is not again seen alive. The prisoner at the bar takes a String of Pearls, similar to those which were in the possession of Francis Thornhill, and raises upon them a considerable sum of money of a man named John Mundell. It appears then, that the hat of Mr. Francis Thornhill is taken from the premises of the prisoner by a dog; and it further appears, upon the clear testimony of respectable persons, that beneath the prisoner's shop is a contrivance by which people might be killed; and there or thereabouts contiguous to that contrivance, a certain bone is found, which is proved to be the thigh-bone of Francis Thornhill.

"Gentlemen of the jury, the sequence of evidence by which it is attempted to bring this crime home to the prisoner at the bar, lies in a very small compass indeed. Firstly, there is the tracing of Francis Thornhill to the prisoner's shop, and his disappearance from thence. Then there is the hat found there or taken from there, and then there is the thigh-bone sworn to be that of Francis Thornhill, and certainly found in such contiguity to his premises, as to warrant a belief that he placed it there.

"Gentlemen of the jury, the case is in your hands."

This was a very short summing up, but the bar quite understood it to mean that the guilt of the prisoner was so clear and transparent, that it was not at all necessary for the judge to go elaborately through the evidence, but merely as a matter of form, leave the facts in evidence to the jury.

And now came that awful moment to Todd, when the question of guilty or not guilty hovered on the lips of those twelve men, who were to decide upon his fate. The jury laid their heads together for a few moments only, and then they turned round and faced the court again.

The clerk of the arraigns rose, and spoke —

"Gentleman of the jury. How say you? Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty of the crime laid to his charge in the indictment?"

"Guilty!" said the foreman.

A cheer burst from the auditors, and the judge raised his hand, saying —

"Officers, repress this unmanly exultation that a fellow-creature is found guilty of a dreadful crime. I beg that any person so offending may be brought before me at once."

The officer could not or would not find anybody so offending, but the judge's words had the effect of calming the tumult at all events, and then all eyes were turned upon Sweeney Todd, who stood in the dock glaring at the foreman of the jury, as though he had only imperfectly heard what he had said, or if he had perfectly heard him, doubting the evidence of his own senses, as regarded the real, full, and true meaning of the dreadful word "guilty!"

CHAPTER CXXXI.

TODD MAKES AN ATTEMPT UPON HIS OWN LIFE.

IN THE COURSE OF A FEW MINUTES the tumult in the court was effectually suppressed, and then as it was known that the judge would sentence Todd at

once, all eyes were turned upon the criminal, to note the effect which that awful moment was likely to have upon him.

The judge spoke.

"Sweeney Todd, you have been by an impartial and patient jury, convicted upon the clearest evidence of the murder of Francis Thornhill. Have you anything to say why sentence of death, according to the law, should not be passed forthwith upon you?"

Todd did not seem to understand the question, and the Governor of Newgate repeated it to him. He started then, and glared at the judge, as in a deep hollow voice, he said —

"Death! death! — Did you say death?"

"Such says the law — not I. If you have anything to say why that sentence should not be pronounced against you, now is your only time in which to say it."

Todd passed his hand twice across his brow before he spoke, and then, in a vehement voice, he said —

"It is false — all false. I did not kill the man. There is a vile conspiracy against me. I say I did not do it. Who saw me — what eye was upon me? I was at chapel — at prayers, when you say among you that I did it. It is a plot — nothing but a plot from first to last. You would make me the victim of it among you. Who saw me kill him? I know nothing of hidden places in the old house. It is not true, I say. A plot — a vile plot for my destruction."

"Have you finished?" said the judge.

"Have I not said enough? I know nothing of it. I am a poor man, and strive to get a living as best I might, and among you now you bring a bone from some churchyard to kill me with. You swear anything — I know you all well. If the man you say I killed be really dead, I here at this moment summon his spirit from another world, to come and bear witness for me that I did not kill him!"

These last words Todd yelled out in such a tone of frantic passion, that everybody looked aghast; and more than once, more than commonly superstitious spectators thought that the appeal to the beings of a supernatural world might yet be answered in some way.

There was a death-like stillness in the court for some few moments, and then the Governor of Newgate in a whisper, said to Todd —

"Have you finished?"

"Finished what?" he cried, in a startling tone. "Finished what? — Finished pleading for my life? Yes, I have, for I know that they have made up their minds to murder me. I have no witnesses — they are all in the grave now. That woman, Lovett, who is dead, you tell me — I cannot say if she be dead or not, she is hard to kill — that woman could exculpate me; but, as I say, my witnesses are in the grave, and there is no truth in spirits visiting this world again, or

she and the man you say I murdered would appear here, and yell in your ears, all of you, that I did not do it."

The judge sat quite patiently. He was evidently resolved to hear quietly what Todd chose to say. It could but occupy a little more time; and as his fate was fixed, it did not matter.

"If you have finished your observations, prisoner," said the judge, "it will now be my duty to proceed to pass upon you the sentence of the law."

"But I have said I did not do it. I am not guilty."

"It does not lie within my power to decide that question. The jury have found you guilty, and all I have to do in my capacity here is, in accordance with that finding, to sentence you according to law. If you could have stated any legal impediment to the passing of the sentence, it would have had effect; but now it is my painful duty to — "

"Hold! I will, and can state a legal impediment."

"What is it?"

"I am mad!"

The judge opened his eyes rather wider than usual at this statement, and the jury looked at each other in wonder and amazement. Among the spectators there was a general movement, too, of surprise.

"Mad!" said the judge.

"Yes," added Todd, holding up his arms, "I am mad — quite mad. Do you think any other but a madman would have done the deeds with which you charge me? I either did not do them, and am saved, or I did do all these murders, the consequences of which you would heap upon my head, and am mad. What is there in the wide world would compensate a man for acting as you say I have acted? Could he ever know peace again? What is madness but an affliction of providence? and dare you take the life of a man, who has acted in a certain way, in consequence of a disease with which the Almighty has thought proper to visit him? I tell you you dare not, and that I am mad!"

This speech was uttered with a vehemence that made it wonderfully effective; and at its conclusion Todd still held up his arms, and glared upon the judge with the look of one who had advanced something that was utterly and completely unanswerable.

The judge leant over to the recorder, and whispered something to him, and the recorder whispered to the judge.

"Mad! Mad!" shrieked Todd again.

The Attorney-General now whispered something to the judge, who nodded; and then addressing Todd, he said in calm and measured tones —

"However great the novelty of a plea of insanity, put in by the party himself, may be, it will yet meet with every attention. I shall now proceed to pass sentence of death upon you; and after you are removed to the jail of Newgate, certain physicians will see you, and report upon your mental condition to the

Secretary of State, who will act accordingly."

Todd dropped his arms.

The judge put on the black cap, and continued —

"Sweeney Todd, you have been convicted of the crime of murder; and certain circumstances, which it would have been improper to produce before this court in the progress of your trial, lead irresistibly to the belief that your life for years past has been one frightful scene of murder; and that not only the unhappy gentleman for whose murder you now stand here in so awful a position has suffered from your frightful practices, but many others. It will be a satisfaction, too, to the court and the jury to know that the woman named Lovett, who you say would and could have proved your innocence, had she been in life, made, shortly before her death, a full confession, wherein she inculpated you most fearfully."

"False! False!" cried Todd.

The judge took not the slightest notice of the interruption, but continued his speech —

"It is now my painful duty to pass upon you the sentence of the law, which is, that you be hanged by the neck until dead, and may Heaven have mercy upon you, for you cannot expect that society can do otherwise than put out of life one who, like yourself, has been a terror and a scourge."

"Quite mad!" cried Todd. "Quite mad!"

"Officers, remove the prisoner," said the judge, who was much disgusted by the attempt of Todd upon their credulity, by stating that he was mad.

The Governor of Newgate laid hold of him by the arm, but Todd raised his voice again, saying —

"One moment. Only one moment. Before I leave this court, I have a great desire to say something to Sir Richard Blunt."

"If Sir Richard Blunt has no objection," said the judge, "the court can have none. Is that gentleman present?"

"I am here," said Sir Richard, as he made his way towards the dock, in which Todd was. "What is it you have to say to me, Sweeney Todd?"

"It is for your private ear."

"Then, I decline to hear it. If you have anything to say to me, say it out, and openly. I decline any private communications."

"Nay, but it really interests those whom you love. Come a little closer to me, and I will speak it."

"Now," said Sir Richard, as he reached the front of the dock, "speak at once, and say what it is. The court is too indulgent to you."

"Is it, really!"

With the rapidity of thought, Todd drew a small table knife from the breast of his apparel, and made a stab at Sir Richard's neck with it; but the magistrate had had by far too long experience with such men as Todd to be so taken at

TODD, ON HIS TRIAL, ATTEMPTS TO KILL SIR RICHARD BLUNT.

unawares, and he dropped to the floor of the court before the point of the knife reached him. The Governor of Newgate sprung upon Todd, and disarmed him in a moment.

From seeing Sir Richard Blunt drop, the general impression in the court was, that he was killed, or seriously injured, by Todd; and in a moment a scene of unparalleled confusion arose. Everybody got up from their seats, and the place was full of cries.

"Kill him!" cried some. — "Down with him!" shouted others. — "Hang him at once! A surgeon for Sir Richard!"

Amid this Babel of confusion, Sir Richard Blunt rose again, and sprung upon the barrister's table, calling out in a loud voice that rose above every other sound —

"I am perfectly unhurt."

Upon this such a cheer arose in the court, that the judge saw that it was perfectly hopeless to attempt to stop it by any ordinary means, and he only held up his hand deprecatingly. The cheer was thrice repeated, and then Sir Richard dismounted from the table, and a death-like stillness ensued in the court as the judge spoke.

"How was it possible," he said, "that the prisoner at the bar could be furnished with such a weapon at a time like this?"

The Governor of Newgate felt that this question was addressed to him, and he tremblingly spoke, saying —

"My lord, I have not the most distant idea upon the subject. He was searched this morning carefully before leaving his cell. It is beyond my comprehension."

"My lord," said a counsel at the table, rising, "there was a very similar case about five years since, when a notorious criminal attacked a witness for the prosecution with a fork, and it appeared afterwards that as he was brought through some of the day-rooms of Newgate to the bar, he had hastily snatched it up from a table that he passed without the officers noticing him."

"This is very likely a similar case," said the judge.

"It may be so my lord," said the Governor.

Todd yelled with rage, when he found that Sir Richard Blunt had escaped his malice. If he could but have taken his life or inflicted upon him some very serious injury, he would have been satisfied almost to have gone to death; but to fail was almost enough to drive him really mad.

"Curses on ye all!" he cried; and then he burst into a torrent of such frightful invectives, that everybody shrunk aghast from it, and it is quite impossible that we should transfer it to our pages. How long he would have proceeded in such a storm, there is no knowing, had not the officers rushed upon him, and by main force dragged him from the dock and the court into the dark passages leading to Newgate.

His voice was yet heard for several moments, uttering the most dreadful and diabolical curses!

It may be supposed that after what had happened, the officials of the prison were not over tender in the treatment of Sweeney Todd, for they well knew that they would be some time before they heard the last of the knife business, and indeed it was a piece of gross carelessness to allow a man in Todd's situation, and such a man as Todd too, to have an opportunity of doing such very serious

mischief in a moment as he might have done.

There can be very little doubt, that if he had been content to do an injury to any other witness but Sir Richard Blunt, he would really have succeeded; but that personage was too wary to fall in such a way.

It was not thought advisable by the prison authorities to take Todd back to the same cell from which they had brought him. It was an idea of the Governor, and by no means a bad one, that desperate criminals were caused to change their cells now and then, as it baffled and cut up completely any combination they might in their own minds have made for an attempted escape; so Todd found himself in a new place.

"Why is this?" he said. "Why am I placed here? This cell is darker than the one I before occupied."

"It's quite light enough for you," growled a turnkey.

"Yes," added one of the officers who had been in court. "Folks who are keen and bright enough to pick up knives, and nobody see 'em, mustn't have too much light in their cell. Oh, won't it be a mercy when you are settled next Monday morning."

"The fetters hurt me," said Todd.

"Oh, they are too light," said the officer; "and for your satisfaction, I have to tell you that the Governor has ordered you another pair."

At this moment a couple of blacksmiths came into the cell, carrying with them the heaviest set of irons in the whole prison, which the Governor had determined Sweeney Todd should be accommodated with. Without a word they proceeded to knock off the fetters that he wore.

"So you are not contented," said Todd, "to cage me as though I were some wild animal, but you must load me with irons?"

"And a good job too."

"And you think to hang me?"

"Rather!"

"Then thus I disappoint you, and be my own executioner!"

As he spoke, he snatched up one of the smith's hammers, and made a blow at his own forehead with it, which if it had taken effect, would unquestionably have fractured his skull, and killed him instantly; but one of the officers just managed to strike his arm at the moment and confuse his aim, so that although he did strike himself, it was not with anything like sufficient force to do himself any hurt.

The hammer was wrested from him in a moment, and he was thrown to the floor of the cell, and the heavy irons placed upon him.

CHAPTER CXXXII.

TODD MAKES AN ACQUAINTANCE IN NEWGATE, AND TRIES AN ESCAPE.

IN THE COURSE OF A QUARTER OF AN HOUR MORE, Todd was left alone. The irons he wore weighed upwards of a hundredweight, and it was with some difficulty that he managed to get up, and sit upon the stone seat that was in the cell.

It was close upon evening, and the cell was getting very dark indeed, so that the walls, close as they were together, were only very dimly discernable indeed.

Todd rested his head upon his hands, and thought.

"Has it then really come to this?" he said. "Am I truly doomed to die? Oh, what a dreadful thing it is for me now to begin to doubt of what I always thought myself so sure, namely, that there was no world beyond the grave. Oh, if I could only still please myself with an assurance of that! But I cannot — I cannot now. Oh, no — no — no."

He started, for the cell door opened, and the turnkey brought him in his food for the night, which he placed on the floor. It was not then the custom to sit up with condemned prisoners.

"There," said the man, "it's more than you deserve. Good-night, and be hanged to you. Here's the sheriff been kicking up the devil's delight in the prison about that knife affair."

"I hope he will discharge you all," said Todd.

"Do you?"

"Oh, yes. I wish you had all one neck only, and I a knife at it. With what a pleasant gash I would force it in — in — in!"

"Well, you are a nice article, I must say."

"Bring me two candles, and pens, ink, and paper."

The turnkey stared with astonishment.

"Anything else," he said, "in a small way that you'd like? Buttered rolls, perhaps, and a glass of something good? Perhaps a blunderbuss would suit you? I tell you what it is, old fellow, it ain't very often that anybody goes out from here on a Monday morning to be scragged, that we don't feel a little sorry for them, but I don't think we shall any of us cry after you. You may sleep or do what you like now until to-morrow morning, for you have got it all to yourself. Two candles, indeed! Well I'm sure — what next? Two candles! — Oh, my eye!"

TODD'S SECOND ATTEMPT AT SUICIDE IN THE CONDEMNED CELL AT NEWGATE.

The turnkey banged shut the door of the cell, and barred and bolted it in a passion; and then away he went to the lobby, which was the great gossiping place, to relate the cool demands of Sweeney Todd.

Once more the prisoner was alone. For some time he set in silence, and then he muttered —

"All the night to myself. He will not visit this cell until the morning. A long — long night; many hours of solitude. Well, I may chance to improve them. It was well in that scuffle for the hammer, when they threw me down,

that I contrived to grasp a handful of tools from the smith's basket, and hid them among my clothing. Let me see what I have — aye, let me see, or rather feel, for by this light, or rather by this darkness, I can only judge of them by the feel."

The tools that Sweeney Todd had been clever enough to abstract from the smith's basket, consisted of two files and a chisel. He ran his fingers over them with some feeling of satisfaction.

"Now," he muttered, "if the feeling to die were upon me, here are the means; but it has passed away, and even with these small weapons, and in a cell of Newgate, I do not feel quite so helpless as I was. It will be time to die if all should fail else, but yet if I could only for a time live for revenge, what a glorious thing it would be! How I should like yet to throttle Tobias. What a pleasure it would be to me to hold that girl by the throat, who so hoodwinked me as to impose herself upon me for a boy, and hear and see her choking. How I should like to see the blood of Sir Richard Blunt weltering forth while his colour faded, and he expired gradually!"

Todd ground his teeth together in his rage.

"Yes," he added, while he moved with difficulty under the weight of his iron. "Yes, I have bidden adieu to wealth and the power that wealth would have given me. I have carried on my life of crimes for nothing, and in blood I have waded to accomplish only this world of danger that now surrounds me — to give to myself the poor privilege of suicide; but yet how fain I would live for vengeance!"

His chains rattled upon his limbs.

"Yes, for revenge. I would fain live for revenge. There are some five or six that I would like to kill! Yes, and I would gloat over their death-agonies, and shriek in their ears, 'I did it! I, Sweeney Todd, did it!'"

The fetters entangled about his legs, and threw him heavily to the floor of the cell.

He raved and cursed frightfully, until he was too much exhausted to continue such a course, and then he sat upon the floor, and with one of the files he began working away assiduously at the iron, in order to free himself from those clogs to his movements.

As he so worked, he heard the prison clock strike ten.

"Ten," he said. "Ten already. Of a truth I did not think it was so late. I must be quick. Others have escaped from Newgate, and why should not I? The attempt will and shall be made; and who knows but that it may be successful? A man may do much when he is resolved that he will do all he wishes or die."

Todd filed away at the chains.

"Who will stop me," he said, "with the feeling that will possess me? Who will say, 'I will stop this man, or he shall kill me?' No one — no one!"

The file was a good one, and it bit fairly into the iron. In the course of a

quarter of an hour Todd had one wrist at liberty, and that was a great thing. He was tired, however, of the comparatively slow progress of the file, and he made a great effort to break the chains from his ankles; but he only bruised himself in the attempt to do so without succeeding.

With a feeling of exhaustion, he paused.

"Oh, that I could find an opportunity of exerting so much force against those whom I hate!" he said.

At this moment he fancied he heard a slight noise not far from him, and every faculty was immediately strained to assist in listening for a repetition of it. It did not come again then.

"It must have been imagination," he said, "or some sound far off in the prison conveyed by echoes to this spot. I will not suffer myself to be alarmed or turned from my purpose. It is nothing — nothing. I will use the file again."

He commenced now upon the other wrist, and by the little experience he had gathered from his practice at the one which he had already filed in two, he got on more quickly with this one. He found that a long light movement of the file did more work than a rapid grating process. In much less time, then, this other wrist manacle was off, and he could lift up both his arm in freedom.

"This is something," he said, "Nay, it is much, very much indeed. I feel it, and accept it as a kind of earnest of success. Where is the man — where are the two or three men, that will dare to stand in my desperate way, when I have one of these files in each hand, and are free from fetters. They will need be mad to do it. Such an amount of zeal is not to be found. No, they will step aside and let me pass."

It now became a matter of great importance with him, to get the other two fetters that bound his ankles undone. He felt as if he should go mad, if he did not quickly release himself from them now.

Sitting upon the floor of the cell, he set to work; but he found that the file he had been using did not bite very well. The work it had done already had dulled its powers; but the other was fresh and keen, and with it he made great progress.

The left-hand shackle was entirely removed, and now only by his right ankle was he connected with that hundredweight of iron, which held him to the ground.

"I shall be free!" he muttered. "I shall be free! Did they think to hold me with these chains? Ha! ha! No. It may be, that there is a dark spirit of evil that aids men, such as I am; and if it be so, I will consent to be wholly his, if —"

Todd started, for the same noise that had before come upon his ears, now attracted him. It was plainer though than before; and at the moment he thought that it must be in his cell. A cry of terror rose to his lips, but he smothered it in the utterance, and bent again all his faculties to listen.

The sound did not now pass away like an echo as it had done before, but

it went on steadily, and he could trace it as localising itself against one of the walls of the cell.

It was a profound mystery. He could not make out what it meant. It was a strange dull scraping noise. At times he thought it was some animal in the cell — a rat, probably; but then the sound was too continuous, and although he stamped once, and said 'Hush!' several times, it steadily continued.

The darkness in the cell was now so intense, that it was in vain to attempt to pierce it. Any straining of the eyes only peopled the palpable black atmosphere with all sorts of strange shapes, conjured up by the imagination; so Todd was glad to close his eyes after a few moments' experience of that character.

"I will know what this is," he said. "I must know what this is, and I will know!"

He held out his arms, and he slowly advanced towards the side of the cell from whence the sound came.

"Speak," he said, "if you are mortal, speak. If immortal, I fear you not. I am now past all such terrors. You can but kill me."

His hands touched the cold stone wall; and then he felt it from the floor upwards, but nothing but the chill surface of the stones was perceptible; and yet the scraping noise continued, and at last he felt convinced that it came from the other side of the wall.

Now he did not know what to think, for he had no means of knowing what was upon the other side of that wall. It might be a corridor of the prison. It might be a room belonging to one of the officials, who was about some work that, if explained, would not appear singular at all.

He placed his ear to the exact spot from whence the noise came, and he listened attentively.

As he so listened, Todd began to have other notions about that noise, and for more than once the square block of stone, against which his ear reposed, shook in its place.

"It must be a cell like this," he said, "that is on the other side of the wall, and that, no doubt, is some prisoner at work, trying to effect his escape. If so, it is fortunate. He must be a bold man, and we can help each other."

Still Todd hesitated what he should do, notwithstanding the hypothesis regarding the noise he heard appeared so very probable. He was resolved to spend a little more time in listening, for he felt that once to commit himself would possibly be to spoil his own chances of escape. He kept his ear to the stone of the wall, then which shook more and more each passing moment.

Suddenly he heard a voice. In a drawling accent, it sang a few lines of a popular thieves' song —

The beak looked big, and shook his head,
Heigho, the beak!
He wished such family cares were dead,
That honest folks might get their bread,
Heigho, the beak!
The family cove, he grinned a grin,
Heigho, the cove!
Says he, to prig I think no sin;
For sure a Romany must have tin:
*Heigho, the cove!**

"It must be all right," thought Todd, "or he would not sing that song; but what good it can do him to get from his own cell into this, I cannot imagine. He would be equally confined here as there, and all his labour thrown away. But together, we may do something. I will speak to him. Yes, I think I will speak to him."

Todd still waited and lingered before he gave any intimation of his presence and knowledge of what was going on, and then the song ceased, and by the renewed vigour with which the tenant of the next cell worked at the stone, it would seem that he had got very impatient at the length of time it took him.

Suddenly, the stone, which was about a foot square, shook so, that Todd withdrew from it, thinking that it would come out of its place altogether; and as it was evidently the object of the prisoner at the other side to push it through into Todd's cell, he thought it better to stand on one side, and let it come.

Suddenly, with a crash, it fell through, and then Todd spoke, for the first time, to the prisoner.

CHAPTER CXXXIII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE OPERATIONS TO ESCAPE FROM NEWGATE.

"WHO'S THERE? WHO ARE YOU?" cried Todd.

"The deuce!" said a voice, from the adjoining cell. "Sold at last, after all my trouble. Confound you, why didn't you speak before, and save me the last hour's work?"

** According to the argot of late-1700s robbers and highwaymen, a "beak" was a judge or magistrate; the "family" referred to the informal brotherhood of thieves and outlaws, so a "family cove" was a "cove" (owner or proprietor of an inn or other establishment) who was part of it; a "Romany" was a Romani person ("gypsy"); "prigging" was, of course, larceny; and "tin" was money.*

"What do you mean?" cried Todd. "I am a desperate man. Do not tamper with me. Do you belong to the prison, or do you not?"

"I belong to the prison! I should think not. Don't you?"

"Oh, no — no — no — no."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you are a prisoner?"

"I am, indeed, and condemned to die."

"All's right then. Bravo! This is capital. I thought I was in the end cell, do you know, and that by working through the wall by the assistance of Providence always — Bah! I can't get out of the old trade. I mean to say, that I thought I was working through a wall that would have taken me into one of the corridors of Newgate, and then there would have been a chance of getting off, you know."

"I do not know, and did not know," said Todd; "but if there be really any chance of escape, I am a desperate man, and will risk anything for it. Only say that you will help me."

"Help you? Of course I will. Do you think I am in love with these cold walls? No, I will get a light in a moment, and we can then have a look at each other. Are you in fetters?"

"I was, but I have a file, and have succeeded in freeing myself from them completely. Are you?"

"Yes, but I have muffled them with some pieces of my clothing that I have torn up for the purpose, and please the Lord they will make no noise."

Todd was rather amazed at the religious expressions of the other prisoner; but he forbore to make any remark concerning them, and as something had been said about getting a light, he resolved to wait patiently until it was procured, when he would be able to see who it was that chance had so very strangely thrown him into companionship with.

"You see," added the other prisoner, "a religious lady left me some tracts, and as I told her they did not allow light here, she was kind enough to smuggle me in some phosphorous matches, in case in the night I should wish to read."

"Very kind of her," said Todd.

"Oh, very. Let us praise the — Bother, I shall never get out of the habit of chaunting, I do believe."

In a moment, now, a faint blue light illumed the cell adjoining to Todd's, and as the religious lady had been kind enough to bring some little wax ends of candles, the prisoner lit one, and placing it upon the ledge left by the displaced brick in the wall, he put his face close to it, and looked at Todd.

Todd did the same thing, and looked at him.

"Humph," said the prisoner. "They are not going to hang you for your beauty, whoever you are, my friend."

"Nor you," said Todd, who was a little stung by this cool remark, "for I must say a more villanous looking countenance than yours I never saw in all my life."

"Then you certainly never looked in a glass."

"Hark you, my friend," said Todd. "If we are to aid each other in getting out of Newgate, it will not be by railing at each other through a square hole in the wall of our cells. We had better leave all remarks about our looks to other folks, and at once set to work about what is much more important, namely, breaking our way out of this most detestable of all places."

"Truly," said the other; "you speak wisdom, and the Lord — Pho! The deuce take it, when shall I get rid of the cant of the conventicle? My dear sir, you see before you a man who has been a great victim."

"What is your name?"

"Lupin they used to call me. The Reverend Josiah Lupin."

"Ah," said Todd. "I heard something of your case. I believe you murdered a woman, did you not?"

"Why, my friend," said Mrs. Oakley's old acquaintance, for indeed it was no other, "I don't mind confessing to you, that a woman met with a slight accident at my place, and they say I did it. But now that I have been so candid, pray who are you?"

"They call me Todd."

The Reverend Mr. Lupin screwed up his mouth, and whistled.

"Humph," he said. "The religious lady only this morning told me all about you. You used to polish the people off in your barber's shop, and then make them into pork pies, I believe?"

"Ha! ha!" said Todd.

"And you had a charming assistant in the shape of a lady, named Lovett, I have been informed, who used to help you to scrape the bones of the poor devils who had only just slipped in for a shave, and by no means expected such a scrape."

"Ha! ha!" said Todd.

"Stop a bit," said Mr. Lupin, "don't come that sort of laugh again. It don't sound at all pleasant. Well, I think we may manage to get out of Newgate, do you know, by a little hard work, if you are willing; but mind you, I don't want to be made a pork or a veal pie of, if you please."

"I never ate them myself," said Todd, "so there is no temptation; but I sincerely hope, my friend, that you do not believe one word of the many calumnies that have been heaped upon my character?"

"Oh, dear no; and you, too, are well aware that I am the most falsely accused and innocent clergyman that ever lived."

"Perfectly."

"My dear, sir, you are a very reasonable man, and I don't see any reason on earth that we should not be capital friends from this moment. Just help me to move another of these stones and I shall be able to creep through the opening into your cell."

Todd very kindly assisted the Reverend Mr. Lupin, and in the course of a few minutes, another of these large square blocks of stone that formed the wall of the cell being removed, he was able to creep through the aperture with the assistance of Todd.

"All's right," said Lupin, as he shook himself. "And now, my new friend, I will borrow the same file with which you released yourself from your fetters, and git rid of mine."

"Here it is," said Todd; "you work upon one leg, and I will work upon the other, for I have two files here, although one of them is a little blunted by the work it has already done. Yet it will help, and time is everything."

"It is," said Lupin. "Work away, for I am not able to think of anything until I am free of these confounded irons."

They worked in real earnest, and to such purpose, that in a much less space of time than anybody would have thought it possible to accomplish the process in, the fetters of Mr. Lupin dropped from him, and, like Todd, he stood so far free from restraint.

"Now," he said, "I have some first-rate picklocks, and if providence — Tush! tush! I mean if we are lucky, we shall get on capitally. The next thing we have to do is, to get out of here, and by far the shortest way is to work through the wall. Have you any other tools beside the files, for they are not much use now to us?"

"Yes, a chisel."

"A chisel? Oh, my friend, you are indeed a wonderful man. A chisel? What may not be done with a chisel! A strong, good chisel, too. Oh, if we do not chisel our way out of Newgate now, it will be very hard indeed. Come, you shall see an old hand at work. Perhaps you have not had much experience at prison-breaking?"

"Certainly not," said Todd.

"Well, this will be a good lesson to you. Now you will see how nicely I will get one of these old square blocks of stone out of its place."

Todd smiled grimly. Perhaps he thought he could have given the Reverend Josiah Lupin a good lesson in some things; but at that time he was only too happy to meet with a companion who promised such great things in the way of immediate escape.

Certainly Mr. Lupin showed great dexterity in handling the chisel, with which he had been furnished by Todd; and in a much less space of time than any one would have thought the work could have been performed in, he had loosened the stone in the wall that he wished to dislodge.

"Let us both push it," he said, "and we shall get it through easily."

"But its fall will make an alarm," said Todd.

"Oh, no. The distance is too short, and it will go down easy. Now for it."

They pressed upon the stone both of them, and by a skillful joggling

THE TWO MURDERERS, TODD AND LUPIN, ESCAPING FROM THE CELL OF NEWGATE.

movement, Lupin got it to move along until it was beyond its centre of gravity, and then, with a heavy bump, down it went on the other side. They both now paused for some moments, and spoke not a word, for they were anxious to discover if the fall of the stone into the passage beyond the cells had made any noise sufficient to attract the attention of the prison officials.

All was still.

"It's as right as possible," said Lupin. "They are asleep, the greater part of them. The pretended vigilance in this place, and the sleepless watchfulness, is

all a fudge. Turnkeys, and police officers, and Governors of Newgate, are but flesh and blood, and they will take things easy if they can."

"You are quite a man of the world," said Todd.

"Oh, yes; I have seen a little of it. But I say, Master Todd, deal candidly with me now. Have you not some secret hoard of cash, upon which we can make ourselves comfortable, when we get out of this mousetrap? I have not a penny piece; but you ought to have something, I should say. I don't mean to say but that I had money, but it was not hidden, and the police have got hold of that. If I were acquitted, they kindly said they would let me have it. But if found guilty, of which they did not entertain the smallest doubt, I could not want it."

"Curses on them!" said Todd; "they had enough of mine to have made us both rich men — very rich men. Oh, that I had been off a month ago!"

"Don't fret about that. We are all in the hands of a gracious provi — Psha! I am forgetting again. Whatever you do, Todd, in this world, don't turn parson to a parcel of old women, for the phraseology will stick to you as long as you live, if you do. But come — tell me now. You do know where to lay your hand upon money?"

Todd thought that it would be very indiscreet to say no to this little proposition, so with a nod and a smile he replied —

"Only a few hundreds. That's all."

"A few hundreds? That is a pretty good all, and will do very well indeed, my dear friend. Is it an understanding that we go halves?"

"Quite, quite."

"Then, if we don't get out of the stone-jug pretty soon, it will be a strange thing to me. Now let us work away like bricks, and we will show them that two determined men can laugh at their bolts, and bars, and stone walls."

"How confident you are," said Todd. "You surely forget that we must go through much, before we can see the outside of the walls of this dreadful place. I wish I could be as sure of the result as you are, or as you seem to be."

"It is one-half the battle to make sure; there goes another of the stones. Now follow me through this opening in the wall. It leads to a passage from which we can reach one of the smaller inner courts; and from that we shall get on through the chapel to the Governor's house, and if we can't get out there, it's a bad case."

Mr. Lupin, who had, in a great measure, now that he no longer had any sanctified character to keep up, thrown off his timid nature, ventured to scramble through the opening in the wall, and he assisted Todd to follow him.

They both now stood in a narrow vaulted passage, and then they paused again for several minutes to listen if any noise in the prison gave intimation that any one was stirring; but everything was perfectly still, and so death-like was the silence, that, but that they well knew to the contrary, they might have

supposed that they were the only living persons within that gloomy pile of building.

The little bit of wax candle that had been brought to Lupin by the pious lady, and which he had lit in his own cell, for the purpose, at first, of having a good look at Todd, was now upon the point of going out; but he was very well provided with wax candle-ends, and he speedily lighted another, as he said in a tone of irony —

"The sheriffs will write a letter of threats to the pious lady, when they find how much she aided us in escaping."

"They ought," said Todd. "We will pray for her."

Lupin laughed, as he with a light step now crept along the vaulted passage, and reached a massive door at the end of it, up and down which he passed the light several times. Then he muttered to himself —

"Good! Only the lock, and it will need to be a good one if it resist me. I used to be rather an adept at this sort of thing."

"Then you are," said Todd, "a professional — "

He paused, for he did not like to say thief; but Lupin himself added the word, "cracksman," and Todd nodded.

"Yes," added Lupin, "I was a cracksman, but I got known, so I thought the chapel dodge would suit me, and it did for a time, and would for some time longer, but that the little accident of which you have heard something took place in the chapel, and that idiot Mrs. Oakley found me out. Ah! you never after all can be a match for a crafty old woman. They will have you at some moment when you least expect it. She regularly sold me."

CHAPTER CXXXIV.

THE ESCAPE, AND THE RETREAT IN CAEN WOOD, HAMPSTEAD.

WHILE MR. LUPIN TALKED, HE DID NOT lose time, but he was working away at the lock of the door at the end of the passage. After a few moments there was a crackling sound, and then the lock yielded to the exertion of Mr. Lupin, and went back into its home. The door, with a wheezing sound, slowly opened.

"All's right," whispered Lupin. "The less we say now, Todd, the better, for our voices will go farther now that we shall be clear of this passage. Come on. Follow me!"

They both emerged into the night air; and crouching down, Lupin ran along the little yard in which they were, and which was not above half-a-dozen yards across. He paused at a door, and then suddenly starting away from it, he muttered —

"It is not this one. Ah! this is it! Stand quite close up against the wall, and then there will be the less chance of any one seeing you. I must work away at this door."

"Where does it lead to?" whispered Todd.

"To the chapel."

Todd screwed himself up into the smallest space that he possibly could against the wall, close to the door, while Lupin tried to open it. That door for more than ten minutes baffled him. Probably that fact was owing in some degree to the circumstance of his being in the dark, for of course, before emerging from the vaulted passage, he had thought it prudent to extinguish the little light he had.

"It baffles you," said Todd, in a voice of great anxiety.

"As yet, yes. No. It is open."

Todd breathed more freely.

"Come in," said Lupin. "Come in. We have done wonders as yet, my friend, and we will do wonders yet, I think, if Providence only looks with a gracious — There I go again. When shall I forget that chapel, I wonder?"

"It don't matter," said Todd. "I used to find a little religion answer very well myself."

"Not a doubt of it. Now, then, that the door is fast, we may muster up a light again."

With the aid of one of his matches, Lupin again illuminated the little wax end of the candle, and then Todd found that he was in a small kind of vestibule from which a green baize door led directly into the chapel. In fact, that was the entrance by which the lower class of offenders confined in Newgate were brought to the chapel on Sundays. The little building looked much larger by the faint light of that one candle than it really was, and Todd glared around him with a feeling of terror, as he had not felt since he had left his cell. Perhaps, after all, a good deal of that was owing to the low temperature of the chapel, that lent a chill to his system.

"Look at that seat," said Lupin, pointing to one. "Do you know what it is?"

"Only a seat," said Todd. "Is there anything particular in it?"

"Nothing, except the kind of interest it might have for you, as being the one upon which the condemned prisoners sit, on the Sunday previous to their execution, that is all."

Todd turned aside with a shudder.

"Enough," he said. "Enough. That is enough. Let us get on, and not waste time in idle talking about such idle matters as these. I do not feel very well."

"And I," said Lupin, "would give a few bright pieces out of those hundreds that you have hidden, for a glass of brandy. But that's not to be thought of now. This is a door that leads from the chapel to the Governor's house, through which the parson, and the Governor and Sheriffs come on the occasion of Sunday service here. It is by that we must attempt an escape in this place."

Sweeney Todd and Mr. Lupin looked like two spectres, as they crept noiselessly through the chapel of Newgate; but Lupin appeared to know perfectly well the route which it was necessary for him to take, and he soon went up three small steps, and applied his ear to the panel of a door to listen, as he said —

"Through here lies our route."

"Is all still?" said Todd.

"Quite. I don't believe, except ourselves, there is any one up and about in Newgate except a couple of lazy fellows in the vestibule; but we are too far off them to be in any danger of their overhearing us. This door will not give any trouble. Ah!"

"What is the matter?"

"It is bolted on the other side."

"Then we are foiled?"

"Not at all. It will take us a little time to unbolt it, that's all. Hand me the chisel."

Todd handed it to him; and then holding the light for Lupin, the latter set to work upon the panelling of the door, to cut away sufficient of it to enable him to get his head through, to draw back the bolts, one of which was at the top of the door and another at the bottom of it.

The door, though, was not built for strength, for it was scarcely imagined that it would ever be attacked, so that the panelling was only of an ordinary character; and as the chisel was a good one, and Mr. Lupin was tolerably expert in its use, the chips from the wood soon began noiselessly to fall about him. He worked in a circle, so that when he should get fairly through the panel, there would be quite space enough for him to get his arm through, and unfasten both the bolts; and this he completed in about ten minutes.

"I should never have got on without you," said Todd. "The only notion I had of the affair, was to try and fight my way out of the prison, and if I fell in doing so, I was no worse off than I should be on Monday morning — or, indeed, rather better, for I could not endure the agony of waiting for death."

"They would not have killed you."

"They must."

"Nay, they will go through fire and water here, and suffer anything, rather than that a man should escape the gallows. They would have flung themselves upon you, and overpowered you by numbers, and on Monday morning, if you had a breath of life left in you, you would have been dragged out to death."

Todd shuddered.

"And you so innocent, too," added Lupin. "But it is the innocent that in this world, verily, are chastened alway."

"You are getting into your old habit of preaching again," said Todd, roughly.

"So I am. I am much obliged to you, my friend, to put me in mind of it. Very much obliged. I was for a moment preaching; but here is the door open, and now I beg that you will tread as though you trod upon a mine, for we do not know what persons in this portion of this confounded building may be upon the alert."

"Oh, that we were only in the open air!" said Todd.

"Hush! hush!"

The villain Lupin, almost as bad in his way as Todd was in his, now shaded the little light with his hands, and crept on slowly and cautiously, until he reached the staircase, which was nicely empanelled, and up that he slowly took his way. Before he got to the top of it, he blew out the light, and waiting there until Todd was close to him, he said, in the smallest possible whisper —

"Follow me, and be careful, I am afraid the light might gleam through some key-hole, and betray us. Come on, and recollect that a slip or a stumble may be fatal. Think that the rope is about your neck."

"I will," said Todd. "I will. I almost seem to feel it actually. Oh, yes, I will be very careful."

"Hush! hush! Are you mad to go on talking so?"

Todd said no more, and Lupin crept on until he got right to the top of the stairs. Then holding by a balustrade that was continued along the landing, he reached the head of another flight of steps, which led directly down to the hall or passage of the Governor's house. Lupin was terribly afraid that Todd would come upon these second stairs at unawares, and stumble down some of them, so he waited at the head of them, until Todd touched him, and then he whispered the one word, "Stairs."

"Yes," replied Todd, and then Lupin commenced the descent, followed by his trembling companion, and for the matter of that, Lupin himself shook now like an aspen leaf.

The steps were fourteen in number, and then, by the feel of a mat at the foot of them, Lupin was satisfied that he had actually gained the hall of the Governor's house. Todd was close behind him.

"Stop!" whispered Lupin, and Todd stopped as suddenly as though he had been some piece of machinery that could be in a moment arrested in its progress.

Lupin well knew now that without a light it would be folly to attempt opening the door of the Governor's house, which, as a matter of course, was well secured; and very reluctantly he lit another match, and ignited the wax candle-end again. He placed Todd in such a position on the mat at the foot of

the stairs, that his bulky tall form acted as a screen against the rays of the light ascending the staircase, and then, with something of his old nervousness and abject fear of manner and expression, he narrowly scrutinized the door.

"Curses on all these precautions!" he muttered. "We may be detained here until morning."

In good truth, the door of the Governor's house was very well fastened up, and Mr. Lupin might well feel a little staggered at the sight of it. A chain that was up across it, he easily removed, and the bolts offered no obstacles; but what was the most serious consisted of a small, but exquisitely made lock that was on the door, and the key of which, no doubt, at such an hour was under the Governor's pillow.

Todd at that moment would have given anything to be able just to say —

"How are you getting on?" but in such a place, with, for all he knew to the contrary, the Governor of Newgate within a dozen yards of him, he dared not open his lips.

And now Lupin brought all his old skill to bear upon that one little lock upon the Governor's door, and yet it resisted him. On five minutes' attempt to pick it was to him pretty conclusive evidence that it was not to be done.

He had the chisel in his pocket, and in despair he inserted it between the door and the post. It broke short off by the handle. Lupin uttered a groan, which was echoed by Todd, and then they both stood glaring at each other in solemn silence. Todd crept towards Lupin, and leaning forward he whispered faintly —

"It can't be done?"

"No," said Lupin, "that lock stops us."

"Lost — lost!" said Todd. "We are lost, then?"

"Hush. Let me think. The key of this lock is with the Governor, of course. Now, Todd, you are a man of strong nerves, you know, or else it would have been quite impossible for you to have gone through life in the way you have done. What do you say to going and trying to get the key?"

"I — I?"

"Yes, to be sure. I have, up to this moment, you know, done all the work, and if this lock had not baffled me, I would have done the remainder cheerfully; but could you not take one of these files — the end of it is very sharp — and persuade the Governor to give up the key?"

"Kill him, you mean?"

"You may call it killing."

"If I thought it could be done with anything like a certainty of result, I would make no more of the life of the Governor than — than — "

Todd was at a loss for a simile, and Lupin helped him out of the difficulty by saying —

"Giving a man a clean shave for one penny, or eating a veal pie."

Todd nodded.

"Now, hark you," continued Lupin, speaking in the same very low whisper, indeed, that he had conducted the conversation in. "It is quite a maddening thing, you see, to find that there is nothing between us and liberty but this door. Every moment is of the greatest possible importance. Will you do it?"

"Are you mad?"

"No. I am quite sane, I confess, though that I have not the pluck to do it. You ought to be a man of courage. What is it to you, if you were to murder everybody in this house, so that you got this door open? That is the great object, the only object; and to you, you know, three or four more deaths will not make much consequence."

"My friend," said Todd, with a sickly smile, "I am afraid you believe the calumnies that have been heaped upon my innocent head. But, if nothing can be done, but what you say, I will make the attempt. There are two files, though, and they are equally sharp. Do you take one, and I will take the other."

"You want me with you?"

"I do, most, surely."

"Well — well; if it must be so, it must. I will come. Let us set about it at once, and — "

Before Mr. Lupin could say another word, there came a sharp rap at the door from the outside with the knocker; and so sudden and so utterly unexpected was the sound at such an hour, that Lupin and Todd fell on each other in their hurry to escape, they knew not where.

CHAPTER CXXXV.

THE CHASE THROUGH SMITHFIELD, AND THE MURDER.

THEY WERE AFRAID TO SPEAK, were those two murderers, as they now stood trembling in the passage of the Governor's house in Newgate. They could only be conscious of each other's presence by the hard breathing which their fears gave rise to, and as Lupin had extinguished the little light, the most intense darkness reigned around them.

Bang — bang — bang! went the knocker upon the door of the Governor's house again.

"Lost — lost!" said Todd.

If Lupin was not the most hardened villain of the two, he was certainly at

that moment the most courageous. He aimed a blow at Todd in the dark to give effect to his admonition for silence; but it did not take effect. Todd, however, was quite still now, and in the course of a few moments the knock at the door was repeated a third time. Then Lupin whispered to Todd —

"Keep yourself up as close against the wall as you can. Some one will come to the door, and you can throttle whoever it is, while I take the key of the little lock from them."

"Yes," said Todd, faintly.

The word had hardly escaped his lips, when a flash of light from above came streaming down into the passage, and from each side of the door, close to the passage wall, against which they screwed themselves into as small a compass as possible, they saw a man approaching.

The person who came to answer the knock at the Governor's door was evidently only just roused from sleep, for he was looking heavy, and yawning as he came. The candle he carried swayed to and fro in his hand, and it was very unlikely that he would see anything that was not remarkably close to his nose.

"Ah, dear me" he yawned. "Can't people come at reasonable times? Who'd be a Governor's clerk, I wonder, to — ah, dear! — get up at all hours of the night in Newgate. Ah, heigho!"

Mr. Lupin wanted to say only two words to Todd, and those were "Kill him;" but he was afraid even to whisper them, lest Todd should not be equally discreet in reply. He knew he could whisper softly enough; but he thought his companion might not be so accomplished in that particular, so he was silent.

Before the individual who had announced himself to be the Governor's clerk could get into the passage down the flight of stairs, the person on the outside of the door got impatient, and executed another rather startling rap.

"Oh, bother you," said the clerk. "I only wish you were at the bottom of the Thames. I'm coming, stupid; don't you see the light through the little bit of glass at the top of the door, that — ah, dear! how gapish I am — you keep hammering away there, as if you thought we were all deaf or stupid?"

The clerk was evidently wakening up, but as he carried the light right in front of his eyes, he had not the smallest chance of seeing either Mr. Todd or Lupin, and in that way he reached the passage, or hall it might be called from courtesy.

To be sure, how could he for one moment suspect to find two of the most notorious criminals in all Newgate snugly hidden in the hall? We must consider how very improbable such a thing was, before we blame the clerk for any imprudence in the matter.

The grand object of Lupin, who kept his sharp little ferret-looking eyes upon the clerk as he descended, was to note if he had a key with him at all; if he had, there could be no doubt of its being the key of the little lock that had so baffled his, Lupin's, attempts to open it, upon the door of the Governor's

house. To his great satisfaction he saw that, dangling from the clerk's finger by a piece of tape, he did carry a key, and Lupin at once naturally concluded it was the one he wanted.

"Only just let me find out now," said the clerk, "that this is something about nothing, and won't I make a riot about it in the morning. To rouse a fellow out of his bed, it is really too bad, as if any kind of thing could not be just as well done in the day time as in the middle of night. Now stupid, who are you?"

These last words he addressed to the person outside, by placing his mouth close to the keyhole.

A voice responded something, the only recognisable word of which was "donkey."

"What do you say?" cried the clerk, again. "You are — a — a — donkey, do you say?"

"No," said the voice from the outside through the key-hole. "But you are."

"Oh, am I, you infernal vagabond? I'll soon let you know what's what, I will, you rascal."

With this the clerk began to open the door, and the moment he got the key in the little lock, so that Mr. Lupin was thoroughly aware it was the one he wanted, he sprung upon the unfortunate clerk, and dashing his head against the door, which was heavily plated with iron, he knocked him insensible in a moment.

To open the lock was the work of an instant, and the door creaked upon its hinges.

"Who are you?" said Lupin.

"A messenger from the Secretary of State," said the man on the outside, "and I shall report your insolence."

"Don't," said Lupin.

"Indeed, I shall."

"Then take that."

With the file he dealt him a frightful wound in the face, and then they both rolled down the whole flight of steps together, for Mr. Lupin had over-balanced himself with that blow. Todd sprang over them both, and gained the open street, just as a watchman who was opposite began to spring his rattle at seeing such a scuffle going on at the Governor's door. The messenger from the Secretary of State, notwithstanding his wound, grappled with Lupin, but that rascal got hold of him by his hair, and knocked his head against the pavement until he was quite dead. Then rising, he cried —

"Through Smithfield, Todd! Follow me."

"I will," said Todd, and off they both set, pursued by the single watchman, who had happened to be the sole witness to the whole affair, and who, finding himself outstripped by the two men, wisely stopped at the corner of

THE ASTONISHED WATCHMAN — LEAVING NEWGATE BEHIND.

Giltspur-street to spring his rattle, which he did with a vengeance that soon brought others to his assistance.

"An escape from Newgate!" the watchman kept crying — "An escape from Newgate! There they go — through Smithfield; two men, one very big and the other not so big! An escape from Newgate!"

These cries soon sent about a dozen persons on the trail of the fugitives, and as the alarm was understood at the prison, four of the most bold and skillful

men upon the premises at once started in pursuit. From the watchman who still stood at the end of Giltspur-street, they heard in what direction the prisoners had gone, and they did not lose a moment in dashing after them, calling out as they went —

"Fifty pounds reward for two prisoners escaped from Newgate! Fifty pounds reward for them!"

These words summoned up many an idler who was trying to dream away the night in the pens of Smithfield, and the officers soon got together a rabble host for the pursuit of Todd and his villanous companion.

But these officers with their fifty pounds reward were rather late in the field. It was the few persons who first heard the rattle and the outcries of the watchman, who were close upon the heels of the men, and they kept them well in sight right across Smithfield and so on towards Barbican. Todd heard the shouts of the pursuers, but he did not look back, for fear of losing time by so doing; and the fact was, that Mr. Lupin was so fleet of foot that it required all the exertion of Todd to keep up with him at all. Upon any less exciting occasion it is extremely doubtful if Todd could have kept up such a race; but as it was, he seemed to lose his wind, and then in some mysterious way to get on without any at all. Mr. Lupin crossed Aldersgate-street, and dashed down Barbican. He then turned down the first opening he came to on the right, and he did so, not because he was making for any known place of safety, but because he knew that a labyrinth of small streets were thereabouts, amid the intricacies of which he hoped to baffle his pursuers; and it was certainly under the circumstances very good policy in him to take the course he did.

From the moment of so abruptly turning out of Barbican, they were both out of sight of their pursuers, who had been able to keep them steadily in view up to this; but although that was the case, they were not without their perils, for a watchman met them both and aimed a blow at Lupin's legs with his stick, crying in an Irish brogue —

"Stop that, my beauty — Stop that any way!"

Lupin sprang upon him like an enraged tiger, and turning the stick from his hands, he laid him flat with one blow of it and on he rushed, carrying it with him as a defence against the attack of any one else.

They now turned a corner and met a string of half-drunken gents of the period, arm-in-arm, and occupying the whole breadth of the pavement. Lupin avoided them by swerving into the road-way, but they caught hold of Todd, crying —

"Here's the devil. Let's make him an offer for his tail!"

Certainly, Sweeney Todd was not at that moment disposed for trifling, and he laid about him with his immense fists in such style that the gents were all rolling in the kennel in a moment or two; and then, however, before Todd could again reach Mr. Lupin so closely as he had been, he heard a loud shout of —

"There's one of them. Come on! — Come on!"

That was no drunken shout, and Todd immediately felt that the danger was imminent. He rushed on at increased speed, and just got up to Lupin at the corner. They turned it together, and then Todd managed to say —

"They come — they come!"

"Officers?" said Lupin.

"Yes, I think so. On — on. Oh, push on!"

"This way."

Lupin crossed the road, and sprung down a narrow court; but even as he did so, came that voice, crying —

"There they go. Stop them — stop them! There they go! Fifty pounds reward!"

A frightful oath burst from Todd's lips, as he emerged from the court still close upon the heels of Lupin. They were now in a tolerably wide street, and they saw but one individual in it, and he was evidently, by the curious manner in which he sometimes favoured the curb-stone by walking upon it for a few paces, and then lumbered up against the house, just a little gone in intoxication.

This individual, after some fumbling in his pocket, produced a latch key, and having staggered up the steps of a house, he made some ineffectual attempts to open the door.

"Hold!" said Todd to Lupin. "Anything is better than this race for life. We can hide in the passage of that house until the pursuit is past. Come."

"A good thought," said Lupin.

By this time the inebriated individual had succeeded in opening the street-door with his latch-key, and he was so elated at having performed the feat, that he stopped to laugh before he entered the house. The moment, however, that he did get into the passage, Todd sprung up the steps, and very adroitly placed his foot against the door, so that when the person from within slammed it as he thought shut, it was a good two inches off that condition. It was then amusing to hear him, with drunken gravity and precision, as he thought, shooting the bolts into their sockets, after which, often tumbling on his way, he went along the passage, and up stairs.

Todd opened the door.

"Come," he said.

"All's right," said Lupin.

"Stop thief! Stop thief!" cried a chorus of voices at the corner of the street.

"Indeed," said Lupin, "The Lord be good to you all."

He stepped into the house after Todd, and very quietly closed the door.

The passage was profoundly dark, and there they both stood, those two convicted murderers, listening to what was taking place outside their place of refuge. They heard the sounds of several voices, and it was quite evident that

just about that spot the pursuers were baffled, and did not know now which course to take after the fugitives, who were so snugly ensconced so near them.

CHAPTER CXXXVI.

TODD AND LUPIN ESCAPE TO CAEN WOOD.

"WHAT'S TO BE DONE?" said a voice.

"I'll be hanged if I know," said another, "and yet I feel sure that they came this way. I thought how it would be when they took to all these streets. Lord bless you, we might have passed them in some doorway easy enough — a dozen times."

"So we might," said the other voice. "All we can do now, is to go round to the different outlets of the city, and give an alarm."

"Well, I won't give it up yet," said a third person; "I feel quite sure they are lingering somewhere about here, and I'll be on the watch yet for a time, and hunt about quietly. You be off and give the notice to the watch, and leave Johnson and I to do what we can."

"Very good — I wish you luck."

There was a scuffle of feet, and it was quite clear that some of the men had gone off at a quick pace, leaving, no doubt, the two only in the street.

"Well," whispered Lupin. "Well, my friend, what do you think of all this?"

"I don't know what to think," said Todd. "I'm very tired."

"Ah, and so am I, but that can't be helped. I ain't used to such a run as we have had. But it won't do us any harm. If we can get off, it will be a world's wonder, I can tell you. It ain't now every day that a fellow gives Newgate the go-by."

"No — no, and I must say that I did not myself expect it. But I was prepared to cheat the hangman."

"Pho! That's a poor-enough look out."

"Yes, but it's a something. She did it."

"She? Who the deuce is she?"

"Mrs. Lovett."

"Oh, I recollect. I have heard of her — I have heard of her. She was the nice creature who lived in Bell Yard, wasn't she, and accommodated the folks with pies?"

"Yes," said Todd, and if Lupin had seen the horrible contortion of visage

with which he accompanied the word, even he, with all his nerve in such matters, might well have been excused for a sudden accession of terror. "Well," added Todd, after a pause, "you are a man of judgment Mr. Lupin, and all I want to know now, is what you mean to do?"

"Get away from here as soon as possible. But it won't be quite safe to try it yet. This house is very quiet, and no doubt everybody is in bed and asleep, so I shall get a light and look about a little. It would be quite a providential thing to find something to eat."

"Yes, and to drink," said Todd.

"Just so. I would give something handsome now, if I had it, for a good glass of brandy. That run has made me first hot and then shivery all over; but who knows what luck may be in store for us? Come now — here's a light, and we shall soon, by the help of providence, see what sort of a crib we have got into."

It was lucky for them both that Lupin had retained about him the means of getting a light, for if he had not, they would have been left to conjectures merely regarding their position. He ignited one of the little pieces of wax-ends, and when the small flame rose and began to burn steadily, he held up the piece of candle, so they both looked curiously about them.

The hall of the house in which they were was well got up. A handsome table and some old carved chairs were in it, with some crests upon the backs, and upon numerous pegs hung hats, cloaks, and coats.

"Humph," said Lupin, "this is the very place for us, I shall take the great liberty of making free with some gentleman's coat and hat, and I think you had better do the same."

Todd at once practically acquiesced in the suggestion, by slipping on a large cloak with sleeves, and placing upon his head a hat richly bound with silver lace.

"Upon my word," said Lupin, "you almost look respectable."

"Do I?" said Todd. "It isn't then on account of the company I am in."

Lupin smiled, as he said —

"Very good — very good, but the less we cut at each other, my friend, the better."

"You began it," said Todd.

"So I did, so we will say no more about it, as yours was the hardest hit. How do I look in the cloak and hat?"

"Just nice," said Todd, making a frightful face.

Lupin laughed again.

"Come," he said. "Now that we have a little time to spare, let us see if these people keep a good larder. If they do and they lock it up at night, they will find that the cat has been at it by the morning, I rather think. Tread as lightly as you can, Todd, and keep down your voice as you have done. Sounds go so far in the night time."

"They do," said Todd. "I have heard them at odd times."

Lupin led the way along the hall, at the end of which was the staircase, and to the right of that a door which was not fast, so that they passed on quite easily to the domestic portion of the house, and soon found the way to a kitchen, which was upon the same floor. Then they opened a door that led into a little sort of outhouse, paved with red bricks, and in one corner of that was a larder, or safe, well stocked with provisions. Lupin took from it a magnificent quarter of venison, with scarcely a quarter of a pound cut from it; and that, with some bread were the only viands that he felt disposed to take from the larder.

"It will be wholesome," he said, "and do us a world of good, by the aid of Providence; and we don't know what we may have to go through yet, in this world of woe. Amen!"

"You fancy you are in the chapel again."

"Dear me; yes, I do — I do. Well, well, it don't matter — it don't matter. Come, friend Todd. Let us recruit ourselves a little. Oh, that I could find the way to the wine cellar of these people; and yet that should not be a difficult matter. Let us think. It must be somewhere hereabouts."

"There is a door," said Todd, pointing to one at the end of the outhouse. "It seems to be locked, and if so, it is no doubt that of the cellar."

"We will try it," said Lupin.

With this he quickly opened the door, by the aid of his picklocks, which no ordinary lock could withstand the fascinations of for a moment, and then sure enough the supposition of Todd was found to be correct, for a goodly collection of bottles in long rows presented themselves to the eye. Lupin at once laid hold of a bottle, and breaking off the neck of it he decanted a quantity of its contents into his throat, rubbing his stomach as he did so in a most ludicrous kind of way, to indicate how much he enjoyed the draught.

"Nectar," he said, when he took the bottle from his mouth to enable himself to breathe; "nectar."

"Is it?" said Todd, as he seized upon another bottle. "I am partial generally to something a trifle stronger than wine; but if it be really good, I have no particular objection to a drop."

With this Todd finished off half a bottle of the rich and rare old port that was in the cellar. They then worked away at the haunch of venison; and having made a very hearty meal, they looked at each other as though they would both say — "What next?"

"You say you have money?" said Lupin.

"True," said Todd.

"But not here of course, my friend; and who knows what difficulties we may find in our way before we reach your nice little hoard? Where did you say it was?"

"Hidden beneath a tree in Caen Wood, close to the village of Hampstead.

I went one night, and myself placed the cash there in case of accidents."

"And how much do you suppose, my friend, there is?"

"I know what there is. I put away two thousand pounds, and that you know will be a thousand pounds for you, and another for me. I purpose in that manner equitably to share it, for I am not ungrateful for the great assistance you have been to me in this escape from Newgate."

If Mr. Lupin had not swallowed two-thirds of a bottle of old port-wine, the probability is that he would have detected that Todd was deceiving him, by the whining canting tone in which he spoke. The fact was, that Todd had not one farthing hidden in Caen Wood; but he thought it highly desirable while there existed any danger, and while Mr. Lupin was likely to be useful to him, to keep up such a delusion.

"Well," added Lupin, "you really are a liberal fellow; but as, I say, there is no knowing what good a trifle may be to us before we reach your snug two thousand pounds in Caen Wood, I propose to see what we can get in this house. People who keep such a good cellar, and such a capital larder, ought to have something in the place worth the taking in the way of cash."

"Yes, but I am afraid it will be hazardous," said Todd.

"A little, perhaps; but with this carving knife, don't you think we might make things pleasant?"

"That is possible. Well, if anything worth having is to be got, let us set about it at once; for I think we have spent time enough in this house; and no doubt our friends are upon the move off, if they have not gone long before this."

"Come on, then."

They both left the kitchen, and each being armed with a knife, they cautiously opened all the room doors on that floor; but they only found the usual furniture of such apartments, and it was quite clear that no cash was to be had in that portion of the premises.

"Come up stairs," said Lupin, with a look of savage determination. "Come on, Todd; we will see what can be done up stairs."

They carefully ascended the staircase, but they only just peeped into the drawing-room, and then they went up to the floor upon which the bed-rooms were situated. They paused at the first door they came to, and Lupin very carefully tried the lock. It was only on the latch, and in the room a rushlight was burning. They both crept in, and their footsteps made no noise upon the soft carpeting of the apartment. A bed was in the room, and upon it lay a young lady. Lupin gave a hideous grin as he looked at her, and then stooping down by the bed-side he said, in a whisper —

"If you scream, everybody in this house will be murdered! — If you scream, everybody in this house will be murdered! If you — Oh, that will do."

The young lady awakened with a start, but the words that were twice

THE MURDERERS IN THE YOUNG LADY'S CHAMBER.

repeated still rung in her ears, and scream she did not, but she looked half dead from fright.

"Now, my dear," said Lupin, "Providence has brought us to your bed-side, and if you make any disturbance, we mean to submit you and the whole of the family to the operation of a carving-knife, the Lord willing. All we want is money, and if we can get that quietly, we will go and not so much as ask your pretty little lips for a kiss."

"Oh, Heaven protect me!" said the young lady.

"A — men!" said Lupin. "Now my dear, who is in the house besides you?"

"My father, the alderman, and my mother, and the servants above stairs. — Oh, spare my parents."

"Very good, where can any money be got hold of?"

"Will a hundred pounds content you?"

"Yes," said Todd, putting his head between the curtains at the foot of the bed. The young lady gave a faint cry, and Mr. Lupin flourished the carving-knife over her — "Where are the hundred pounds?" he said, "and we will go."

"In my father's room. It is the next room. His purse is on the dressing-table. If you will let me go and get it, I will give it to you upon your promise then to leave the house."

"How are we to trust you not to say that we are here?"

"I swear by all that is holy — I use the name of the great God. Oh, indeed you may trust me."

"Go," said Lupin.

The young lady got out of bed, and both Todd and Lupin followed her from the room. She crossed the landing, and at once opened the door of a room. Then they heard a man's voice say — "Who's that?" and the young lady replied — "Only me, father. I want something out of your room. I shall not be a minute."

"Bless the girl," said a female voice — "What can she want?"

In a minute or two the young lady came back to the landing where Todd and Lupin were waiting for her.

"Now," said Lupin in a low voice — "Now, my little dear, have you got it?"

"Quick — quick!" said Todd, "or you die. I am half a mind to cut your throat as it is, just for the pleasure of the thing."

The young lady stood just upon the threshold of the door of her father's room, and then as Lupin held up his light, she raised both her hands, in each of which was a horse-pistol*, and presenting one at Lupin's head and one at Todd's, she said —

"Thieves! thieves! thieves!"

** A very large flintlock pistol, big enough that it can only conveniently be carried if one is on horseback.*

CHAPTER CXXXVII.

THE JOURNEY TO CAEN WOOD, HAMPSTEAD.

IT WOULD BE QUITE IMPOSSIBLE to describe the effect that was produced upon Lupin and Sweeney Todd, by this heroic conduct on the part of the young lady, from whom they did not in the least expect any such active resistance to their proceedings.

Lupin was constitutionally, by far the greater coward of the two, and when he saw the bright barrel of the pistol in such startling and unexpected contiguity to his head, he at once stepped back, and missing his footing, fell down the stairs to the landing-place immediately below that flight.

Todd thought that there would be just a chance of dashing in upon the young lady and disarming her of her pistols; but now that both of them were levelled at him, and she began to cry out "Help! help! thieves!" again, louder than before, he reluctantly abandoned the idea, and turning, he bounded down the staircase.

The young lady leant over the stair-head and fired one of the pistols after him, which so accelerated the movements of Todd, that he tumbled right over Mr. Lupin, and fell down all the way to the hall with Lupin after him.

Under any other circumstances than the dangerous and exciting ones in which they were in, no doubt they would both of them have been too much hurt to do anything but lie on their backs in the hall; but the feeling that if they were taken it would be to death, was sufficient to rouse them, and they both scrambled to their feet.

Lupin got the street-door open, and dashed out closely followed by Todd. A watchman tried to stop them, but him they felled with a blow, and then off went Lupin down a cross-street, that led him into Old-street Road, and with Todd at his heels, who was very faint.

"Stop, stop!" panted Todd, "stop!"

"What for?" said Lupin.

"I cannot run so fast. Are you hurt? Oh, that I had a knife at that girl's throat!"

Lupin paused, and held by a post at the corner of a street, and swore dreadfully, as he too panted a little for breath, although he was by no means so much used-up as Todd was. But then Lupin was a younger man, and much lighter on his feet, than our old friend of murdering notoriety.

"Oh, dear," said Todd. "What's to be done now?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing, did you say? But, my dear friend, something must be done. We have positively wasted half the night, and we are without money, and half dead. I am covered with bruises from head to foot by the fall down the staircase, and it will be daylight in another half hour or so at the utmost."

"Ah," said Lupin, "we must breakfast somewhere, I'm thinking, my friend."

"And so am I."

"Well, well, we have made certainly a mess of our adventure at the alderman's; but it can't be helped now. The idea, only to think of it now, Todd, of you and I, two such men as we are, and as the world refutes us to be, being beaten back, and, you may say, thrown down two pair of stairs, by a girl of sixteen or thereabouts."

Todd growled out some malediction.

"It was the will of Providence," said Lupin. "But who is this? Stand aside, Todd, and let this old gentleman pass on. We may as well not be seen and described by any one."

"Do you think he may likely have enough about him," whispered Todd, "to pay our expenses for the day?"

"A lucky thought. It is more than likely that he has. Knock him down and rob him, Todd. There's not a soul in sight. Give him one of the knocks you used to give the poor devils you made the pies of, you know."

"Be quiet," said Todd, "I am amazed that a man of your profound sense and sagacity, should give ear to such idle rumours about me! I am really both shocked and surprised, Mr. Lupin!"

"Amen!" said Lupin. "You rob the old man, and we won't quarrel about any such nonsense, Todd. Here he comes, grinning like an old polecat. What business has a man of that age out at such a time as this?"

"None," said Todd, "except to provide us with a little money."

Todd cast a keen glance around him, and was convinced that the report of Mr. Lupin that no one was in sight was quite correct, so he stepped up to the old man, and said —

"Good morning, sir."

"Thieves! thieves!" cried the old man, and began to run, but Todd put out one of his long legs and tripped him up. Then pouncing upon him, he extracted a well-filled purse from his pocket, and holding it up to Lupin, he said —

"This will do?"

"Rather," replied Lupin. "Come on."

Off set Lupin again on a run, rather to the discomfiture of Todd, who had not had such a scampering-about for a long time indeed; but yet he felt the necessity of getting as soon as possible out of the immediate vicinity of the old man whom they had just robbed, so they did not stop until they got right away on the northern side of Finsbury Square.

That side of the ancient square of Finsbury was not built then; and beyond it, where there is now such a squalid and uninviting neighbourhood, there was nothing but fields.

"Now," said Lupin. "Let us look at the purse!"

"Here it is," said Todd.

"It's very light!"

The fact was, that notwithstanding the speed at which he was compelled to run to keep up with Lupin, or rather to keep a few paces only behind him, Todd had contrived to abstract the better part of the contents from the purse, and to pocket them; for the story with which he had tickled the ears of Lupin of his having any money concealed in Caen Wood, Hampstead, was a mere delusion, got up for the purpose of making him, Lupin, more than commonly solicitous concerning his, Todd's, safety in the escape from Newgate.

"Yes," replied Todd, "it is light, but such as it is it may be of some service to us. Take it, Mr. Lupin, and you can be the treasurer: you know I can trust to you."

"Implicitly," said Lupin, as turning out the contents of the purse into his hand, he said — "Here are four guineas and a half, and about six or seven shillings in loose silver."

"Better than nothing," said Todd, with a look of great philosophy. "Our first care now is to get a breakfast."

"I don't know," said Lupin. "I took quite enough at the alderman's to last me some time. I should say, get out of London as quickly as we possibly can; and when we are at Caen Wood, we can, at our ease, consider what course we will feel inclined to take with our money in our pockets."

"A couple of thousands," said Todd.

"Exactly so. I move that we strike across the fields now at once, and make for Highgate and Hampstead, so that at each step we shall be leaving some danger behind us."

"Agreed," said Todd. "Come on! For my part I should like very much to find a conveyance of some sort; but that, I suppose, is impossible."

"Quite! Besides, on foot we are much less likely to be recognised and described. Come on, Todd; you ought to be able to walk to Hampstead, surely, after the little trifling exercise that you have had only."

"Trifling, do you call it?" said Todd, making one of his most hideous faces. "Trifling! I have not a bone in my body that don't ache. Trifling? I am one mass of bruises from top to toe, and I never, in all my life, felt so exhausted; but yet the love of life and of liberty will lend me strength; so, come on; I will go on to Hampstead, and I will reach it, my friend, unless I drop by the way."

"Well spoke," said Lupin.

They now pursued a course which led them rapidly by the back of the City Road, and through the now well-populated district called Hoxton; and keeping on in that way they crossed the high-road near to Stamford Hill, and soon began to get a good view of the heights of Highgate and Hampstead in the distance.

"Brandy," said Todd, "brandy!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"My good friend, I can't get on without some brandy. I am rather used to a little stimulant at times, so I must have it. Then we have no risk now to run by going into a public-house."

"I don't know that, Todd. But if you can't do without, some brandy you must have. To be sure, we are in luck's way, so far, that we are provided with hats and coats from the alderman's hall, and, therefore, people cannot have a description of us. The first quiet little hotel we come to, Todd, I promise you that I will not object to our stopping at, so that you may have your drop."

"Yes," said Todd, "that will do. My good friend, it is the only thing that keeps me up. When I used to feel a little down in spirits I poured some other spirits down, and then I get up again."

"Exactly. Here we are, at an old roadside house called the Adam and Eve, which will be the very thing. They may take you for Adam and me for Cain or Abel. — Come along."

They halted at the door of the little public-house, but upon going in they found the landlord and landlady bargaining with a man who was hawking something, and the following words came upon the startled ears of Todd.

"Only threepence, sir, I assure you, and the most exact likeness of Sweeney Todd, the murderer; taken while he was on his trial at the Old Bailey. You will see what a look he has, and the artist has been most successful in the squint: and only threepence."

"He will be hanged on Monday, of course?" said the publican's wife.

"Oh yes, ma'am, in course, and there's expected such a crowd as never was known at the execution."

"No doubt of it. Well, I'll give twopence."

"And a drop of ale," said the publican.

"Here you are, master, you shall have it. A capital likeness. If you was only now to catch a sight of the original Todd, you'd know him in a moment by the look of this picture, particularly the squint."

"Come in," whispered Lupin to Todd.

"Oh no — no — I don't want the brandy now."

"But I do. Your speaking about it, has got me into the mind of wanting some now; so come on and let us have it, my friend, at once. Why, you are not afraid that the portrait is too good a likeness, are you?"

"Oh dear, I don't know," said Todd. "I believe I have a remarkable nose, and rather an engaging look about the eyes. — Come along."

"A quartern of the best brandy," said Lupin.

Todd felt that now the safest thing he could do, was to brave the matter out, as anything in the shape of a retreat would be much worse than actually making an appearance at the bar of the public-house; and then it was truly ridiculous to see the manner in which Todd strove to alter the cast of his features, by protruding one lip, and putting on what he thought as a kind of satisfied smirking smile, extremely difficult, indeed, for his usual expression of face.

There was only one slight comfort he felt, and that was in the circumstance that the news of their escape from Newgate had not yet reached that place.

"A nice, bracing morning, gentlemen," said the publican.

"Very, by the goodness of providence," said Lupin.

"Amen!" said Todd.

"I have just, gentlemen, been buying a portrait of the execrable Todd; and if either of you have happened to see him in London, perhaps you can tell me if it is at all like the villain. We frighten our children now, if they misbehave themselves at all, and tell them that Todd is coming to make them into pies, and then they are as quiet as possible. Ha! ha!"

"How funny," said Todd,

"Well," said Lupin, as he looked at the twopenny portrait of Todd, with a pretended critical air, "I don't think it's like him at all. I saw him at Newgate; and my friend here, is more like him than this picture."

"You don't say so, sir?" said the landlord.

"He! he!" laughed Todd — "ho! ho!"

How he wished at that moment that he could have taken Lupin by the throat and strangled him!

The brandy was duly discussed, and Lupin having paid for it out of the contents of the old gentleman's purse, took a courteous adieu of the landlord, and with Todd left the house.

"Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Todd, "how could you dream of saying what you did about me at the bar?"

"My good friend, that was for the express purpose of drowning suspicion for you. I saw the landlady staring at you most fixedly, and so I said it on purpose, for fear she should really begin to think you could be no other than Todd the murderer — the execrable Todd, with whom they frighten the children."

"Oh, well," said Todd, "don't say anything more about it. I am quite satisfied. Indeed, I am more than satisfied, my dear friend."

"I thought you would be, when you come to think — "

"Oh, dear, yes."

"You may depend, Todd, that the greatest safety always runs alongside of the greatest danger; and that when you think that your fortunes are at the lowest, you may not unfrequently be upon the point of a highly favourable

change: and it's all by the goodness of Providence."

"Bother you!" said Todd. "I do believe, if you were to live for a hundred years, you would not forget your chapel experience."

"Perhaps not; but I made a good bit of money that way, taking one thing with another, Mr. Todd."

CHAPTER CXXXVIII.

CAEN WOOD AND HAMPSTEAD IN THE OLD TIMES.

IN SUCH DISCOURSE AS THIS, the precious pair beguiled the way to Highgate, from which they proposed crossing to Hampstead.

Notwithstanding the liberal potations that they had taken at the Alderman's house; and notwithstanding the brandy that had since been discussed, they neither of them felt any the worse for the imbibition. Probably, the active exercise they took carried off all bad effects. But, certainly, when they reached Highgate, both Todd and Lupin were hungry.

"Let us turn into the Old Gate-House Tavern," said Lupin.

"Don't you think a more obscure place," suggested Todd, "would be better for us, as we do not by any means court popularity?"

"No; there is more safety in a large place like the Gate House, where plenty of guests are coming and going continually, than in a little bit of a public-house where we should be looked at, and scrutinised from top to toe, from the moment we went in to the moment we came out."

"Very good," said Todd. "I think you reason well enough upon the point, and I give in to your better judgment completely. Ah! my good friend, I really don't know what I should have done at all without you."

"Been hanged!" said Lupin.

Todd gave a shudder, which was a tolerably convincing proof of how fully he agreed in what Mr. Lupin said; and then they went into the Old Gate-House Tavern, at Highgate, where they had a very plentiful breakfast; and by getting into a corner of the room, in which they sat, they did not attract any observation beyond the mere casual regards of the visitors to the house.

Before they left though, Todd had the horror of hearing a great confusion of voices in the passage, and in a few moments one of the waiters came into the room, quite bursting with his news.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the notorious Todd, and a man named Lupin, who

was a murderer likewise, have escaped from Newgate!"

"Escaped?" said Lupin. "You don't say so?"

"Dear me, when?" said Todd.

"Last night, gentlemen, last night; and — coming — coming!"

The waiter was compelled to leave the room, as a bell rung violently.

"Let us go," said Todd.

"Yes, I think, now that the news has reached here, it will be wise to do so."

"Come along, then."

Todd rose in a moment; but Lupin in a whisper strictly cautioned him not to show any symptoms of hurry or alarm; and he was so far master of himself to see the necessity of such a caution, so that they both got safely out of the Gate-House Tavern, and took the route to Hampstead by Swains Lane, without having anything said to them.

"This is an escape indeed," said Todd.

"Yes," said Lupin, "you may depend that in a very little time there will be some officers at the Gate-House; but if we can get to the wood within the next half hour, I think we are safe enough. What do you think?"

"I think that if our safety depends upon getting into Caen Wood in half-an-hour, we ought to be there in half the time."

"Do you? Then come on for a run."

"Oh, dear," said Todd. "I am all aches and pains, and not at all fit for running; but I suppose I must. Don't go very fast, Mr. Lupin, or I shall never be able to keep up with you."

"Then you go first and run as fast as you can without greatly distressing yourself, and I will adopt my speed to yours."

"That will be better," said Todd.

Off they both set down Swains Lane, and as the first part of that well-known thoroughfare from Highgate to Hampstead goes down hill, they got on speedily with very little exertion; but when the foot of the little slope was reached it was quite another thing, and Todd was fast subsiding into a walk, when Lupin cried to him —

"We are pursued!"

At these words, Todd fell flat in the roadway.

"Up — up!" said Lupin, "there is a turn in the lane just ahead of us, and when we reach that we must get over the hedge and hide. I don't know that they are actually after us, but there are horsemen in the lane coming from Highgate."

Todd got up as far as his hands and knees, and then, as his ears were close to the ground, he said —

"We are lost, for I can hear horsemen coming from the other direction too."

"The deuce you can!"

Mr. Lupin stooped to listen, and in a moment he was assured of the fact. He seized Mr. Todd by the collar, saying —

"Now, Todd, if you want to escape, rouse yourself and follow me; but if you don't care about it, say so at once, and I will look after my own safety."

"Care about it?" cried Todd, "what else do you suppose I care about in all the world?"

"Come on, then."

"Here I am. Oh, yes I'm coming on — as quick as you like now, Lupin. The dread of capture banishes all fatigue. I can now run like a hunted hare."

"There is no occasion," said Lupin. "This way. We must hide now; speed would do us but little good against horsemen. — This way."

Lupin ran on until he got to the turn of the lane, which hid the horsemen from Highgate effectually from their view; and as the mounted party coming from the direction of Hampstead had not got so far as to appear, he thought it was just the place to halt at.

"Now, Todd," he said, "we must get over the hedge here, and our only chance of safety, if these men are really on the look-out for us, is to hide in the meadow."

Without waiting for Todd to make any remark upon the very doubtful means of escape presented, Lupin scrambled through the hedge. Todd then followed him, and the first care of Lupin's was to arrange the twigs that had been displaced in the hedge by their passage through it, so that there should not appear to be any gap at all there.

Immediately upon the other side of the hedge which they had thus crossed there was a ditch, and a large heap of manure. Mr. Lupin, without the slightest ceremony, laid himself down, and pulling a lot of the manure heap over him, he nearly covered himself quite up.

"This is very shocking," said Todd.

"It's quite a luxury compared to a cell in Newgate," replied Lupin. "You had better be quick."

The word Newgate acted upon the imagination of Todd as a very powerful spell, and he at once lay down and began to follow the example of his friend, Lupin; and indeed so very anxious was he while he was about it to hide himself completely, that he nearly smothered himself outright in the manure.

"I hope this will do," he moaned.

"Silence!" said Lupin.

Todd was as still as death in a moment.

As they now lay close to the earth, all sounds upon it were much more clearly brought to their senses than when they were walking, so that there was no sort of difficulty in distinguishing the tread of the horses that were coming from Highgate from those that proceeded from the other direction, and which latter ones were not quite so near as the others.

Faintly, too, they could hear the hum of commotion, which showed that the party consisted of three or four persons.

And now the mounted men from Highgate got right down into the hollow, close to the bend in the lane, and they paused, while one said, in a clear voice —

"We ought not to go any further. Those from Hampstead should meet us now, I think."

"They are coming," said another.

"Ah! so they are. I wonder if they have seen anything of the rascals. I do hope they will soon be nabbed, for this patrolling business is very tiresome."

These words were quite sufficient, if any doubt had been upon the minds of Lupin and Todd, to convince them that the mounted men were after them, and of the great peril they would have been in if they had staid in the lane.

To be sure there was nothing in what had been said to add to the supposition that the horsemen had any knowledge of the fact that the persons they sought were in that neighbourhood, and that might be considered to decrease the danger a little; but yet it was sufficiently great, under all circumstances.

In the course of the next two minutes the Hampstead party came up and joined the others.

"Any luck?" said one.

"No, we came right on across the heath, but we neither saw nor heard anything of them, and it is quite impossible to say, as yet, that they have come in this direction at all. I don't myself think it at all likely."

"Why not?"

"Because of all neighbourhoods close to London, it is the most high and exposed, while at the same time it is not thickly peopled."

"Well, there may be something in that. We have heard nothing of them in Highgate up to now, so I suppose we may go back again the way we came, and you will do the same."

"Have you been in any of the meadows?"

"No. But it's easy to get over the gate yonder, and take a look all round. The enclosures are not very numerous about here, and they would find it difficult to hide. Hold my horse, George, and I'll get into the meadows and take a look."

When Todd heard these words, he looked upon himself as lost, and could hardly suppress a groan.

The man who had last spoken got over a gate that was at some little distance off, and stood upon an elevated spot of the meadows to look about him.

"There's nothing moving," he said.

"Come along, then," cried another. "Let's get on."

"Here's a compost heap; they are perhaps in the middle of that. Is it worth looking at?"

"Not exactly. Come on."

The man retired to the road again and mounted, and in the course of a few moments the two parties rode back again upon the way that they had come.

"Todd?" said Lupin, "Todd?"

"Oh!" groaned Todd.

"Todd, I say, get up. Are you out of your mind? The danger is past now. They are gone."

"Gone!" said Todd, looking up. "You don't say so? Didn't I hear one of them say that he would look in this very place?"

"Yes; but that was only a joke."

"A joke?" said Todd with a deep groan. "A joke was it? Oh, how very careful people should be when they make jokes, when other people are hiding from their enemies. It might be very funny to him, but it was quite the reverse to me."

"That's true enough; but get up now, and in the name of everything that's safe and comfortable, let us get to the wood. These fellows are evidently patrolling the road, and they will be back again in a little while, and still come across us if we don't manage to get out of their way before that time. — Come along. We can get to the wood now quickly."

"Ah, dear me!" said Todd, as he shook himself to get rid of as much of the unsavoury mess he had lain in as possible. "Ah dear me! truly I have now hit upon evil times; and fortune, that I thought petted me, has slipped from me like a shadow, leaving me glad of a manure heap in a field as a place of shelter."

"All that is very true," said Lupin, "but it don't get us on a bit."

"I'm ready — I'm quite ready," groaned Todd.

They were upon the point of going into the lane again, but they were compelled — or rather thought it prudent — to wait until a man had passed, who, by the box that he carried on his back, was evidently a hawker of goods about the country. He soon trudged out of their way, and then they both got through the hedge again into the lane.

The place of their destination was now close at hand, upon their left; and watching a favourable spot by which to do so, they crossed the hedge upon that side and got into the fields; but although a sharp run across two or three meadows would have taken them at once to Caen Wood, they did not think it at all prudent so to expose themselves to observation.

"Skirt the hedge, Todd," said Lupin, "and stoop down so as to keep your head as much below the top of the hedgerow as possible. You are inconveniently tall, just now."

Upon this instruction, Todd bent himself almost double, and in that attitude he managed to scramble close to the hedge, and up to his knees, at times, in the ditches and drains that he came across in such a situation.

In this way, then, they got on until they reached the outskirts of Caen Wood. Not a creature was to be seen, and the most profound and solemn

stillness, reigned around them. Todd was not used to that intense quiet of the country and he shook at it rather, but Lupin took no notice of his emotion.

"Here we are, at last," he said, "and all you have to do, Todd, is to point out the spot where you have hidden your money, and then we will divide it, and wait until nightfall before we venture out of this snug place."

"Come along," said Todd; "it's all right."

And then they both dived amongst the trees, which, in some places, quite shut out the daylight.

CHAPTER CXXXIX.

THE ADVENTURES IN CAEN WOOD OF THE TWO MURDERERS.

TODD WAS SO MUCH EXHAUSTED by the time they reached the wood, that he at once cast himself to the ground upon a heap of dry leaves, and he felt that he was speaking only the truth when he said —

"I could not go a step further just now, if it were to save my life, I feel that I could not; and here I must lie and rest."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lupin; "what a poor creature you must be. How old are you, Mr. Todd?"

"I don't know," said Todd. "The church I was christened at was burnt down only the day after, and all the books burnt. My father and mother are dead, and the nurse was hanged, and the doctor cut his throat."

"Upon my word," said Lupin, "they were a lively set. I suppose it was remorse did all that?"

"Remorse! What do you mean by remorse?"

"Why that sort of feeling, you know, might be awakened in their minds, by finding that you were not exactly the sort of baby that was expected. You must have looked a beauty in long-clothes, Todd; and as for your age, I should guess it about fifty-five."

"Guess your own age," said Todd, "and leave mine alone."

"Oh, if it's at all a sore subject I won't say another word about it. But come now, Todd, you charming creature, could you not manage to crawl a little way further?"

"What for? If we are safe in the wood at all, we are safe enough here where we are now."

"But, my dear friend, you quite forget."

"What — what? What do I forget? Don't plague me, Lupin. It is enough just now to remember that we have by almost a miracle made an escape from Newgate; and as for forgetting, I would be right glad to forget if I could that I had ever been there; but that will be impossible."

"It won't be very easy," said Lupin, "and if possible, it will take a long time; but what I was just mildly going to remind you of was, that in this wood your two thousand pounds, you know, are hidden, and that we were to share the amount."

"Ah, my dear friend, yes, I had not forgotten that little affair. It is, of course, very important; but let me rest a little, if you please."

"Oh, certainly — certainly."

"And then, my dear companion, it will be necessary to get a spade, you know, to dig it up. Our nails decidedly are neither long enough or strong enough, and I don't at all see how it is to be done without a spade, or something that shall be a good substitute for one."

"Oh, nonsense," said Lupin. "How deep do you suppose it lies?"

"About two feet."

"Very good then, you need give yourself no uneasiness about the digging it up. I have the chisel and the two files here; and if I can't dig two feet into the earth with them, and my hands to shovel out the mould with, I'm a Dutchman, that's all. Only you show me the spot, that's all, and I won't ask you to tire yourself in the matter."

"In a little," said Todd, "in a little. Without being so old as you would make me out, I am still older than you are, Lupin, and cannot go through the amount of fatigue that you can. Just let me recover myself a little, and then instead of crawling to the spot where my money lies hidden, I shall be well able to walk to it and show it to you."

"Very good — very good. Of course I don't want to hurry you too much about the matter, only the sooner we do get a hold of the two thousand pounds the better. I wonder, too, that you don't feel rather anxious to see that it is quite safe, for some accident might have discovered it, for all you know to the contrary."

"Oh no, my friend, nothing but an earthquake could do that. You may depend it is quite safe where I put it. In a little time I shall be able to show you the exact spot, which I have so accurately in my mind's eye, that I can walk to it with the greatest of ease; of course I did not trust such a valuable deposit to the ground without accurately marking the spot that I had made my bank."

"Is it in gold?"

"All — all. I did think of hiding notes, but I was afraid that the damp, if there should come any heavy rains, would have the effect of rotting them, and

I had no iron box sufficiently small to place them in; so I brought all gold, and a good weight it was too."

"Ah, we will make that weight light by dividing it."

"Just so."

Lupin's mouth actually watered at the idea of getting possession of such a sum, and as he turned his head aside, he muttered to himself—

"If I don't put Todd out of this world, and save the hangman the trouble, it shall go hard with me, and then I shall have all the money to myself, and I can get to America, and be a free and enlightened citizen for the remainder of my days."

Mr. Lupin could hardly forbear an audible chuckle over this delightful prospect; so that it will be seen that both of these villains meditated evil intentions towards each other, from which it may be gathered how much faith is to be put in the association of men for any guilty design. Was it likely that such persons as Todd and Lupin, after being false and ruffianly to all the world, should be true to each other, except so far as their common interests dictated? No, Todd amused Lupin with the story of the buried gold in the wood at Hampstead, because he, Lupin, was of assistance in his escape from Newgate; and Lupin assisted him to escape with the idea of murdering him in the wood, and securing for himself all the money that he believed was there hidden!

It was quite evident that Lupin was desperately impatient at the rest Todd was taking, previous to showing him where the money was hidden; and he walked to and fro, looking as vexed as possible, and yet fearing to say too much, lest he should get up a quarrel, the result of which might be, that Todd would refuse to show him where the gold was at all.

"I think," he said, "if I were to manage to get a good thick stave off some tree, it would help considerably in digging, would it not?"

"Without a doubt," said Todd.

"Then I will try, and by the time I have got it, perhaps you will be rested enough, my dear friend, to make an effort to get up and show me the spot where to dig for the gold."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Todd.

Mr. Lupin found that he was obliged to be contented with this doubtful acquiescence of Todd's; and he busied himself, by the aid of the chisel and the files, in getting off a stout strong bough from a sycamore-tree, which he shaped to a tolerable point. It looked like a formidable bludgeon; and as he eyed it, he thought what a capital knock on the head it would give to Mr. Todd.

It was rather odd that the same idea crossed Todd's mind, and as he saw the bit of wood, he muttered to himself—

"That would do it. One blow from that would do it."

Now, Todd had but one solitary incentive to the murder of Lupin, and

that was, that he feared when he found out how he had been deceived regarding the money, he would find some mode of denouncing him to the police, while he took care of himself; and, therefore, upon that mere idea, Todd would take his life. But then, steeped in blood guiltiness as Todd was, the taking the life of any one always seemed to him to be the readiest way of solving any difficulty connected with them. It was his motive to consider that that was the shortest and easiest mode of settling the affair, if any one became at all troublesome; and he was not all likely to make an exception in favour of such a personage as Mr. Lupin.

"All ready?" said Lupin. "Are you rested now?"

"Yes," said Todd, as he rose. "Ah, dear me, yes, as much as I can expect, until I get a regular night's repose, you know, friend Lupin. But I don't expect that very soon."

"Oh, who knows? We are continually, in this world, getting what we don't expect, and not getting what we do; so you may rest easy enough, Todd, much sooner than you expect. Come, lean on my arm if you feel fatigued."

"Oh, no, thank you. Lend me the stick, it will help me on the best, for it seems just about my height."

Lupin could not very well refuse Todd's request with any prospect of keeping him in good humour at the same time, so he gave him the stick, although it must be confessed he did not do so with the very best grace in the world. But Todd did get it, and that satisfied him.

"Is it far off?" said Lupin.

"Oh dear, no. Quite close at hand—quite close. There's a small chestnut-tree, and a large chestnut-tree, and there's a small fir-tree and a large fir-tree, and a large oak-tree and a small oak-tree, and then there is a blackberry bush and a little stream of water."

"Good gracious, is there anything else?" said Lupin.

"No, my dear friend, that is all."

"Well. I must confess, that your description would not have very materially assisted me in finding the spot."

"Indeed, I thought nothing could possibly be more clear."

"Clear to you, Mr. Todd, it may be, but not to any one else; but that don't matter a bit as you are here yourself to point out the exact spot. Are we near it now?"

"Yes, you see that cluster of bushes?"

"Yes, oh yes."

"Well, the money lies hidden right in there, and you cannot miss it if you scramble in."

"Lend me the stick to clear away the brambles and the nettles, and I will creep in."

"My dear friend, I shall fall down if I lend you the stick. There is no

difficulty in getting in. Don't you see there is a gap that you have only to push through, and there you are?"

"Well — well," said Lupin. "That's enough; I will get through. Come on, let us secure the gold."

Lupin stooped to push his way through the gap in the hedge, for the bushes grew so close together just there, that they resembled an enclosure carefully planted on purpose. Then Todd took the heavy stick that had been cut from the sycamore tree in both hands, and swinging it in the air, he brought it down with a stunning crack on the back of Lupin's head, just at the juncture of the neck.

"God!" said Lupin, and it was the first time in his life that, with true sincerity, he had pronounced that sacred name. He then turned and sunk to the ground, with his face towards Todd. He could not speak now, but the look that he gave to his murderer was awful in the extreme. The injury he had received had quite paralysed him, and his hands hung helplessly. But the quality of mercy belonged not to Todd's composition.

Again the huge stick was raised, and this time it fell upon the top of Lupin's head. The wretched man uttered one faint sigh and expired at once.

"Dead!" said Todd, as he stood gaunt and erect before his victim, with the stick stretched out in his hand. "Dead — quite dead. Ha!"

Todd made one of his old faces. He must at that moment have fancied himself engaged upon his ancient business in the cellars beneath his house in Fleet-street, or he never could have made the sort of face which had become so very incidental to him in that locality.

The body fell huddled up, and the change that rapidly took place in the countenance, was something truly awful to behold; but it had not much effect upon Todd. He had struck many a man down to rise no more, against whom he had no cause of suspicion or of dread; and it was not likely that he would scruple to do so to one whom he both feared and hated as he did Mr. Lupin.

"That is done!" said Todd, as he slowly let his arm droop until the stick touched the ground; and then relinquishing his grasp of it, he let it fall entirely. "That is done!"

A slight noise close at hand made the murderer start, and caused the blood to turn cold around his heart from very abject fear that there had been some witness to his crime.

"What was that?" he said, "what was that?"

All was still again. It was but some wild bird taking flight from a low branch of a neighbouring tree, not liking the vicinity of man, and especially such a man as Mr. Todd; for we may well suppose even those little feathered fragile things are gifted with some of that physiognomical power that seems to be an attribute or an instinct of all animals, with regard to the human race.

"It was nothing," said Todd very gently. "It was nothing at all. This has

TODD KILLS THE MURDERER, LUPIN.

been an easily done deed, and a safe one. Nearly noiseless, too. It may be many a long day ere the body be discovered. I will drag it in among the bushes, so as to hide it for as long a space as may be, else if it were found early it would be a kind of index to my route, and would, at all events, show that I had been here."

Full of this idea, Todd laid hold of the body and turned it back upwards. He even did not like to look in the face more than he could help. Then seizing the corpse by the collar of his coat, he dragged it into the hollow space among

the bushes, and cast it down, saying as he did so —

"Rest you there, Mr. Lupin. I have only saved the hangman, after all, the trouble of taking your life, for I can feel well assured, that such would have been your end. You thought yourself a clever fellow, but after all you were nothing to me. Rest there; you were useful up to the moment that we reached the wood, and were in comparative safety. After that, you became an encumbrance, and so I have got rid of you, as I am in the habit of doing all such encumbrances to my views."

Sweeney Todd then crept out from among the bushes, and after having cast the stick with which he had done the murder in among the bushes on top of the body, he walked rapidly away to another part of the wood.

Ever and anon he stopped to listen if he could catch the slightest indication of the presence of any one else in the wood; but all was still, save now and then the song of some wild bird, as it lit for a few moments upon the branch of some tree, to warble a few notes, and then dart off again into the fresh and fragrant air.

"I am safe here," muttered Todd, "I am safe here for the present, and until nightfall I will remain; but between this time and sunset, I must determine what I shall do, and it must be done quickly, for on the morrow the pursuit will be of a wider, as well as of a closer character than what it has been to-day."

CHAPTER CXL.

SHOWS HOW THE NEWS OF TODD'S ESCAPE WAS RECEIVED BY ALL CONCERNED.

HAVING TRACED TODD AND LUPIN thus far in their escape from the meshes in which the law had so properly bound them, we will now for a time leave the arch-villain Todd in Caen Wood, Hampstead Heath, while we take a glance at what ensued in London, upon the escape of the two worthies from Newgate.

It has often been remarked, that one person in London does not trouble himself about his neighbour's affairs, as is done in smaller communities, or know what is happening in his immediate vicinity; but it is likewise true, that nowhere does news travel so fast, or acquire so many exaggerations, as in London.

Thus, then, in the course of a few hours, there was scarcely a person in the metropolis that was not aware of the escape of Sweeney Todd and Mr. Josiah Lupin from Newgate. And not only were they aware of the mere fact of the

escape, but women had added so many extravagances to the whole affair, that it was quite wonderful to think of the fertility of invention of the illiterate persons who had added so many wonders and exaggerations to the real facts of the case, which, after all, lay, as the reader knows well, in a very small compass indeed, considering the magnitude of the result.

Nor were the newspapers published on the ensuing morning at all backward in pandering to popular taste by making the affair as striking and as wonderful as they possibly could.

In one quarter of the town it was firmly believed that not only had Todd and Lupin set Newgate on fire, but that they had murdered the governor and half a dozen turnkeys, and then made their way into the Old Bailey through the ruins of the prison over the dead bodies of their victims.

In another part of London it was currently reported that an infuriated mob had attacked the prison, for the purpose of taking out Todd and hanging him forthwith, and that in the midst of the confusion incidental to such a scene, he had succeeded in making his escape in the disguise of a turnkey, with a huge bunch of keys in his hand as a symbol of his profession.

Then again, in the highly religious district of Islington, it was fully believed, and, in fact, cried through the streets, that his Infernal Majesty, in his own proper person, had called at Newgate at about half past twelve at night, and taken away both the prisoners at once without any further ceremony.

But all these idle rumours might be safely left to sink or swim as the incredulity or the credulity of their authors and hearers might determine, since it was after all only to a very few persons that the escape of Sweeney Todd was of the smallest importance, and, to still from that, the fate of Mr. Lupin was of any importance at all.

The persons with whose feelings and wishes we and our readers feel interested, are those to whom the escape of Todd presented grounds for some anxious and painful reflections; and it is to them and their proceedings that we would now draw the attention of our readers.

One of the first persons to whom the news was taken in a clear and compact unexaggerated form, was Sir Richard Blunt, and at an early hour of the morning he was roused from his rest by a messenger, who presented him with a brief note, containing only the following words from the Secretary of Newgate —

Newgate.
SIR:—
The prisoner, Sweeney Todd, has escaped from the jail, along with one Josiah Lupin.
I am, Sir, Yours Obediently,
JOHN SMITH.

"The deuce he has!" cried Sir Richard, as he sprung out of bed and began

to dress himself with unusual speed, for Sir Richard seldom did anything in a hurry, as experience had long since told him how very little was gained by hurry and how much was sometimes lost.

As soon as he got his things on, he descended to his private room, and there found an officer from the prison waiting to give him the particulars of the escape, which was done in a very few words.

"And they are clear off?" said Sir Richard.

"Quite so sir."

"Well, after this, I rather think the Secretary of State will agree with my opinion, that it is not bolts and locks and bars that are to be trusted to, to keep notorious and bold malefactors in prison, but a stout and watchful personal superintendence; and until that is the case, there will be continual prison escapes. Such a man as Todd should not have been allowed to be for five minutes quite alone."

"I think so, too," said the officer; "and there's another thing must be put a stop to before any good is done in Newgate."

"What's that, my friend?"

"Why, Sir Richard, the religious ladies must be stopped from coming in. The moment now that any notorious malefactor is cast for death, the prison is besieged by religious ladies, who, if they had their own way, would eat, drink, and sleep with him in his cell; and they bring in all sorts of things that are quite enough to help the fellow out of limbo. Why, Sir Richard, there was Michael Richardson that was cast for death for murdering his wife; a religious lady came to pray with him, and brought him in files and tools enough for him to get out of the stone jug, and off they both went together to America."

"It is a serious evil."

"I believe you, Sir Richard; and, I think, the only way will be to let 'em all know that before they pass the lobby they will be well searched by a couple of turnkeys."

"That ought to stop them," said Sir Richard, as he rung the bell sharply. "You may depend upon it I will mention your suggestion to the Secretary of State."

One of the magistrate's servants now made his appearance in answers to the summons by the bell.

"My horse directly, Jones," said Sir Richard Blunt.

"Yes, sir."

IN THE COURSE OF TEN MINUTES, Sir Richard Blunt was mounted, and off at a good trot to the City. Any one would have thought that he was going to Newgate; but such was not the case. The prisoners had flown, and he felt that by going to the prison he could only gratify his curiosity by seeing the precise

mode in which they had effected their escape, when by going where he did go, he might do some good.

He did not halt until he found himself at the shop of old Mr. Oakley, and then, although the hour was a very early one, he knocked at the door. Mr. Oakley put his head out at the window, and Sir Richard said —

"Don't be alarmed; I only want to speak to you for a few moments."

"Oh, dear me, yes," said the old man. "I'm coming down stairs directly — I'm coming."

In a few moments the old spectacle-maker opened the door, and came out to the side of the horse, from which the magistrate did not dismount, but leaning down to Mr. Oakley, he said, in an earnest tone —

"There's no occasion for any alarm, but I have come to tell you that Sweeney Todd has escaped from prison."

"Oh, Lord!"

"Hush! It is of no great moment. Where is your daughter and Mr. Ingestrie? I must put them upon their guard against anything that may arise, for there is no exactly saying what that rascal, Todd, may be at."

"Oh, he will murder everybody."

"I think, Mr. Oakley that is going just a little too far, for I will take good care that he don't murder me, nor any one else, if I can by any possibility help it. I will soon have him, I think. Where is Mr. Ingestrie, Mr. Oakley?"

"Oh, dear, they are at the new house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. It's just opposite to the water if you go —"

"I know all about it, thank you, Mr. Oakley. All's right. Be under no apprehension, and above all things, don't you believe one word of anything you hear about Todd from popular rumour or from the newspapers. I will let you know everything that is of any consequence, personally or by letter. Good morning. I hope Mrs. Oakley is quite well this morning?"

"Yes, charming; but, dear me!"

"Yes, it is dear me. Good morning."

Away rode the magistrate, and now he put his horse, which was a good one, to a smart trot, and made his way to Colonel Jeffery's house in a very short space of time; for London was not quite so large as it is now, and it was not a day's journey to go from one house to another if your friends happened to reside at different ends of the town. The colonel, at that hour of the morning, was up and walking in his garden. When Sir Richard Blunt was announced, he guessed at once that something very unusual had taken place; and after shaking hands, he said —

"I know there's some news. Sir Richard. Is it pleasant, or the other way?"

"In truth," said Sir Richard, "that is a question I can scarcely answer you yet. All I have got to say is, that you had better look out, for they have let Todd get out of Newgate."

"Escaped?"

"Exactly so."

"Now that is too bad. One would really have thought they would have taken care of such a fellow as that. How in the name of all that's abominable is it, that if any one escapes from Newgate, it is sure to be some notorious rascal who ought by all means to be the most carefully kept in it."

"Ah! that I don't know, but I quite agree with you that it is a fact nevertheless."

"It's a very awkward thing, and I am particularly obliged to you for coming to let me know."

"Why, the fact is, Colonel, my opinion of Todd is just this: that now he has lost all his money he is just like a wild beast, and that revenge against all and every one who has been instrumental in bringing him to his present condition, will be the dominant feeling in his breast."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Then by awaking you to a sense of this danger both to yourself and to your *protegé*, young Tobias, I am doing my duty. It is not courage that will protect any one from Sweeney Todd. If that had been the case, this is the last house I should have dreamt of coming to with a warning; but it will be only by the greatest circumspection that his attempt to assassinate may be avoided, and the villain foiled."

"I thank you with all my heart, and feel the truth of your observation. I will not mention the matter to poor Tobias, for I feel that it would drive him half mad with terror; but I will take care to keep such a watch upon him, that no harm can come to him from Todd, now that I know that there is danger. He may, of course, hear of the affair from other sources, but he shall not from me."

"That is right. Mind you, colonel, I don't think this state of alarm must last long, and as regards Tobias, I am in hope that at the same time he hears of Todd's escape, he may hear of his recapture, for I am going to set about that as soon as I possibly can, after I have warned every one interested to keep themselves on the look-out concerning the rascal."

"You think you will have him again?"

"Oh, yes. He must be without resources, or, at all events, comparatively so; and under such circumstances, we shall soon trace him. Besides, he is rather a remarkable man, and one who, once seen, is not only easily known again, but easily described; so that when I set all the agencies on foot which I have at my command to find him out, he cannot for long elude me."

"I sincerely wish you every success."

"Thank you, colonel, for I must now be off, for I have to get to Chelsea to warn the Ingestries of the possible, if not the probable danger of Todd trying some delectable scheme of revenge against them, for he is most furious

I know against Johanna."

"Off with you, Sir Richard, at once. Do not let me detain you, when you are upon such an errand. I would not have any harm come to Mrs. Ingestrie for worlds."

"Nor I. Good morning."

The magistrate mounted his horse again, and waving his hand to the colonel, he again started at a good round trot, and made the best of his way by the nearest possible route he could to Chelsea, where Mr. and Mrs. Ingestrie had set up housekeeping in Cheyne Walk.

That portion of Chelsea was then very fashionable, and from the appearance of the houses even now, it is very easy to see that it must have been a very desirable place at one time. All the evidences of wealthy ease meet you on every hand, as you look at those broad, well-put together, aristocratic residences, with their pretty bit of highly cultivated garden in front of them, and their massive doorways.

It was in one of these houses that Johanna and her young husband had taken up their residence. The string of pearls had been actually purchased by royalty of Johanna, and had produced a sum of money that had not only placed the young couple above all the ordinary pecuniary accidents of life, but had enabled them to surround Mr. and Mrs. Oakley with comforts, although the old spectacle-maker, from very habit, would stick to his shop, declaring, and no doubt with great truth, that his daily labour was now such a thing of habit that he would be miserable without it.

It was a very different thing, though, for old Mr. Oakley now to work at the bench in his shop, when he felt that he was placed above the real necessity for doing so, to when he had worked very hard indeed to support himself and Johanna, during the period, too, when in consequence of Mrs. Oakley's rather insane predilection for the Reverend Josiah Lupin, there was no comfort in the house, and, but for Johanna, all would have gone to rack and ruin.

The frightfully dirty ditch that lies before and beyond Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, was not then in existence, so that the really handsome row of residences was not destroyed — as it is now — by such dubious companionship. The river, too, was much clearer than now of craft, and likewise much sweeter, so that really at times, when the sun shone upon its ripples, it really deserved the title of "The Silver Thames."

It was still an early hour when Sir Richard Blunt reached Chelsea — that is to say, it was what then was considered an early hour, for all the world was not in the hurry that is the fashion now, and people did everything in a much more easy and deliberate way than they do now.

What is gained, or pretended to be gained, by all the hurry-skurry and jostling and driving that characterises society at present? We must confess ourselves at a loss to imagine, and we are decidedly of opinion that people were

both happier and better when everything was taken in an easy way, and when folks did not disturb their dignities by all sorts of frantic manoeuvres to save time, as if the whole end and aim of life was to get through as much of what is called business as possible, and as if the principal business of everybody was not to be as quiet and comfortable as possible.

The magistrate could not but pause for a moment as he reached Cheyne Walk and saw the bright sun shining upon the water, and gilding with beauty the sails of some small craft that were taking advantage of a light pleasant breeze to get along without labour.

"A pretty enough place this," he said, "and I don't know any that I should prefer to idle away my life in, if I had nothing to do, as I hope to have some of these odd days — but not yet."

CHAPTER CXLI.

SHOWS HOW TODD MADE UP HIS MIND TO VENGEANCE.

SIR RICHARD DREW BRIDLE OPPOSITE the house of Mr. Ingestrie, and called to an urchin who was passing to ring the bell for him.

The boy complied and in a few moments a servant made an appearance, to whom Sir Richard said —

"If your master is stirring, pray tell him that a gentleman wishes to speak to him for a few moments."

These words were hardly past the lips of the magistrate, when some one, with a bunch of flowers in her hand, and one of the prettiest of pretty morning dresses, came to the door. It was our old, dear, young, kind friend, Johanna! We cannot help calling her Johanna still, although, perhaps, it would be more proper for us to name her Mrs. Ingestrie; but it seems so odd to append that title of "Mrs." to our gentle, youthful Johanna, whose dangers in Todd's shop we have watched and trembled at so often in times past.

"Ah! my dear friend," she cried, when she saw who it was. "I am so glad to see you!"

"And I am equally glad to see you," said Sir Richard, "particularly as you look so well and so happy."

"Yes, I am happy. Mark! Mark! here is Sir Richard come to breakfast with us."

"Nay, I did not think of dismounting."

SIR RICHARD BLUNT PAYS A VISIT TO JOHANNA, AT CHELSEA.

"Oh, but you must. I will hold the bridle of the horse, and you will have to ride over me if you attempt to go away. Mark — Mark! where are you!"

Upon these repeated calls, Mark Ingestrie make his appearance at the door, and looked pleased enough to see Sir Richard, who, finding that they would take no sort of denial, he felt that he could not do otherwise than dismount and enter the house. A servant of the Ingestries took charge of his horse, and he was soon in the breakfast-room of the pretty house, inhabited by the young couple.

It did not escape the observation of Johanna that there was a cloud of seriousness upon the countenance of Sir Richard Blunt; but she did not make any remark, although each moment she felt more and more convinced that it was some matter of business that called the magistrate to their abode so early; for it will be remembered that although he had transacted a good quantity of business, the day was yet very young.

Mark Ingestrie did not appear to have any idea beyond the fact that it was very kind of the magistrate to visit them; but the reader will easily excuse him for not being so acute an observer as Johanna.

"I hope," said Mark, "that you will often take a canter over here, Sir Richard, before the business of the day commences, and breakfast with us. I know how very hopeless it is to expect you often at any other time."

"It is rather so," replied Sir Richard, "and my stay now must be very limited indeed. How do you both like your new house?"

"It is charming," said Johanna, "and the view from the windows is full of animation for the greater part of the day."

"It's the view in-doors," smiled Mark, "that to me is so delightful and so full of animation."

"That is just what I should have supposed," said the magistrate, glancing at Johanna with a smile.

"Now, positively, I must go and take my breakfast in some other room," said Johanna, "if there are to be any compliments. They are quite absurd, you know, among married folks."

"And a little unfair," said Sir Richard, "at meal times, I think, above all others."

"Indeed?" said Mark.

"Yes, to be sure," added Johanna, "for you know one is either obliged to hear the compliments, which feed no one but with false viands, or leave the table upon which there may be something much more substantial and decidedly more palatable."

"I give in," said Mark, "I give in. I don't for one moment profess to be a match for you alone, my dear; but when you get Sir Richard to side with you, I feel that I had better say as little as possible."

"A graceful defeat," said Sir Richard, "is almost as good as a clumsy victory."

"Much better," said Johanna, "a great deal better. But now, Sir Richard, you have not ridden over here to help us at our breakfast, or to talk badinage."

Mark opened his eyes very wide indeed, and looked from Johanna to the magistrate, and from the magistrate to Johanna, with evident surprise. An expression of great anxiety was each moment gathering over the face of Johanna, which Sir Richard saw, and with all that tact which with him was a kind of second nature, he said —

"I have had the pleasure of seeing your father this morning, and they are all well at the old house, and as comfortable as can be."

Johanna drew a long breath of relief, and then Mark Ingestrie cried in a voice of surprise —

"What? Do you mean to say you have been in the city before you came here, sir?"

"I have, my friend, and I have been to Colonel Jeffery's, too, before I came here. If I had not, I should not be able to indulge myself with the pleasure of staying here for even the short time that I have been beneath your roof. I must, however, go."

"Something has happened!" said Johanna.

"So there has," said the magistrate with a smile, "but it cannot be anything very serious, you know, as all our dear friends are well. Anything falls light in comparison with the health and happiness of those whom we love."

"Oh, yes — yes," said Johanna. "You are right, and you are very good to preface bad news in so kind a manner, Sir Richard. It is good, and kind, and grateful, and like you in all respects. I thank you from my heart."

"But what's it all about?" cried Mark Ingestrie. "Good gracious, what's it all about? Who talks of bad news? If all our friends are well, how can there be bad news? Do not keep us in suspense, Sir Richard!"

"No — no," said Johanna.

"I will not."

Both Johanna and Mark Ingestrie looked most intently at the magistrate, as he said in his quiet way —

"Sweeney Todd has escaped from Newgate, and is now at large!"

Mark Ingestrie sprang to his feet, and Johanna, for a moment, turned rather pale.

"The villain!" cried Mark.

"Hush!" said Johanna. "Oh, hush, Mark!"

"It was of the utmost importance," continued Sir Richard Blunt, speaking quite calmly, "that all who were in any way comprehended in the list of what Sweeney Todd would call his enemies, should be speedily informed of this fact, and that is what has brought me to Chelsea at so early an hour in the morning."

"We thank you from our hearts," said Johanna.

"We do, indeed," said Mark. "But let him beware of me. He dare not, villain as he is, come within the reach of my arm. The spirit of my poor murdered friend, Thornhill, will cry aloud for vengeance, and nothing should save the murderer from death."

"Oh, Mark — Mark!" said Johanna, "do not speak in such a strain. You do not know Todd. You know nothing of the character and of the capabilities of that man. He is not only one of the most wicked, but he is likewise one of the most crafty and unscrupulous."

"That is true," said the magistrate. "He does not know him. Do you suppose for one moment, Mr. Ingestrie, that I would have ridden over here to give you such a special warning concerning this man, if I apprehended any open attack? No — that I could have trusted to you to ward off. Your life has been one of danger and adventure; but not you, nor I, nor all the world, can be prepared against what Todd may, in the profound depths of his imagination, attempt."

"All that is true," said Johanna, "most true."

"You now really alarm me!" said Mark.

"Then I did not mean to do so. All I wished was that you should be made aware of the real extent of the possible danger. For myself, I look upon all such men as Sweeney Todd as mad men, to a certain extent; and now that he is deprived of his money, there is no knowing but he may be willing to sacrifice his life for the gratification of, no doubt, one of the most powerful feelings of his mind, which is revenge!"

"No doubt," said Johanna.

A flush of colour came over the cheek of the young husband, and he took the hand of Johanna in his, as he said —

"Oh, Sir Richard, only tell me now I may best secure this treasure against the machinations of that monster in human shape."

"Nay, now, Mr. Ingestrie," said Sir Richard, "do not fall into the other extreme, and make too much of this danger. We are very apt to pet some peril, until we make it to our imagination assume a much larger shape than really belongs to it. I hope that Todd will be in custody again soon."

"Is it likely, sir?"

"I fancy so. From this day I abandon all other objects and pursuits, and devote myself to that task alone."

"Then there is a hope," said Johanna.

"Yes," added Sir Richard. "My impression is that he has no money, and that I shall soon apprehend him; but if, unknown to me, he has any secret funds, he may make an attempt to leave the kingdom, and so foil me."

"And if he does?"

"I follow him, for I am determined that sooner or later, dead or alive, Todd shall be given up to the law."

"But you will advise us what to do," said Mark Ingestrie. "In your experience you can suggest to us the best mode of proceeding in this emergency."

"I have been thinking of that as I came along, and my advice is that you leave London immediately. I do not think that the danger, admitting that there is any at all, is immediate. Todd for some days will be far too intent upon evading pursuit and recognition to think of much else, besides his personal safety, so that you will have ample time to leave."

"We will do so," said Johanna, "at once. Where would you advise us to go?"

"There is a little fishing village on the south coast, called Brighthelmstone.

It lies in a pleasant enough valley stretching to the sea. There you can remain quite unsuspected of Todd, and enjoy the fair sea breezes that make the place delightful, without a thought of danger, for it is not that way he will go, as the place is not a port from which he could take shipping if he wished to leave England; and if he did not wish to leave at all, nothing could be further from his thoughts than going so far from London, and the spot upon which all his revenge could alone be attempted to be gratified."

"We will go," said Johanna, appealingly looking at Mark Ingestrie as she spoke.

"Certainly," he replied.

"Well, then," said Sir Richard, "since that is so far settled, I have a favour to ask of you both."

"You have but to name it," said Ingestrie. "You ought rather to say that you have a command to give us both."

"Yes," said Johanna, "that is so."

"No. If I thought that, I should not like to mention it. But I appeal to your candour to say 'yes,' or 'no,' to the request, according as you really feel inclined when you hear it. You know how anxious Todd has been to take the life of the poor lad, Tobias, who has suffered so much at his hands."

"Oh, yes — yes," said Johanna.

"Well. Have you any objection to take him with you?"

"None in the least," cried Mark.

Johanna turned to him with a smile, as she said —

"Mark, I thank you with all my heart for that ready reply and acquiescence with the proposal of Sir Richard Blunt, and I echo it by likewise saying, 'None in the least.'"

"You have met the proposal as I anticipated you both would," said the magistrate, "or I should not have made it. You will find poor Tobias one of the most gentle and inoffensive of beings; but his nature has been so acted upon by Todd, that it would drive him to the verge of madness if he thought that the villain were at large; so I do not wish that he should know as much until it can be coupled with information of his recapture."

"The secret shall be kept."

"Then my business is concluded, and I am sorry to say my pleasure also; for it has been a real one to visit you both; and I must be off at once. I will communicate with Colonel Jeffery about Tobias, and manage how he shall come to you. A post-chaise will take you in six hours to the place I have mentioned, which you will find marked on the map."

"I know it," said Ingestrie.

"That is well. And now good-day."

The Ingestries took a warm and affectionate leave of Sir Richard, who, in ten minutes more, was on his road to London.

CHAPTER CXLII.

RETURNS TO TODD IN THE WOOD AT HAMPSTEAD.

WHILE ALL THIS WAS GOING ON, contingent upon his elopement from Newgate, Todd was still in the wood at Hampstead — that wood in which he had committed so barbarous a murder, in ridding the world of almost as great a rascal as himself, in the shape of Mr. Lupin.

Todd was as anxious as possible to leave the wood, but he felt that to do so in daylight would be jeopardising himself much too seriously. He was not without money, as the reader is aware; and after placing some distance between himself and the dead body of Mr. Lupin, he sat down upon the roots of an old tree to think.

It was not that Todd had any particular terrors connected with the dead body of Mr. Lupin that induced him to get away from the neighbourhood of the body, but he thought it was just possible some people might come into the wood, and in such a case he did not wish to be connected with the deed in consequence of any contiguity to it.

"What shall I do?" said Todd, after he had rested for some time with his head upon his hand. "That is the question — what shall I do? I have some money, but not enough. Oh, that I had but a tithe of the amount that once was mine! I would yet leave England for ever, and forego all my thoughts of vengeance, unless I could contrive from a great distance to do some mischief, and that might be done if very cunningly contrived; but they have taken from me all — all!"

Here Mr. Todd indulged in a few expletives, with which we do not think proper to encumber our pages; and after swearing himself into a state of comparative calmness again, he held up his left hand, and separating the fingers, he began to count upon them the names of people.

"Let me see," he said. "Let me see, how many throats now it would give me a very special pleasure to cut — Humph — Ha. Sir Richard Blunt — one; Tobias Ragg — two; Colonel Jeffery — three; Johanna Oakley — four; and her husband, that is, I suppose, by this time, five — confound him! Ah! those make up the five that I most specially should like to sacrifice! A whole handful of victims! After they were comfortably despatched, no doubt, I could think of a few more; but it is better to confine one's attention to the principals for a time. The others may drop in afterwards, when one has nothing more important to do."

He thought he heard a noise in the wood, and he stooped his head to listen. It was nothing, or if it had been anything, it quickly ceased again, and he was tolerably satisfied that he was alone.

"What a delightful thing, now, it would be," he muttered, "if I could poison the whole lot of them at once, with some drug that would give them the most excruciating agony! And then I should like to go round to them all, and shout in their ears — 'I did it! — I, Sweeney Todd, did it!' That would be glorious, indeed! Ha! ha!"

"Ha!" said a voice behind him, following up his hideous laugh most closely in point of tone.

It was almost with what might be called a yell of terror that Todd sprang to his feet, and turned round, fully expecting to see some one; but not the slightest vestige of the presence of any human being met his eyes.

After gazing for a moment or two, he thought that surely some one must be hiding behind one of the trees, and he sprang forward, crying —

"Disclose yourself, villain! Crafty wretch, you or I must die!"

There was no reply to this; and he could find no one, although he looked narrowly about, for the next quarter of an hour, all over the spot. He felt quite convinced that no one could have slipped away without him hearing something of the footfall, however light it might be; and he was left, by this extraordinary circumstance, in a complete maze of terrified conjecture. He trembled in every limb from positive fright.

No man was probably more generally free from what might be called superstitious terrors, than Sweeney Todd. At least, we may certainly say, that no guilty man ever could be more free from them. Had such not been the case, it is quite impossible that he could have carried on the career that he did; but of late, two or three things had happened to him to give his imagination a kind of jog upon such subjects.

He might well be excused for a little kind of nervousness now, when he felt quite confident that a laugh from no mortal lungs had sounded within a few inches of his ears, at so strange a moment.

"What can it be?" he said, in a voice of terror. "What can it be? Have I all along been mistaken; and is there such a thing as an invisible world of spirits about us? Oh, what can I think? — what excuse can I now give myself for an unbelief, without which I should have gone quite mad long — long ago?"

The heavy drops stood upon his brow, and he was forced to stagger back, and hold by a tree for support. After a few moments of this condition, however, the determined spirit of the man triumphed over the fears that beset him, and raising his voice, he said —

"No — no; I will never be the slave of such wild fancies! This is no time for me to give way to a belief in these things, which all my life I have laughed to scorn! If I had believed what the world pretends to believe, I must have been

stark staring mad to load my soul with guilt in the way I have done, if my recompense had been the accumulated wealth of all the kingdoms of the earth; for death would, despite all that, come and rob me of all, leaving me poor as any beggar who lays him down by the road side to die!"

While he spoke, he glared nervously and apprehensively about him, and then he drew a long breath, as he added —

"I take shame to myself now to have one particle of fear. Have not I, at the hour of midnight, many and many a time threaded the mazes of the dark vaults of St. Dunstan's, when I knew that I was all but surrounded by the festering, gaunt remains of heaps of my victims? and shall I here, with the open sky above me, and only the known neighbourhood of one dead villain, shake in such a way? No — no!"

He stamped upon the ground to reassure himself; and then, as though willing to taunt the unseen laugher into a repetition of the mocking sound, he again cried —

"Ha! — ha!"

There was no response to this, and it was rather a disappointment to Todd that there was not, for a hope had been growing upon his mind to the effect, that it was only some echo in the wood, to which he had been indebted for his fright; but now, when it did not occur again as it ought to have done, if it had been a result from any natural cause, he was thrown back upon his strength of mind merely to shake it off as best he might.

"Fancy! fancy!" he cried. "It was but fancy after all;" but he did not believe himself when he so spoke.

Todd remained in the wood tolerably free from any more alarms, until the sun sunk in the west; and while there was positive darkness in that place where he was hiding, a sweet twilight still lingered over the fair face of nature.

"I must not venture forth yet," he said, "but in another hour it will be dark alike upon the heath as in the wood, and then I will go into the village and get some refreshment, after which, I rather think, that London, with all its dangers, will be the best place for me. I have heard of people hiding there for many a day. I wonder, now, if a lodging in the Old Bailey would be a good thing? Surely they would never think of looking for me there."

Todd rather chuckled over this pleasant idea of a lodging in the Old Bailey. It was just one of the notions that, for its practical extravagance, rather pleased him than otherwise, but although it had something to recommend it, it required rather more boldness than even he was master of to carry it out.

But such thoughts sufficed to amuse him until darkness was upon the face of the land, and to withdraw his thoughts from other and more tormenting matters; so that for a time he even forgot the seemingly supernatural laugh that had sounded so oddly behind him, and produced in him such a world of alarm.

He heard the clock of Hampstead Church proclaim the hour of nine, and then he thought that he might venture from his place of concealment; and yet it will be seen that Todd had not been able to concoct any definite plan of operations. Then he was wishing to do many things, and yet unable in that anxious state of his fortunes to do anything at all.

Truly, Sir Richard Blunt was right enough, when he said that Todd, for a time, would be much too busy with his own affairs to take any active step for the accomplishment of any of his revenges.

In the wood, now, the darkness was so great, that literally you could not see your hand before your face; and the only plan by which he could leave it was by blundering right on, and trusting to get out at any point to which his chance steps might lead him. In about a quarter of an hour he came to a rather precipitous bank, which he clambered up, and then he found himself on the outskirts of the wood, and not far from the village.

He heard some one coming along the road-way, and whistling as he came. The moon was struggling against the shadowing influence of a mass of clouds in the horizon, and Todd felt that in a little time the whole place would be light enough.

"Am I sufficiently unlike myself," he said, "to trust an appearance in the village? I want food, and most of all, I want drink. Yes, now more than ever; I cannot pretend to live without stimulants. Yes, I will risk it, and then I will go to London."

He sprang down into the road, and in as careless a manner as he could, he walked on in the direction that he thought would take him to the village.

The man who was whistling as he came along, rather increased his pace, and to the great alarm of Todd, overtook him, and said —

"A fine night, sir, we shall have? The moon is getting up nicely now, sir!"

Todd breathed a little more freely. After all, it was not an enemy, but only one of those people so common in places a little way out of town, who are talkative to any one they may meet, for the mere love of talking. For once in his life, Todd determined upon being wonderfully gracious, and he replied quite in a tone of serenity —

"Yes, it is a nice night; and, as you say, the moon is rising beautifully."

"Yes, sir," added the man, who was carrying something that Todd could not, for the life of him, make out. "Yes, sir, and I am not sorry to get home, now. I have been all round by Hendon, Golders Green, and Finchley, sticking bills."

"Bills?"

"Yes, sir, about the murderer Todd, you know!"

"Oh, ah!"

"You know, sir, he has got out of Newgate, and there's five hundred pounds reward offered by the guvment for him. A nice little set up that would be, sir, for any one, wouldn't it, sir?"

"Very."

"All the bill-stickers round London have had a job in putting up the bills, and they say that if it costs a million of money they intend to have him."

"And very proper too," said Todd. "Can you spare a bill, my friend?"

"Oh, yes. There's hand ones as well as posters. Here's one, sir, and you'll find a description of him. Oh, don't I only wish I could come across him, that's all; I'd make rather a tidy day's work then, I think. That would be a little better, sir, than the paste-pot, wouldn't it?"

"Rather," said Todd; "but he might be rather a dear bargain; for such a man, I should think, would not be very easily taken!"

"There's something in that, sir, as you say, but yet I would have a try. Five hundred pounds, you know, sir, is not to be picked up everyday on the road-side."

"Certainly not! Is that Hampstead where the lights are, to the left, there?"

"Yes, right on. I live at west-end, and my way lays this way. Good night, sir!"

"Good night," said Todd. "I hope you may have the luck of meeting with this Todd, and so earning the five hundred pounds you mention; but I am afraid, after all, there is not much chance, for I heard he had gone down to the coast, and had got on board a vessel and was off by this time. That may not be true, though. Goodnight!"

CHAPTER CXLIII.

TODD TAKES A LOOK AT HIS OLD QUARTERS IN FLEET STREET.

The village of Hampstead was, at the time of which we write, really a village. It still retains many of its old houses and picturesque beauties, but it is not quite such a little retired spot as it was. If ever any one walked through Hampstead, however, who was less inclined than another to pause and speculate upon its beauties, certainly that man was our doubtful acquaintance, Sweeney Todd.

He did not think it quite prudent to stop in the High-street to solace himself with any worldly comforts, although he saw several public-houses very temptingly open, but passing right on, he descended Red Lion Hill, and paused at a little inn at the foot of it, that is to say, on the London side of the pretty village.

Brandy was Todd's request, and he was met by a prompt, "Yes, sir;" but Todd had, among his varied experiences, to find out what Hampstead brandy was, and the moment he placed a portion of it in his mouth, his eyes goggled furiously, and spitting it out, he said, in a voice of anger —

"This is some mistake."

"Mistake, sir?"

"Yes; I asked for brandy, and you have given me the rinsings of some bottles and dirty glasses."

"Oh, dear no, sir; that brandy is the very best that you will get in all Hampstead."

"The best in all Hampstead!" repeated Todd, with a groan; "what must the worst be, I wonder?"

"I assure you, sir, it is considered to be very good."

"Considered?" said Todd. "Then, my friend, there's your money, and as the brandy is considered to be so good, you can drink it; but having some respect, from old companionship, for my inside, I decline it. Good evening."

With these words, Todd laid a shilling upon the bar, and strode away.

"Well," said the publican, "how singular! that's the eighth person who has refused that one quartern of brandy and paid for it. Here, wife, put this back into the bottle again, and shake it up well."

Todd pursued his route down Haverstock Hill, until he came to the then straggling district of Camden Town, and there he did find a house at which he got just a tolerable glass of brandy, and feeling very much invigorated by the drop, he walked on more rapidly still; and a thought took possession of him, which, although it was perhaps not unattended with danger, might turn out to be a very felicitous one.

During his career in the shop in Fleet-street, he had collected a number of watches from the pockets of the murdered persons, but he had always been afraid to attempt the disposal of the best of them.

The fact was, that at that time everybody had not a watch as at present. It was an expensive article, and Mr. So-and-so's watch was as well known as Mr. So-and-so himself; so that it would have been one of the most hazardous things possible for Todd to have brought suspicion upon himself by going about disposing of the watches of his victims. It was the same, too, with some other costly articles, such as rings, lockets, and so on; and as he had realised as much money as he could previous to his arrangements for leaving England, Todd had left some of this description of property to perish in the fire, which he hoped to be the means of igniting in old Fleet-street upon his departure.

Now, as he crept along by Tottenham-Court-Road, he mused upon the state of things.

"If," he muttered, "I could only get into my late house in Fleet-street, I know where to lay my hand upon portable property, which was not worth my

consideration while I had thousands of pounds in gold, but which now would be a fortune to me in my reduced circumstances. If I could but lay my hand upon it!"

The more Todd thought over this proposition, the more pleased he was with it; and by the time he had indulged himself with two more glasses of brandy, it began to assume, to his mind, a much more tangible shape.

"It may be done," he said, "it surely may be done. If I could only make my way in the church it might be done well, and surely one of these picklocks that I have about me might enable me to do that."

The picklock he alluded to was one that he had put in his pocket to accommodate Mr. Lupin, when they were both so intent upon their escape from Newgate, and when Mr. Lupin was foolish enough to believe that Todd really had two thousand pounds buried in Caen Wood, Hampstead. There was one thing, however, which made Todd pause. He did not think he was sufficiently disguised to venture into the locality of his old residence, and, unfortunately for him, he was rather a peculiar-looking man. His great chance, however, was, that in Fleet-street surely no one would now think of looking for Sweeney Todd.

"I must be bold," he said, "I must be bold and resolute. It will not do to shrink now. I will buy a knife."

This was a pleasant idea to Todd. Buying a knife seemed almost like getting half-way to his revenge, and he went into an obscure cutler's shop, and bought a long double-edged knife, for which he gave two shillings. He then carefully concealed it in his clothing.

After this, he hit upon a plan of operations which he thought would have the effect of disguising him. At that period, wigs were so commonly worn that it was nothing at all particular for a person to go into a wig-makers, and select one — put it on — pay for it — and go away!

"Yes," said Todd, "I will buy a wig; for I have art enough and knowledge of wigs to enable me to do so — as shall produce the greatest possible change in my appearance. A wig, a wig will be the thing."

Todd had hardly well made this declaration than he came upon a wig-makers, and in he went. Pointing to a wig that was on a block, and which had a very clerical kind of look, he inquired the price of it.

"Oh, my dear sir," said the wig-maker, "that is much too old looking a perriwig for you. Let me recommend you a much younger wig. Now, sir, here's one that will take a matter of ten years off your age in a moment."

Todd had discretion enough to know well that he could not make up young, so he merely pointed to the wig again and enquired the price.

"Well, sir, it is a couple of guineas, but —"

Without another word, Todd laid down the couple of guineas, and putting the wig upon his head he left the shop, certainly having given the wig-maker

an impression that he was the oddest customer he had had for some time; but little did he suspect that that odd customer was the criminal with whose name all London was ringing, and upon whose head — with or without a wig — so heavy a price was set.

After this, Todd made his way to a shop where second-hand clothing was bought and sold, and there he got accommodated with an old gray coat that reached down to the calves of his legs, and he bought likewise a very voluminous white cravat; and when he got into the street with these articles, and purchased at another shop a walking cane, with a great silver top to it, and put one hand behind his back and stooped very much, and moved along as if he were afflicted with all the corns and bunions that his toes could carry, and by bending his knees, decreased his height six inches, no one could have known him.

At least, so Todd flattered himself.

In this way he tottered on until he got to the immediate neighbourhood of Fleet-street. To be sure, with all his coolness and courage, he could not help shaking a little when he came to that well remembered neighbourhood.

"And I," he thought to himself, "and I by this time hoped and expected to be far over the sea, instead of being such a wretch as I am now, crawling about, as it were, amid pitfalls and all sorts of dangers! Alas! alas!"

He really shook now, and it was quite astonishing how, with his old wig, and his old gray coat and his stick, and his stooping posture, old and venerable, yes, positively venerable, Sweeney Todd actually looked.

"Ain't you well, sir?" said a respectable man, stepping up to him. "Can I assist you?"

Todd perpetrated about half a dozen wheezing coughs, and then, not sorry for an opportunity of trying his powers of imitation of age, he replied in a tremulous voice —

"Ah, sir! Yes — old age — old age, sir — eugh! — eugh! — oh, dear me, I feel that I am on my last legs, and that they are on the shake — old age, sir, will come on; but it's a comfort to look back upon a long life well spent in deeds of charity!"

"Not a doubt of it," said the stranger. "I was only afraid, sir, you were taken suddenly ill, as you stood there."

"Oh, no — no — eugh! — no. Thank you, sir."

"Good evening, sir."

"Good evening, my good sir. — Oh, if I had you only in my old shop with a razor at your throat, wouldn't I polish you off!" muttered Todd, as the stranger left him.

IN THE COURSE OF ANOTHER MINUTE, Todd was on the Fleet-street side of Temple Bar.

He could almost see his old house — that house in which he had passed years of deep iniquity, and which he had hoped, ere that time, would have been a heap of ruins. There it was, tall, dismal, and gaunt looking. The clock of St. Dunstan's struck eleven.

"Eleven," he muttered. "A good hour. The streets are getting deserted now, and no one will know me. I will stoop yet more, and try to look older — older still."

Todd a little over acted his part, as he tottered down Fleet-street, so that some individuals turned to look after him, which was a thing he certainly did not wish, as his great object was to escape all observation if possibly he could; so he corrected that, and went on rather more strongly; and finally he came exactly opposite to his own house, and getting partially into a door-way, he looked long and fixedly at it.

What thoughts, at that time, chased each other through the guilty mind of that man, it is hard to say; but he stood like a statue, fixing his regards upon the house for the space of about a quarter of an hour.

Once only he clapped his teeth together, and gave a sort of savage growl.

It was lucky for Todd that no one saw him just then, or they would have thought him rather an extraordinary old man.

The house was perfectly dark from top to bottom. The shutters of the shop, of course, were all up, and the shutters of the first-floor windows were likewise closed. The other windows had their old dingy blinds all down; and, to all outward appearance, that den of murder was deserted.

But Todd could not believe such to be the case. In his own mind, he felt fully sure, that Sir Richard Blunt was not the man to leave the house without some sort of custody; and he quite settled with himself, that there was some one or more persons minding it, and, no doubt, by order, sitting there in one of the back rooms, so that no light should show in front.

"Curses on them all!" he muttered.

"Ah! you are looking at old Todd's house, sir?" said a voice.

Todd started; and close to him was a person smoking a pipe, and looking as jolly as possible.

"Yes — yes," stammered Todd, for he was taken by surprise rather. "Oh, yes, sir. I am amazed at the great wickedness of human nature."

"You may well, sir — you may well! Lord bless me! I never thought him a good looking man, but I never thought any ill of him neither, and I have seen him lots of times."

"Indeed, sir? Pray, what sort of man was he? I never saw him, as I live in Soho; and I am so much in years now, that in the bustling day-time I don't care to come into streets like this; for you see, sir, I can't move about as I could sixty years ago; and the people — God help them — are all in such a hurry now, and they push me here and there in such a way, that my failing breath

and limbs won't stand it; and — and — eugh! — eugh! Oh, dear."

"Poor old gentleman! I don't wonder at your not liking the crowds. How old may you be, sir?'"

"A matter of eighty-nine, sir. It's an old age to get to, but I — I am younger than my brother, yet — Ha! ha! Oh dear, if it wasn't now for the rheumatism and the lumbago and a pain in my shoulder, and a few other little things, I should get on very well."

"Not a doubt of it. But you asked me what Todd was like, and I'll tell you, sir. He was nigh upon six feet high, and his face was two feet of it. He was just as ugly as any one you would wish to see for a pattern in that way, and that's his house where he murdered all the people."

"Peace be to their souls!"

"Amen! And there are underground places that lead right away through the vaults of St. Dunstan's to Bell-yard, where Mrs. Lovett's pie-shop was, you know, sir."

"I have heard. Ah, dear — dear, I have heard. A very wicked woman, indeed — very wicked; and yet, sir, it is to be hoped she has found mercy in another world."

"There would need be plenty of it," said the man with the pipe, "if Mrs. Lovett is to be accommodated with any."

"My friend," said Todd, "don't be profane; and now I must go, as I don't like being out late."

"And so must I, for my pipe's out. I shall turn in, now. Good night, sir, and a pleasant walk home to you."

"Thank you, sir, thank you — eugh! eugh! I think if it were not for my cough, I should do very well."

Todd hobbled away, and the man, who lived in Bouverie-street, went home. Todd had not got any real information from this man; but the brief conversation he had had with him, had given him a sort of confidence in his disguise, and in his power of acting, that he had not had before, so that, upon the whole, he was not sorry for the little incident.

And now it was quite evident that the streets were getting very much deserted. During the whole length of Fleet-street there was not half a dozen persons to be seen at all, and Todd, after casting a rapid glance around him to note if he were observed, suddenly crossed the way, and boldly went up to the door of old St. Dunstan's Church.

When once close to the door of the old building, he was so much in shadow that he felt tolerably secure from observation, but still he lingered a little, for he did not want to do anything so hastily as to rob it of its caution.

With his back against the church-door he glanced right and left, and then for the space of five minutes he bent all his faculties to the one task of ascertaining if any one was sufficiently near to watch him, and he got perfectly

satisfied that such was not the case. He stood securely against the old church-door.

"So far," he muttered, "I am safe — quite safe."

CHAPTER CXLIV.

TODD MAKES HIS WAY INTO HIS OWN HOUSE.

When Todd was satisfied that he was not watched or even observed by any one, he turned and commenced operations upon the door of the church. The cunning person who had put on the lock, had had a notion in his necromantic head, that the larger you made a lock the better it was, and the less likely to be picked; and the consequence of this was, that Todd found no difficulty in opening the church-door.

The moment he felt the lock yield to the false key he employed, he took another keen glance around him, and, seeing no one, slipped into the sacred edifice and closed the door behind him. Feeling, then, up and down the door until his hand touched a bolt, he shot it into its socket, and then a feeling of great security took possession of him, although the interior of the church was most profoundly dark, and any one would have thought that such a man as Todd — in such a place — could hardly have been free from some superstitious terrors. An overbearing selfishness, however, mingled with the most vengeful and angry feelings, kept Todd above all these sensations, which are mostly the result of vacant mindedness.

The church felt cold, and the silence had about it a character such as the silence of no other kind of place has. It may be imagination, but the silence of a church deserted, always appears to us to be a silence different from any other, as the silence in a wood is entirely different from any other description of stillness.

"All is quiet enough here," whispered Todd. "I and the dead have this place to ourselves now, and so we have often had it. Many a time have I waded about this building in the still hours of the night, when all London slept, and opened some little window, with the hope of letting out the stench from the dead bodies before the morning should bring people to the building; but it would not do. The smell of decomposition lingered in the air, and it is here still, though not so bad. Yes, it is here still! I can smell it now, and I know the odour well."

Todd was sufficiently familiar with St. Dunstan's church almost to go over

TODD IN THE SCENE OF HIS MURDERS.

it even at that hour, and amid that darkness, without running against anything; but yet he was very careful as he went, and kept his arms outstretched before him. He dreaded to get a light, although he had the means of doing so, for Mr. Lupin had, at his request, given him some of the matches and little wax-candle-ends that the pious lady had supplied him with. Yet Todd knew how small a light would suffice to shine through some of the richly stained glass windows

of the church, and therefore he dreaded to give himself a light.

He felt confident that he should have no sort of difficulty in getting into the vaults, for in consequence of recent events the stone that covered up the entrance could not be fast, and he knew from past experience that his strength was sufficient to raise it if he once got hold of it, and if it were not fastened down by cement, which, no doubt, was not the case now.

"I shall yet get," he said, "into my old house. The time has been rather short, and the goods there deposited by me in old times may there remain; and if so, I will carry away enough with me to keep me far above the necessities of life, and when once I have achieved that much, I will from some obscure place meditate upon my revenge."

In the course of about ten minutes he found the flat stone that led into the vaults, and to his satisfaction he found that it was merely laid crosswise over the aperture, in order to prevent any one in day time from heedlessly tumbling in, but at night it was not, of course, expected that any one would be there to fall into such a danger.

With one effort Todd removed it.

"Good," he said. "Now I can make my way, and once below the level of the floor of the church, there will be no danger in at once accommodating myself with a light, which will be useful enough in the vaults."

Getting upon his hands and knees now, Todd, for fear of a fall down the stone steps, cautiously got down the first few of them, and then he paused to light one of the bits of taper with which he was provided. In the course of a few moments the tiny flame was clear and bright, and shading it with his hand, Todd carefully descended the remainder of the stairs.

How still everything was in those vaults of old St. Dunstan's. Were there no spirits from another world — spirits of the murdered, to flit in horrible palpability before the eyes of that man who had cut short their thread of life? Surely if ever a visitant from another world could have been expected, it would have been to appear to Todd to convince him that there was more beyond the grave than a forgotten name and a mouldering skeleton.

When he reached the foot of the stairs and was satisfied that the little light was burning well, he held it up above his head and bent a keen glance around him.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "so they have been doing their best — poor fools as they are to meddle with such rubbish — to rid the family vaults of some of the new tenants that I took occasion to introduce into them. Well, let them, let them! I did play a little havoc with the gentility of the dead, I must admit!"

With this highly jocose remark, Todd passed on, taking a route well known to him, which would conduct him to the cellar that it will be recollected was immediately underneath his shop. It was from this that he hoped to get into the house.

IT TOOK TODD MUCH LESS TIME than it would have taken any one else to make his way to that cellar; but then no one was or could be so well acquainted with all the windings and turnings of the excavation that led to it as he, and finally he reached it, just as he found the necessity of lighting up another little piece of wax candle, as the one he had already lit had burnt right to his hand. He found a piece of wood, into which he stuck the new one securely, so that it was much handier to hold.

Todd now felt the absolute necessity of being much more cautious than before, for he did know who might be in the shop above, and he did know that a very small sound below would make itself heard. Holding up the light, he saw that his nice little mechanical arrangement regarding the two chairs, remained just as it had been as he used to use it.

"Ah!" he cried, "it will be some time in London again before people will sit down in a barber's chair with anything like confidence, particularly if it should chance to be a fixture. Ha!"

Todd was getting quite merry now. The sight of the old familiar objects of that place had certainly raised his spirits very considerably, and no doubt the brandy had helped a little. Setting the light down in a corner of the cellar, he placed himself in an attitude of intense listening, which he kept up for about five minutes, at the end of which time he gave a nod, and muttered —

"There may be some one in the parlour — that I will not pretend to say no to; but the shop is free of human occupants. And now for the means of getting into it. If anybody can, I can, and that with tolerable ease, too."

The apparatus by which Todd had been in the habit of letting down his customers, consisted of a slight system of lever, which he could move from the parlour, but provided he could reach so high, he could just as easily release the loose plank from where he was; in which case the chair that was above would have a preponderating influence, as that was on the heaviest arm of the plank from the centre upon which it turned.

"I can manage that," he said; and then taking the knife from his pocket, he found that by its aid he could just reach high enough to touch the lever that acted as a kind of bolt to keep the plank in its place. The moment he removed that bolt the plank slowly moved, and then Todd caught the end of it in his hand, and pulled it right down, so that it assumed a perpendicular aspect completely. Holding then the piece of wood to which he had attached the wax light in his mouth, he climbed carefully and noiselessly up into his old shop; and when there he replaced the plank, and on the end of the board which was the counterpoise to the chair, he placed a weight, which he knew where to lay his hands upon, and which kept the chair in its place, although a very little would have overcome the counterpoise, and sent it down to the cellar below.

Todd extinguished his light, and the moment he did so, he saw a very faint

illumination coming from the parlour through a portion of the door, into which a square of glass was let in, and through which he, Todd, used to glare at poor Tobias.

The sound of voices, too, came upon his ears, and he laid himself flat down on the floor, close to the wall, under a kind of bench that ran along it for a considerable distance.

"I am certain I heard something," said a voice, and then the parlour-door was opened, and a broad flash of light came into the shop. "I am quite sure I heard an odd noise."

"Oh, nonsense," said some one else. "Nonsense."

"But I did, I tell you."

"Yes, you fancied it half-an-hour ago, and it turned out to be nothing at all. Lord bless you, if I were to go on fancying things out of what I have heard since I have been in this house, minding it for Sir Richard Blunt, I should have been out of my mind long before this, I can tell you."

"But it was very odd."

"Well, the shop is not so large: you can soon see if Todd is in it. Ha! ha! ha!"

"No, no, I don't expect to see Todd there exactly, I confess; it would not be a very likely place in which to find him."

"Well, is there anything now?"

"No — no. It all seems much as usual, and yet I thought I did hear a noise; but I suppose it was nothing, or a rat, perhaps, for there are lots, they say, below. It might have been a rat. I did not think that before, and I feel all the easier now at the idea."

"Then, come and finish our game."

"Very good — all's right. You make a little drop of brandy-and-water, and we will just have this game out before we go to rest, for I am getting tired and it's late."

"Not quite twelve yet."

"Ain't it? There it goes by St. Dunstan's clock."

Todd counted the strokes of the clock, and by the time they ceased to reverberate in the night air, the man who most unquestionably had heard a noise in the shop, had gone into the parlour again, half satisfied that it was a rat, and sat down to the game at cards that had been interrupted.

These were two men that had been put into the house to mind it, until the authorities should determine what to do with it, by Sir Richard Blunt. They were not officers of any skill or repute, although they were both constables; but then Sir Richard did not consider that anything in the shape of great intelligence was required in merely taking care of an empty house — for the idea of Todd ever visiting that place again, had certainly been one that did not even enter the far-seeing brain of the magistrate.

"It's my deal," Todd heard one of them say, "but you go on, while I mix the brandy-and-water."

"Indeed!" muttered Todd, as he gathered up his gaunt form from under the bench. "Indeed! So there are two of you, are there? Well, if there is another world, you can keep each other company on your road to it, for I am not going to let your lives stand in the way of my projects. No — no, I shall yet polish off somebody in my old place, and it is a pleasure that it should be two friends of that man Blunt, whom I so hate, that I have no words in which to express it!"

Todd crept up to the parlour door with the long knife in his hand that he had bought at the cutler's in Camden Town, and putting his eyes close to the pane of glass in the door, he looked in at the two men.

They really seemed to be quite comfortable, those two men. A bright fire was burning in the grate, and a kettle was singing away upon the hob at a great rate. A pack of cards, some pipes, and some glasses, were upon the table that they had dragged up close to the fire-side; and they were, take them altogether, about as comfortable as anybody could well expect to be in that gloomy parlour of Todd's, at his house of murder in Fleet-street.

They were stout strong men, though, and as Todd looked, he thought to himself, that with all his strength, and with all his desperate fighting for life, as he would do, it was not a desirable thing for him to come into personal contact with them.

"Cunning," he muttered, "will do more than strength. I must bide my time — but I will kill them both if they are in my way, and that they will be, is nearly past a doubt!"

"There," said the man who was mixing the brandy-and-water, "there, you will find that a stiff comfortable glass; lots of brandy, and lots of sugar, and only water enough to make it hot and steamy."

"You know how to mix, Bill," said the other, as he took a drop and then was obliged to cough and wink again, it was so strong and hot.

"Ah!" thought Todd, "if it would only choke you!"

The other man then took his drink at the brandy, and he too coughed and winked, and then they both laughed and declared how precious strong it was, and one of them said —

"The fun of it is, that it was old Todd's; and when he laid in such good stuff as this, he little thought that we would be enjoying it. I wonder where he is?"

"Oh, he's far enough off by this time, poking about at some of the sea-ports to try to get away, you may depend."

"Is he," muttered Todd; "you will find, my kind friend, that I am near enough to cut your throat, I hope."

CHAPTER CXLV.

TODD HAS A NARROW ESCAPE, AND HAS A BIT OF REVENGE.

IT WAS QUITE A PROVOKING THING, and gall and wormwood to Todd in a manner of speaking, to see those two boisterous men enjoying themselves in his parlour. There could be no doubt in the world, but that if he had had the means then and there to do so, he would have hurled destruction upon them both forthwith; but he could only look at them now, and wait for a better opportunity.

The fact was, that now, for the first time, Todd found that the architecture of his old place of residence was far from being of the most convenient order; inasmuch as you could not reach the staircase leading to the upper part of the residence, without going through the parlour; so that he was a prisoner in the shop.

"I tell you what it is, Bill," said one of the men, assuming quite a philosophical look. "That fellow, Todd, as used to live here, after all, was some use to society."

"Was he?"

"Yes, to be sure. Can't you guess?"

"Not I. I can't see what use a fellow can be to society who cuts folks' throats."

"Can't you?"

"No, nor you neither, if you come to that."

"Yes I can. Don't it make folks careful of going into a strange barber's shop, let me ask you that?"

"Oh, you idiot. That's always the way with you. You begins with looking as wise as an owl as has found out something wonderful, and then when one comes to find out what it is, it's just nothing at all to nobody. I tell you what it is, old fellow, it strikes me you are getting a drop too much."

"No — no; but I have got something on my mind."

"It stands on a very small place, then. What is it?"

"Just you listen and I'll tell you. I did think of not saying anything about it, because you see I thought, that is to say, I was afraid if I did, you would go off at once."

"Off? Off?"

"I don't mean dead — I mean out of this place, that's all, not out of this world; but now I feel as if I ought to tell you all about it, you know, and then you can judge for yourself. You know you slept here last night on that large sofa in the corner?"

"Yes, in course."

"Very good; you had had what one may call just the other drop you know, and so —"

"No I hadn't, but you had. I recollect quite well you dropped your light, and had no end of trouble to get it lighted again, and kept knocking your head against the mantel-shelf and saying 'Don't' as if somebody was doing it to you."

"Go along with you. Will you listen, or won't you, while I tell the horrid anecdote?"

"Horrid, is it?"

"Above a bit. It's enough to make all your hair stand on end, like quills on a guinea hen, as the man says in the play; and I expect you'll dream of it all night; so here goes, and don't you interrupt me any more, now."

"Go on. I won't."

"Well, you know we had a pretty good fire here, as we have now; and as twelve o'clock went ding-dong by old St. Dunstan's, we thought it was time to have some sleep, and you lay down on the sofa, saying as you could see by the fire light, while I took the candle to go up stairs to bed with, you know — old Todd's bed, I suppose it is, on the second-floor, and rather damp and thin, you know."

"Goodness, gracious! tell me something I don't know, will you? Do you want to drive a fellow out of his mind?"

"Well — well, don't be hasty! I'm getting on. I took the light, and shading it with one hand, for there's always a furious draught upon the stairs of this house; up I went, thinking of nothing at all. Well, in course, I had to pass the first-floor, which is shut up, you know, and has all sorts of things in it."

"Yes; go on — go on!"

"Is it interesting?"

"It is; only you go on. I'll warrant now it's a ghost you are coming to."

"No, it ain't; but don't percipitate, and you shall hear all about it. Let me see, where was I? — Oh, on the first-floor landing: But, as I say, I was thinking of nothing at all, when, all of a sudden, I heard a very odd kind of noise in the front room of the first-floor."

"I wonder you didn't fall headlong down stairs with fright, candle and all."

"No, I didn't. It sounded like the murmur of people talking a long way off. Then I began to think it must be in the next house; and I thought of going up to bed, and paying no attention to it, and I did get up two or three steps of the second-floor stairs, but still I heard it; and it got such a hold of my mind, do you know, that I couldn't leave it, but down I went again, and listened. I thought of coming to you; but, somehow, I didn't do so."

"Now, go on!"

"Well, after listening with my ear against the door for some time, I was certain that the sound was in the room; and I don't know how I screwed up courage enough to open the door very gently, and look in!"

"You did?"

"I did; and the very moment I did so, out went the light as clean as if you had taken your fingers and snuffed it out; but in the room there was a strange pale kind of light, that wasn't exactly like twilight, nor like moonlight, nor like any light that I ever saw, but you could see everything by it as plain as possible."

"Well — well?"

"The room was crammed full of people, all dressed, and looking at each other; and some of them were speaking; and upon all their clothes and faces there was blood, sometimes more, and sometimes less; and all their eyes looked like the eyes of the dead; and then one voice more loud than the rest said — 'All murdered! — All murdered by Todd! The Lord have mercy upon his soul!'"

"Oh, gracious! What did you do?"

"I felt as if my breath was going from me, and my heart kept swelling and swelling till I thought it would burst, and then I dropped the candle; and the next time I come to my senses, I found myself lying on the bed in the second floor, with all my clothes on!"

"You dreamt it?"

"Oh, no — no. It's no use telling me that. I only wish I thought so, that's all."

"But, I tell you, you did."

"You may tell me as much as you like; but in the morning when I came down, there was the candle on the first-floor landing, just as I had dropped it. What do you think of that? Of course, after I drew out my head again from the first-floor front room I must have gone up stairs in the middle of my fright, and I dare say I fainted away, and didn't come to myself again till the morning."

"Oh, stuff! Don't try to make me believe in your ghost stories. If — if I thought it was true, I should bolt out of the house this minute."

"You would, really?"

"Yes, to be sure; is a fellow to stay in a place with his hair continually standing on end, I should like to know? Hardly. But it's all stuff. Take another drop of brandy! Now I tell you what, if you have the courage to go with me, I will take the light now and go up to the first-floor, and have a good look all about it! What do you say to that, now? Will you do it?"

"I don't much mind."

"Only say the word, and I am quite ready."

"Well, I will. If so be they are there, they won't do us any harm, for they took no more notice of me than as if I had been nothing at all. But how you do shake!"

"I shake? You never were more mistaken in all your life. It's you that's

shaking, and that makes you think I am. You are shaking, if you please; and if you don't like the job of going up stairs, only say so; I won't press it upon you!"

"Oh, I'll go."

"You are sure of it, now? You don't think it will make you ill? because I shouldn't like that. Come now, only say at once that you would rather not go, and there's an end to it."

"Yes, but I rather would."

"Come on, then — come on. Courage, my friend, courage. Look at me, and be courageous. You don't see me shivering and shaking and shrinking. Keep up your heart, and come on!"

"You wretches," muttered Todd. "It shall go hard with me, now, but I will play you some trick that shall go right to drive you out of your shallow wits. Go! It is the very thing I would, of all others, have wished you to do."

It was quite clear that the man who had proposed going up stairs to explore the first-floor, was much the more alarmed of the two; and now that he had made the proposal, he would gladly have seized upon any excuse for backing out of it, short of actually confessing that his fears had got the better of him. No doubt he had been greatly in hopes that his companion, who had told the ghost story, would have shrunk from such an ordeal; but as he did not do so, there was no resource but to carry it out or confess that it was but a piece of braggadocio, which he wanted the firmness to carry out. He strove now to talk himself out of his fears.

"Come on — come on! Ghosts, indeed! There are no such things, of course, as any reasonable man knows; and if there are, why, what harm can they do us? I say, what harm can they do us?"

"I don't know!"

"You don't know? No, nor nobody else! Come on, I say. Of course providence is providence, and if there are ghosts, I respect them very much — very much indeed, and would do anything in the world to oblige them!"

The valiant proposer of the experimental trip to the first floor uttered these last sentences in a loud voice, no doubt with the hope that if any of the ghostly company of the first-floor were within hearing, they would be so good as to report the same to their friends, so that he might make his way there with quite a good understanding.

They trimmed the candle now; and having each of them fortified himself with a glass of brandy that Todd had laid in for his own consumption, they commenced their exploit by leaving the parlour and slowly ascending the staircase that led to the upper portion of the house.

Of course, Todd knew well the capabilities of that house, and long before the two men had actually left the parlour he had made up his mind what to do. The door of communication between the shop and the parlour was not fastened, so that he could on open at the moment; and when the men left that

latter room he at once entered it. Todd's first movement, then, was to supply himself with a good dose of his own brandy, which he took direct from the bottle to save time.

"Ah!" he whispered, drawing a long breath after the draught, "I feel myself again, now!"

In order to carry out his plan, he knew that he had no time to spare; for he did not doubt but that the two men would make their visit as short as possible to the first-floor; so — with cautious but rapid footsteps — he slipped into the passage and at once commenced the ascent of the staircase after them. The light they carried guided him very well. How little they imagined that any of its beams shone upon the diabolical face of Sweeney Todd!

"Can't you come on?" said one of the men to the other. "Damme, how you do lag behind, to be sure. Any one would think you were afraid."

"Afraid? Me afraid! that is a good joke."

"Well, come quicker, then."

"You will both of you," thought Todd, "come down a little quicker, or I am very much mistaken indeed."

The distance was short, and the landing of the first floor was soon gained by the men. He who had seen, or dreamed that he had seen, the strange sight in the room upon a former occasion, was decidedly the most courageous of the two. Perhaps, after all, he was the least imaginative.

"I think you said it was the front room?" said the other.

"Oh, yes, I heard not a sound in the back one. Here's the door. You hold the light while I listen a little."

"Yes — I — I'll hold it. Keep up your courage, and don't shake now. Oh, what a coward you are!"

"Well, that's a good one. You are shaking so yourself that you will have the light out, if you don't mind. Do try and be a little steady with it; and your teeth chatter so in your head, that they are for all the world like a set of castanets."

"Oh, how you do talk. Come, listen at the door; I must say I don't hear anything; but I have the greatest respect for ghosts, I have. I never say one word against the dead — God bless 'em all!"

While this man held the light — or rather waved it to and fro in his agitation — the other, with his ear placed flat against the panel of the door, listened attentively. All was perfectly still in the first-floor, and he said —

"Perhaps they haven't begun yet, you know."

"Perhaps not; — shall we go away, now?"

"Oh, no — no. There's no end of curious things in the room; and now that we are here, let's go in, at all events, and have a little look about us. Don't be afraid. Come — come."

"Oh — I — I ain't exactly afraid, only, you see, I don't see much the use of

going in, and — and, you know, we have already heard an odd noise in the shop, to-night."

"But that was nothing, for I looked, you know."

"Yes — yes, — but — but I'm afraid the fire will go out below, do you know."

"Let it go, then. If you are too much of a coward to come with me into this room, say so at once, and you can go down stairs while I have a look at it by myself. You can't have the candle, though, for it is no use my going in by myself."

"What! do you expect me to go in the dark? Oh dear, no, I could not do that; open the door, and I will follow you in; I ain't a bit afraid, only, you see, I feel very much interested, that's all."

"Oh, well, that's quite another thing."

With this, the most courageous of the two men opened the door of the front room on the first-floor, and peeped into it.

"All's right," he said. "There ain't so much as a mouse stirring. Come on!"

Highly encouraged by this announcement, the other followed him; and they allowed the door to creak nearly shut after them.

While this hesitation upon the stairs was going on, Todd had been about half way up from the passage, crouching down for fear they should by chance look that way, and see him; but when he found that they had fairly gone into the front room, he made as much speed to the top of the stairs as was consistent with extreme caution, and laying his hand upon the handle of the lock of the door of the back room on that floor, he noiselessly turned it, and the door at once yielding, he glided in.

The two rooms communicated with each other by a pair of folding-doors, and the light that the men carried sent some beams through the ill-fitting junction of the two, so that Todd could see very well about him.

CHAPTER CXLVI.

THERE IS A FIRE IN FLEET STREET AFTER ALL. — TODD ESCAPES.

WHEN ONCE HE HAD GAINED that back room, Todd considered that his design against the peace of mind of the two men was all but accomplished; and it was with great difficulty that he kept himself from giving a hideous chuckle, that would at once have opened their ears to the fact that some one

was close at hand, who, whether of this world or the next, was a proficient in horrid noises.

He controlled this ebullition of ill-timed mirth, however, and listened attentively.

"There don't seem much else beside lots of clothes," said one of the men, "and hats, and sticks, and umbrellas."

"Ah!" said the other, "and they all belong to the murdered men that Todd cut up to make pies of!"

"Horrible! — horrible!"

"You may say that, old friend. It's only a great pity that Sir Richard has so expressly forbid anything to be touched in the old crib, or else there's some nice enough things here, I should say, that would make a fellow warm and comfortable in the winter nights."

"Not a doubt of that. Here's a cloak, now!"

"A beauty — quite a beauty, I say. He can't know what is really here. Do you think he can?"

"What, Sir Richard?"

"Yes."

"Oh, don't he. I wouldn't venture to touch so much as an old hat here, for I should feel, as sure as fate, he'd find it out."

"Oh, nonsense, he couldn't; and as for the ghosts, they don't seem at all likely to interfere in the matter, for there's not one of them to be seen or heard of to-night."

"No, I defy the ghosts — a-hem! I begin to think, do you know, that ghosts are all a sham. Why here we are, two men as brave as lions, or we should not have come here, and yet the deuce a ghost is to be seen. I tell you what I'd do if one was to come. I'd say, 'Old fellow, was this your cloak?' and then if he said 'yes,' I'd say, 'well, old fellow, it's of no use to you now, you know; will you give it to me?'"

"Ha! — ha! Capital! Why you have quite got over all your fears."

"Fears? Rubbish! I was only amusing myself to hear what you would say."

"Was you, though? Only acting, after all?"

"Precisely."

"Well, then, I must say you did it remarkably well, and if you take to the stage you will make your fortune. Oh, here's a nice brown suit now, that would be just my size. I should feel inclined to say to the ghosts what you would say about the cloak."

"Well, let's say it, and if nobody says anything to the contrary, we will take it for granted. I will take the cloak, and you the brown suit; Sir Richard will be none the wiser, and we shall be a little the richer, you know. 'Mr. Ghost, may I have this cloak, if you please, as you can't possibly want it?'"

"Upon my life you are a funny fellow," said the other; and then holding up

TODD ALARMS THE TWO BOW STREET OFFICERS.

the brown suit, he said, "Mr. Ghost who once owned this, may I have this brown suit, as it is of no use to you now?"

It was at this moment that Todd dashed open the two folding doors, and with one of the most frightful, fiendish yells that ever came from the throat of man, he made one bound into the front room.

The effect of this appearance, and the sound that accompanied it, was all that Todd could possibly wish or expect. The two men were almost driven to

madness. They dropped the light, and with shrieks of dismay they rushed to the door — they tore it open, and then they both fell headlong down the staircase to the passage below, where they lay in a state of insensibility that was highly amusing to Todd.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, as he stood at the head of the stairs; "Ha! ha!"

He listened, but not so much as a groan came from either of the men, and then he clapped his huge hands together with a report like the discharge of a pistol, and laughed again. Todd had not been so well pleased since his escape from Newgate.

He slowly descended the stairs, and more than once he stopped to laugh again. The passage was intensely dark, so that when he reached it he trod upon one of the men, but that rather amused him, and he jumped violently upon the body.

"Good," he said. "Perhaps they are both dead. Well, let them both die. It will be a lesson to others how far they interfere with me. Society and I are now fairly at war, and I will win as many battles as I can. They can't say but this is a well-fought one, two to one. Ha! They ought to make me a Field-Marshal. Ha!"

Making the most hideous faces, just for the fun of the thing, Todd made his way to the parlour, and taking from a corner, where he knew to lay his hands upon them in a moment, a couple of old newspapers, he twisted them up into a kind of torch, and lighting it then at the fire, he went with it flaming in his hand to the passage.

The two men lay profoundly still. Terror and the fall they had had, combined to throw them quite into a swooning state, from which probably it would be hours before they would recover.

"This is capital," said Todd. "Lie there, both of you, until I have transacted the business in this house that brought me here. Then I will, perhaps, think of some amusing way of finishing you both off — ha!"

Still carrying the flaming papers in his hand, Todd now made his way to the first-floor, and found the candle that the men had dropped. That he lighted, as it would be much more convenient to him than the papers; and then he trod them out, for he did not wish any great light as yet to appear from the windows of that house, and perchance awaken the attention of some passing traveller or curious neighbour.

Shading the light with his hand, and looking like some grim ogre, Todd took his way to the second-floor. As he went, he every now and then muttered his satisfaction to himself, or gave utterance to one of his unearthly laughs; for in the whole of that night's adventure there was much to please him.

In the first place, he hoped, and fully expected, to get enough booty from the house to place him a little at his ease as regarded money matters, provided that with it he should be fortunate enough to get away from England. Then,

again, it was no small satisfaction to Todd to do anything which looked like a triumph over Sir Richard Blunt, and this not only looked like it, but really was.

"A good step," he muttered, "a capital step, and a bold one, too; but bold steps are always good ones. Who knows but that from some place of security I may laugh at them all yet; and then, if I do not succeed in killing any of them before I go, I can at my leisure think of and mature some scheme of revenge against them; and there is much to be done with ingenuity, if you are quite unscrupulous. Ha! ha! I have some dainty schemes, if I can but carry them out in the time to come — ha!"

When Todd reached the second-floor, he at once went into the front-room, in one corner of which was a large old-fashioned bureau. Now it was not to be supposed that this bureau had escaped the scrutiny of Sir Richard Blunt; but then it had so happened that before he came to search it he had all the evidence he wished against Todd, so that the search was not so complete or so scrutinising as it might have been.

We shall see that it was not.

"Ah" said Todd, as he drew out the drawers one after the other, "all the locks forced! Well, be it so. That was just what I expected. But I do not think they have moved it from the wall by the look of it."

The bureau, it was quite evident, had not been removed from the wall. It was of immense weight, but Todd managed to move it by short sudden jerks; and then when he had got it quite away at right angles from the wall, he said —

"Here was it that I hid, until some favourable opportunity should occur for the private disposal of them, various articles of value, that I dare not try to convert into money in my open way, for fear of detection. Here are watches, and rings, and jewels, that were described in hand-bills, offering rewards for missing persons, and in advertisements in the papers; so that it became most unsafe for me to show them even to the not very scrupulous Hebrews, who have from time to time bought goods of me."

As he spoke, he removed a portion of the back of the bureau, which slid out of its place softly and easily, for it was made with great skill and care. This sliding piece, when it was fairly removed, disclosed a receptacle capable of holding a great quantity of small articles, and filled up with narrow shelves, as if to hold them securely.

There were costly watches — wigs with rare jewels set in them; for the fashion of wearing wigs was so common at the time, that many wealthy residents of the Temple would pop into Todd's shop for a little arrangement of their wigs or a puff of fresh powder, if they were going somewhere in a hurry, and so lost their lives. Then there were some pairs of rich diamond knee and shoe buckles, and a few lockets, and a whole heap of chains of gold.

"Ah," said Todd; "here is enough to set me up for a time, if I can dispose

of them; and now I must run risks that I would not think of while I had thousands at my command. I must take these things that I was content enough to leave behind me, lest they should at some inopportune moment lead to my detection. Now they shall do me service."

Todd commenced filling his pockets with this dangerous kind of property, each article of which was associated with the frightful crime of murder!

A couple of thousand pounds certainly would not have paid for what Todd upon this occasion managed to stow away about him; and he thought that if he could get one-fourth of that amount for the articles, that it would not be a very bad night's work, considering the not very flourishing state of his finances at that time, compared with what they had been.

During the process, though, of stocking himself with the contents of the secret place in the bureau, he more than once crept to the door of the room, and going out upon the landing, he leant over the staircase and listened. All was most profoundly still, and he was satisfied that Sir Richard Blunt's two men remained in the passage, in the same state of insensibility — if not of death — in which he had left them.

Leaving there some articles of smaller importance than those with which he loaded himself, Todd pushed the bureau back into its place again; and then, taking the light in his hand, cautiously descended the stairs.

When he reached the passage, there lay the two men as he had left them. Indeed, he had been absent much too short a space of time for any very material change to take place in their condition.

"Well," he said. "Now to dispose of you two. What shall it be? Shall I cut your throats as you lie there, or — no, no, I have hit it. No doubt you have both been full of curious speculations respecting how I disposed of those persons whom I polished off in my shop; so you shall both know exactly how it was done. Ha! a good joke."

Todd's good joke consisted now of going into the parlour, and fastening the levers which held up the shaving-chair. Then he lifted up one of the insensible bodies of the men, and carried it into the shop.

"Sit there, or lie there, how you like," he said, as he flung the man into the large shaving-chair.

It was quite a treat now to Todd, and put him in mind of old times, to arrange his apparatus for giving this wretched man a tumble into the vaults below. He went into the parlour and drew the bolt, when away went the man and the chair, and the other chair that was on the reverse side of the plank took the place of that which had gone.

"Ha! ha!" shouted Todd. "This is grand — this is most glorious! Ha! ha! Who would have thought, now, that I should ever live to be at my old work again in this house? It is capital! If that fall has not broken his neck, it's a wonder. It used to kill five out of seven; that was about the average — ha!"

TODD AND THE BOW STREET OFFICERS — THE DEATH GRAPPLE.

Todd didn't fasten the bolt again, but went at once for the other man. He was sitting up!

Todd staggered back for a moment, when he saw him in that position looking at him. The man rubbed his eyes with his hands and said in a weak voice —

"Good God! what is it all about?"

Todd placed the light on the floor within the parlour, so that it shed sufficient rays into the shop to let him see every object in it; and then, with a cry

like that of some wild beast rushing upon his prey, he dashed at the man.

The struggle that ensued was a frightful one. Despair, and a feeling that he was fighting for his life, nerved the man, who had recovered just in time to engage in such a contest, and they both fought their way into the shop together. Todd made the greatest exertions to overcome the man, but it was not until he got him by the throat, and held him with a clutch of iron, that he could do so. Then he flung him upon the chair, but the man, with a last effort, dragged Todd after him, and down they both went together to the vault below!

CHAPTER CXLVII.

SIR RICHARD BLUNT AND CROTCHET COMMENCE THEIR SEARCH FOR TODD.

When Sir Richard Blunt left Chelsea, he felt that he had given a sufficient warning to all who could feel in any way personally interested in the escape of Sweeney Todd from the punishment that his numerous crimes merited.

He rode direct to the office of the Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, and his name at once procured him an interview. This was not the supercilious personage who once before, upon an occasion of Sir Richard Blunt calling upon him regarding Sweeney Todd, had exhibited so much indifference upon the subject, and Sir Richard was received as he ought to be.

"I have waited upon you, sir," said the magistrate, "to say that I have now made every arrangement that is possible for the purpose of counteracting any mischief that the man, Todd, might strive to do; and I think it very likely that I may not have the pleasure of seeing or communicating with you for some time."

"Then you still think, Sir Richard, of going personally after the notorious ruffian?"

"I do, sir. I feel that in some sort I am bound to rid society of that man. I had so large a share in his former apprehension, and in his conviction, that I feel his escape quite a personal matter; and I have no hesitation in saying that I shall not feel at ease until I have again placed him in the hands of the law."

"It is most desirable that he should be so placed, Sir Richard, and I have only two things to say to you upon the subject. One is, that I hope you will be careful of your own safety in the affair; and the other is, that anything we can do or any facilities we can throw in your way, you may most unhesitatingly command in the prosecution of your most praiseworthy enterprise."

"I thank you, sir. I shall take one man with me. His name is Crotchet; and I should wish that in your name I might tell him that, in the event of our search for Todd being successful, he may count upon an adequate reward."

"Certainly! He shall have the whole reward, Sir Richard; and as for yourself, the ministry will not be unmindful of your service in a way that I am sure will be more gratifying to you than an offer of money."

"Sir, I thank you. The government has already, upon more than two or three occasions, been sufficiently liberal to me as regards money to place me in a good position, and I have now no further desires of that sort. I will bid you good morning, sir, and at once start upon the expedition in search of Sweeney Todd. If he be alive and above ground in this country, I will have him."

"If anybody will, you will, Sir Richard."

The magistrate left the place, and repaired at once to his private office, which was close at hand, in Craven-street. There our old friend, Crotchet, was waiting for him.

"Well, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "I have just seen the Secretary of State, and if we catch Todd, you are to have all the money."

"All on it, sir? Oh, my eye! No, I doesn't want all on it, Sir Richard. I isn't a pig."

"I never thought you were, Crotchet; but you may make up your mind to the whole of the reward, as the government will provide for me in another way; so you know now, at starting, what you have to expect, and it will keep you in good heart during all the botheration we may have in looking after this man."

"Why, so it will, sir, you see, so it will, and if I do catch him and get all this tin as is offered as a reward for him, I shall retire from the grabbing business, you see, sir."

"What will you do then, Crotchet?"

"Set up a public-house, sir, and call it 'The Crotchet's Arms,' to be sure. That's the sort of ticket for me."

"Well, Crotchet, you will be quite at liberty to do what you like; and now let us at once start on our errand. We will, from the door of Newgate, see if we cannot trace the progress of this man, with his new friend, that rascal, Lupin."

A tap sounded on the panel of the door of the room in which Crotchet and Sir Richard were conversing.

"Come in," said the magistrate, and his clerk entered with a written paper in his hand.

"Here, sir," he said, "is a report from a city officer, which will give a clue to the route that Todd and Lupin have taken, sir."

"Ah, that is welcome. Let me see it. 'Two men broke into the house of Alderman Stanhope; one a tall man with a large face — the other, shorter.' Humph! Not a doubt of it. I will go and see about it. No doubt it was Todd and his new friend Lupin. This is something of a clue, at all events however

slight, and may, after all, put us upon the right track. Come on, Crotchet, we will do the best we can in this matter. Have you your pistols in good order?"

"Yes, yer honour, and a pair of darbies in my pocket, that if once they get on the wrists of old Todd, he will find it no such easy matter to get them off again."

"That is right. I only want to get face to face with the ruffian, and then I will engage that he shall not be much further trouble to society or to individuals."

Sir Richard Blunt and Crotchet proceeded then at once to the house in the City, into which Lupin and Todd, it will be recollected, had made a violent entry, and from which they had been so gallantly repulsed by the young lady. Then, from the description of the assailants, not a shadow of a doubt remained upon the magistrate's mind that they were the parties he sought; but there all clue seemed to be lost.

He and Crotchet stood in the street looking about them rather despairingly; and then they thought of going to the round-house close to Finsbury; and when they got there, they found an officer, who reported that two men answering the description of the fugitives had been seen making their way westward; and he had met a woman who had passed them, and who had heard the words "money," and "Caen Wood."

This was, in good truth, most important intelligence, if it could be relied upon; and that was the only kind of doubt that Sir Richard had. He spoke to Crotchet about it.

"What do you think, Crotchet? Is it worth while to follow this seeming clue to Highgate?"

"Yes, yer honour, it is. We can go there and back again while we are considering about it here. It's clear enough as we shan't get any other news in this part of the town; and so I advises that we go off at once to Highgate, and calls at every public-house on the road."

"Every public-house?"

"Yes, yer honour. Todd won't do without his drops of something strong to keep him a-going. These kind of feelings go down — down, till they haven't the heart to say don't, when the hangman puts the noose round their necks, if they haven't their drops. It's brandy, yer worship, as keeps 'em a going."

"I do believe, Crotchet, that there is a great deal of truth in what you say; and that it is only by use of stimulants that they keep up a kind of artificial strength, as well as drowning reflection; and so they go blundering on in the career of crime."

"You may depend upon it, sir. They'd cut their own throats in a week, If it wasn't for the tipple, yer honour."

Acting then upon the practical advice of Crotchet, which in a great measure accorded with his own convictions, Sir Richard Blunt repaired to a livery-stable,

and hired two good horses. He found no difficulty in getting them, upon declaring who he was; and so, well mounted, he and Crotchet went upon the very road that had been so recently traversed by the two culprits, Todd and Lupin.

At the first public-house they came to they got no news; but at the second they were told, that two men, answering the description they gave of those they sought, had called and had some brandy.

The magistrate no longer doubted but that he was upon the right track now. With such a feeling, he pushed on, making what inquiries he could on the road; but until Highgate was reached they got no further news, and then, by dint of diligent ferreting out, they found a woman who had seen two men go down Swains Lane, and from the description she gave of them, there could be no doubt but that they were Todd and Lupin. Now as Swains Lane led direct to Caen Wood, it was a great confirmation of the former intelligence; and Sir Richard made up his mind to search the wood, as well as it could be done by him and Crotchet.

They engaged a lad from Highgate to come with them, and to take care of the horses, while they should go into the wood; but they did not say one word to him regarding their object in going there, nor could he possibly suspect it. Sir Richard and Crotchet both thought it would be much more prudent to keep that to themselves, than to put it in the power of a boy to gossip about it to every one who might chance to pass that way, while he was minding the horses.

When the wood was reached, Sir Richard said to the lad —

"Now, my boy, we shall not be very long gone, but you will bear in mind that if we are absent longer than you expected, you will be paid in proportion; so don't be impatient, but walk the horses up and down this bit of the lane; and think that you have got a very good job."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy. "Across that there meadow is the nearest way to the wood. I seed two fellows go that way, early this morning, and one on 'em was the ugliest fellow I ever saw, and he calls out to the other — 'Come along Lupin, we shall be all right in the wood now. Come along, Lupin — Ha! ha!'"

"You heard that?"

"Yes, sir, I did. You see, I was sloe-gathering in the hedge, and they don't let you do it, cos they say you breaks down all the young twigs, and spoils the hedge, and so you does; and so, sir, when I heard footsteps a-coming, I hid myself right down among the long grass, so that they did not see me."

Mr. Crotchet gave a long whistle.

"Very good," said Sir Richard; "we shall be back with you soon. You take good care of the horses."

"I will, sir."

"What do you think of that, Crotchet?" said Sir Richard, as they made their way into the very meadow across which Todd and Lupin had run to get to Caen Wood.

"It's the finger o' Providence, yer worship."

"Well, I cannot deny, Crotchet, but that it may be so. At all events, whether it be Providence or chance, one thing is quite certain, and that is, that we are on the track of those whom we seek."

"Not a doubt o' that, sir. Into the wood here they have been, but whether they have staid here or not, you see, sir, is quite another affair. But it's worth looking well to; at all events yer worship, and I shan't leave an old tree in this here place as we is coming to, that I shan't walk right round and have a jolly good look at, somehow or another."

"Nor I, Crotchet. They may know of some hiding-place in this wood, for all we know to the contrary, and if they do, it strikes me we shall ferret them out."

"In course we shall, sir; and here we is."

They had reached the wood by this time, and before plunging into its recesses the magistrate looked carefully about him, and Crotchet did the same.

"Do you think, your worship, there's a chance of such a fellow as Todd staying long here?"

"Why do you think that?" said Sir Richard.

"Why, sir," said Crotchet, putting his head on one side, "this here is a sort of place that makes a man think; and always when I am in a quiet place like this, with the beautiful trees all about me, and the little birds a-singing, and the frogs a-croaking, it makes me think of things that I don't always think of, and of those as has passed away like spirits, and as we may meet in t'other world nor this, sir."

"Indeed, Crotchet, I do not wonder that the silence and solitude of nature should have that effect upon you."

"Exactly, sir. In course, it ain't for me to say whether in this 'ere world there ought to be prigs, and sneaks, and cracksmen, and all that sort of thing or not; but I will say, sir, as I'm not a little surprised how anybody can do anything very wrong, sir, in the country."

"Indeed, Crotchet?"

"Yes, sir; it has an effect on me. When I gets among the old trees and sees the branches a waving about, and hear the wind a moaning among 'em, it makes me think as there ain't a great deal in this world as is worth the bothering about, you see, sir; and least of all is it worthwhile doing anything that ain't the right thing."

"You are quite a philosopher, Crotchet, although you are not the first nor the only one upon whom the beauties of nature have produced an elevating effect. The reason I fear is that you are not familiar with such places as these.

You are town-bred, Crotchet, and you pass your life among the streets of London; so such places as this affect you with all the charm of novelty, while those who are born in the country know nothing and care nothing for its sights and sounds."

"That's about it, sir, I shouldn't wonder," said Crotchet; "but I feels what I feels and thinks what I thinks."

They now had fairly penetrated into Caen Wood; and we may here appropriately remark, that Caen Wood was much more of a real wood then, than it is now, when it is rather an imitation of one than one in reality. The smoke and the vegetation-killing vapours of London have almost succeeded in begriming the green trees even at that distance off; and in a few short years Caen Wood, we fear, will be but a thing of tradition in the land.

So time works his changes!

Sir Richard Blunt, with long practised sagacity, began his hunt through the wood. It could scarcely be said that he expected to find Todd there, but he would be satisfied if he found some conclusive evidence that he had been there, for that would show him that he was upon the track of the villain, and that he was not travelling wide from the course that Todd had taken. The idea that he might have at once, on foot, made his way to some part of the coast, haunted Sir Richard, notwithstanding all the seemingly conclusive evidence he had to the contrary; and knowing well, as he did, how very little reliance ought to be placed upon personal descriptions, he did buoy himself up with many hopes consequent upon the presumed identity of Todd with the person who had been seen by those who had described him.

Taking a small piece of chalk from his pocket, the magistrate marked a few of the trees in the different directions where they searched, so that they might not, amid the labyrinths of the wood, give themselves increased trouble; and in the course of half an hour they had gone over a considerable portion of the wood.

They paused at an open spot, and Crotchet lifted from the ground a thick stick that appeared to have been recently cut from a tree.

"This is late work," he said.

"Yes; and here are the marks of numerous footsteps. What is the meaning of this strange appearance on the ground, as if something had been dragged along it?"

Crotchet looked at the appearance that Sir Richard pointed out, and then with a nod, he said —

"Let's follow this, Sir Richard. It strikes me that it leads to something."

CHAPTER CXLVIII.

SHOWS HOW TODD HAD A VERY NARROW ESCAPE INDEED.

THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE TONE of Crotchet that made the magistrate confident he suspected something very peculiar, and he followed him without a word.

The track or trail upon the ground was very peculiar, it was broad and defined, and had turned in the direction that it went every little weed or blade of grass that was within its boundaries. A number of decayed leaves from the forest trees had likewise been swept along it; and the more any one might look at it the more they must feel convinced that something heavy had been dragged along it.

What that something heavy was, Mr. Crotchet had his suspicions, and they were right.

"This way, your worship," he said, "this way; it goes right into this hedge as nicely as possible, though the branches of these bushes are placed all smooth again."

As he spoke, Crotchet began to beat the obstructing branches of a wild nut tree and a blackberry-bush, that seemed, by their entwining arms, to have struck up a very close sort of acquaintance with each other; and then he suddenly cried out —

"Here it is, sir."

"What, Crotchet?"

"The dead 'un."

"Dead! You don't mean to say that one such is here, and that the dead body of Todd is in the thicket?"

"Come on, sir, I don't think it is him. It don't seem long enough; but here's somebody, as safe as possible, sir, for all that. Push your way through sir: it's only prickles."

The magistrate did push his way through, despite the vigorous opposition of the blackberry-bush; and then — lying upon its face — he saw the dead body of a man.

The readers of this narrative could have told Sir Richard Blunt what that body had been named while the breath of life was in it; but neither he nor Crotchet could at first make up their minds upon the subject.

"Do you know him?" said Sir Richard.

"I guess only."

"Yes, and you guess as I do. This is Lupin, Todd's prison companion, and the companion in his escape."

Crotchet nodded.

"I went to Newgate," he said, "and had a good look at him, so that I should know him, sir, dead or alive; so I'll just turn him over, and have a good look at his face."

With this, Crotchet carefully — by the aid of his foot — turned over the body, and the first glance he got at the dead face satisfied him.

"Yes, your worship," he said, "Lupin it is, and Todd has killed him. You may take your oath of that."

"Not a doubt of it: such is the result of the association of such men. Todd has found him, or fancied he should find him, an encumbrance in the way of his own escape, and has sought this wood to take his life."

"That's about it, sir."

"And now, Crotchet, we may make certain of one thing, and that is, that Todd is not in this wood, nor in this neighbourhood either. I should say, that after this deed, the first thing he would do would be to fly from this spot."

"Not a doubt of that, your worship; but the deuce of it is to find out which way he has gone."

"We must be guided in that by the same mode of inquiry, Crotchet, that brought us here. We were successful in tracing him to this wood, and we may be equally successful in tracing him from it. We must go into the village of Hampstead, and give information about this dead body; and we will make there what inquiries we can."

They were neither of them very anxious to remain in Caen Wood, after discovering how it was tenanted; and in a very short time they were mounted again, and went along the lane until they emerged upon Hampstead Heath, and so took the road to the village, where Sir Richard gave information to the authorities concerning the finding of the body of Lupin.

There, too, he heard that a man answering the description of Todd had passed through the village, and refused to partake some questionable brandy, at a public-house, on its outskirts. This man was evidently proceeding to London. Crotchet heard this information with great attention; and when he and Sir Richard Blunt were alone, he said —

"I tell you what it is, sir — the country will never suit Todd."

"How do you mean, Crotchet?"

"I mean, sir, that, in my opinion, he has gone back to London again. The country, sir, ain't the sort of place for such men as he is. You may depend upon it, he only came to the little wood to get rid of Lupin, and he has gone back to try and hide in London till the row is over."

"You really think so?"

"I do, sir; and if we want to find him, we must go, too."

"Well, Crotchet, of one thing I am pretty well convinced, and that is, that he is not in this part of the country, for after the murder in the wood, which he will be in continual fear of being discovered, it is not likely he would stay about here; and so, as we have traced him a little on the road to London, we may as well, for all we know to the contrary, assume that he has gone there at once."

"Come on, then, sir," said Crotchet; "I feels what you calls a sort of a — Oh, dear me, what is it? A presentment — "

"A presentiment, Crotchet."

"Ah, sir, that's it. I feel that sort of thing that old Todd will try and hide himself in some old crib in London, and not at all trust to the country, where everybody is looked at for all the world as though he were a strange cat. Lord bless you, sir, if I had done anything and wanted to hide, I should go into the very thick of the people of London, and I ain't quite sure but I'd take a lodging in Bow-street."

Sir Richard Blunt was himself very much of Crotchet's opinion regarding Todd's proceedings, for his experience of the movements of malefactors had taught him that they generally, after their first attempt to try to get away, hover about the spot of their crimes; and it is a strange thing, that with regard to persons who have committed great crimes, there is a great similarity of action, as though the species of mind that could induce the commission of murder from example, were the same in other respects in all murderers.

To London, then, with what expedition they could make, Sir Richard Blunt and Crotchet went, and although they made what inquiry they could, they found no news of Todd.

And now we must leave them for awhile, thrown completely out in all their researches for the escaped criminal, while we once more proceed to the house in Fleet-street, where we left Todd in rather an uncomfortable situation.

IT WILL BE RECOLLECTED THAT, locked in the grasp of the officer, Todd and that individual had gone down with the chair through the opening in the floor of his shop.

This was the first time that Todd had undertaken that mode of getting into the cellars of his house; and when he found the chair going, he gave himself up for lost, and uttered a cry of horror. It seemed to him at that moment as if that were the species of retribution which was to come over him — death by the same dreadful means that had enabled him so often to inflict it upon others.

No doubt Todd's anticipations of being dashed to destruction upon the stones below would have been correct had he gone down alone, or had there been no one already immediately beneath the trap-door in the shop flooring;

but as it was, he fell, fortunately for him, uppermost, and they both, he and the officer, fell upon the other man who had gone down only a short time previous. That saved Todd; but he was terribly shaken, and so was the officer, and it was a few moments before either of them recovered sufficiently to move a limb.

The lives of those two depended upon who should recover his strength and energies first. Todd was that man. Hate is so much stronger a passion than every other, and it was under the influence of that feeling that Todd was the first of the two to recover; and the moment he did so, the yell of rage that he uttered really might have been heard in Fleet-street. It was very indiscreet of Todd, but at that moment he thought of nothing but revenge. His own safety became a secondary consideration with him.

He grasped the officer by the throat!

At the moment that, by the feel only, for that place was in the most profound darkness, Todd felt sure that he had the officer by the throat, he knew that his triumph was certain. It would have been as vain a thing to attempt to escape the chances of destiny, as to dream of avoiding the grasp of that iron hand that now closed upon the throat of the unfortunate officer.

It was just then, though, that the officer began to recover a little from the shock of his fall. It was only to recover to die. Better for him would it have been had he slept on in insensibility to the pangs that were awaiting him; but that was not to be.

"Ah, wretch!" shrieked Todd, "so you thought you had me? Down — down to death! — Ha! — ha!"

The officer struggled much, and dashed about his feet and arms, but all was in vain.

"Ha! — ha!" laughed Todd, and that hideous laugh awakened as hideous an echo in the dismal place. "Ha! — ha! I have you now. Oh! but I should like to protract your death and see you die by inches! Only that my time is precious, and for my own sake, I will put you quickly beyond the pale of life."

The man tried to cry out; but the compression upon his throat of those bony fingers prevented him. He had his hand at liberty, and he caught Todd by the head and face, and began to do him as much mischief as he could. There was for a few seconds a fierce struggle, and then Todd, keeping still his right hand clasped about the throat of his victim, with the left laid hold of as much of his hair on the front of his head us he could, and raising his head then about six inches from the stone floor on which it had rested, he dashed it down again with all his might.

The officer's arms fell nerveless to his sides, and he uttered a deep groan.

Again Todd raised the head, and dashed it down, and that time he heard a crashing sound, and he felt satisfied that he had killed the man.

There was now no further use in holding the throat of the dead man, and Todd let him go.

"Ha! — ha!" he said. "That is done. That is done — Ha! Now am I once more lord and master in my own house — once again I reign here supreme, and can do what it may please me to do. Ha! this is glorious! Why, it is like old times coming back to me again. I feel as if I could open my shop in the morning, and again polish off the neighbourhood. It seems as if all that had happened since last I stropped a razor above, had been but a dream. The arrest — the trial — the escape — Newgate — the wood at Hampstead! All a dream — a dream!"

He was silent, and the excitement of the moment of triumph had passed away.

"No — no," he said. "No! It is too real — much too real! Oh, it is real, indeed. I am the fugitive! The haunted man without a home — without a friend; and I have this night nor any other night any place in which I may lay my head in safety. I am as one persecuted by all the world, without hope — without pity! What will now become of me?"

A low groan came upon Todd's ear.

He started, and looked around him. He tried hard to pierce with his half-shut eyes the intense darkness, but he could not; and muttering to himself — "Not yet dead — not yet dead?" he crept to an obscure corner of the cellar, and opened a door that led by a ladder to the floor of the back parlour, where there was a trap door, under which the large table usually stood, and which he could open from below.

In the parlour Todd got a light, and feeling then still disturbed about the groan that he had heard below, he armed himself with an iron bar that belonged to the outer door, and with this in his right hand, and the light in his left, he crept back again to the cellar.

A glance at the two men who lay there was sufficient to satisfy him that they were no more; and after then taking from them a couple of pairs of pistols, and a small sum of money, he crept back again to the parlour. As he did so, he heard St. Dunstan's clock strike the hour of four.

"Four!" he said. "Four. It will not be light for nearly two hours yet, and I may rest myself awhile and think. Yes, it is necessary now that I should think; for I have time — a little time — to do so, and much, oh, so much to think of. There's some of my own brandy, too, in the parlour, that's a comfort."

The fire was still burning in the parlour grate. Todd raked the glowing embers together with the iron bar, and then he took a good draught at the brandy. It revived him most wonderfully, and he gave one of his old chuckles, as he muttered —

"Oh, that I could get a few whom I could name in such a position as I had yon man in in the cellar a short time since. That would be well, indeed. Ha! I am, after all, rather lucky, though."

A sharp knock come, at this moment, at the outer door of the shop, and Todd sprang in alarm to his feet.

CHAPTER CXLIX.

TODD IS IN GREAT PERIL IN THE EARLY MORNING IN LONDON.

THE SILENCE THAT ENSUED after that knock at his door, for he had become to consider it as his again, was like the silence of the grave. The only sound that Todd heard then, was the painful beating of his own heart.

The guilty man was full of the most awful apprehensions.

"What is it?" he said. "Who is it? — who can it be? Surely, no one for me. There is no one who saw me. No — no! It cannot be. It is some accidental sound only. I — begin — to doubt if it were a knock at all. — Oh, no, it was no knock."

Bang! came the knock again.

Todd actually started and uttered a cry of terror, and then he crouched down and crept towards the door. He might, to be sure, have made his escape from the premises, with some little trouble, by the way he had got into them; but he was most anxious to find out who it was that demanded admittance to the old shop in Fleet-street, with all its bad associations and character of terror; so he crept towards the door, and just as he reached it, the knock came again.

If the whole of his future hopes — we allude to the future that might be for him in this world only, for Todd had no hopes nor thoughts of another — had depended upon his preserving silence and stillness, he could not have done so, and he gave another start.

"Hush — hush!" he then said. "Hush! I must be very cautious now — very cautious, indeed. Hush — hush!"

He then, in a tone of voice that he strove to make as different as possible from his ordinary tone, and which he was very successful indeed in doing, he said —

"Who is there?"

"It's me," said a voice, in defiance of all probability or grammar. "It's only me."

"Oh! what a mercy," said Todd.

"Open the door. Is it you, Joe? Why didn't you come home, eh? You might have got away easy enough. I have brought you something good to eat, old fellow, and some news."

"Ah, what news, my boy?"

"Why, they say that old Todd is in London."

Todd fell to the floor in a sitting posture, and uttered a deep groan. It was some few moments before he could summon strength and courage to speak to the man again. But he began to feel the necessity of doing something, for the man began to hammer away at the door, and the very worst thing that could happen to Todd, just then, would have been that man going away from the door of the shop with an impression that all was not right within it, and spreading an alarm to that effect.

"I will open the door just wide enough," muttered Todd, "and then I will drag him in and cut his throat, and throw him down into the cellar along with the two others. That will only make three this morning — yes, this morning, I may say, for it is morning now."

Acting upon this resolve, which certainly was diabolically to the purpose, Todd spoke to the man again, saying in the same assumed tone in which he had before addressed him —

"All's right — all's right. I'll open the door."

"That's the thing; but you seem to have a bad cold."

"So I have — so I have. A very bad cold; and it has affected my voice so that I can hardly speak at all."

"So I hear."

Todd slowly undid the fastenings of the door, and an infernal feeling of joy came over him at the idea of murdering this unhappy man likewise. It quite reconciled him to the danger in which he was, for he could not but know that the daylight was rapidly approaching, and that each moment increased his peril.

"Yes," he muttered, "he will make three this morning, three idiots who fancy they are a match for me; but I will soon convince them of the contrary, I will soon put him out of his pains and anxieties in this world. Ha! he shall be an independent man, for he shall have no wants, and that is true independence."

Todd drew the last bolt back that held the door.

"Come, Joe, are you coming?" said the man.

"Soon enough, my dear friend, soon enough," said Todd. "You will find me quite soon enough. Come in."

Todd felt quite certain that if the man caught but the slightest glance at him, it would be sufficient to convince him that it was not Joe, and, therefore, he only now opened the door wide enough to let him slip into the shop, and kept himself back partially behind it, so as to be, with the exception of one arm, quite out of sight.

The man hesitated.

"Come in," said Todd. "Come in."

"Why, what's the matter with you," said the man, "that makes you so mighty mysterious, eh? What is it, old fellow?"

"Oh, nothing. Come in."

The man stepped one foot across the threshold, and put his head in at the shop-door.

"Come, now," he said. "None of your jokes, Joe. Where are you?"

Todd felt that that was a critical moment, and that if he failed to take advantage of it, the least thing would give the man the alarm, and he might draw back from the door altogether, and so stop him from executing that summary proceeding against him which he, Todd, thought essential to his interests.

"No, old fellow. There's no trick. Come in."

"Oh, but I —"

The man was drawing back his head, and Todd saw that the moment for action had come. Darting forward, he stretched out his right hand and caught the man by the throat, saying as he did so, in the voice of a demon —

"In, wretch — in, I say!"

The man's cravat came away in the hand of Todd, who rolled upon his back on the floor of the shop. The man finding himself free from the terrific grip that had been laid upon him, fled along Fleet-street, crying —

"Help — help! thieves! — murder! Todd! — help! fire! murder — murder!"

Todd lay upon his back with the cravat in his hand, and so utterly confounded was he by this accident, that for a few moments he felt disposed to lie there and give up all further contest with that fate that never seemed weary of now persecuting him after the long course of successful iniquity he had been permitted to carry on.

He heard the loud cries of the man, and he knew that even at such an early hour how those cries would soon rouse sufficient assistance to be his destruction. He yet did not like to die without a struggle. Newgate, with its lonely cells, came up before his mind's eye, and then he pictured to himself the gibbet; and with a positive yell, partly of rage and partly of fear, he rose to his feet.

"What shall I do?" he said. "Dare I rush out now into Fleet-street, and by taking the other direction to that in which this man has gone, try to find safety?"

A moment's thought convinced him of the great danger of that plan, and he gave it up. There remained then nothing but the mode of retreat through the church; and no longer hesitating, he took the light in his hand and dashed open the little door that communicated with the narrow stairs that would take him underneath the shop.

Before descending them he paused to listen, and he heard the cries and shouts of men afar off. He found that his foes were mustering in strong force to attack him; and clenching his double fist, he swore the most horrible oaths. This was a process that seemed to have some effect upon the spirits of Todd. The swearing acted as a kind of safety valve to his passion.

He descended the staircase, and when he reached the foot of it he paused

again. The noise in the street was not so acute. It had sobered down to a confused murmur, and he felt that his danger was upon the increase. Shading the light with one hand, for there was a current of air blowing in the cellars and secret passages, he looked like some fiend or vampire seeking for some victim among the dead.

"They come," he said. "They come. They think they have me at last. They come to drag me to death. Oh that I had but the power of heaping destruction upon them all, of submitting them all to some wretched and lingering death, I would do it! Curses on them — how I should revel in their misery and pain."

He went on a few paces past the dead bodies of the two men, and then he paused again, for he could distinctly hear the trampling of feet upon the pavement near to the house; and then, before he could utter a word, there come such a thundering appeal to the knocker of the outer door, that he dropped his candle, and it was immediately extinguished in the start that he gave.

It was quite evident that his foes were now in earnest, and they were determined he should not escape them by any fault of theirs, for the knocking was continued with a vehemence enough to beat in the door; but so long as it did continue, it was a kind of signal that his enemies were upon the outside.

"I may escape them yet," he said, tremblingly. "Oh, yes, who shall take upon them to say that I may not escape them yet? I can find my way in the dark well — quite well. I am sufficiently familiar with this place to do so."

That was true enough; but yet, although Todd was, as he said, sufficiently familiar with the place to find his way through it in the dark, he could not make such good progress as when he had a lamp or a candle to guide him.

He heard a loud crash above.

"They have broken open the door," he said, "but yet I am safe, for I have a wonderful start of them. I am safe yet, and I am well armed, too. I hold the lives of several in my hands. They will not be so fond, from their love of me, to throw away their lives. Ha! I shall beat them yet — I shall beat them yet."

With his hands outstretched before him, so that he should not run against any obstacle, he took his way through the gloomy passages that led to the vaults beneath St. Dunstan's church. The distance was not great, but his danger was; and yet such was his insatiable desire to know what was going on in his house, that he paused more than once again to listen.

From what he heard, he felt convinced that many persons had made their way into the shop and parlour, and he anticipated a thorough search of the house.

"Let them," he said, "let them. There is nothing there now that it can interest me to keep secret — absolutely nothing. Let them search well in every room. It will give me the more time."

He struggled on in the dark a little further, and then he suddenly paused. A thought had struck him.

"Oh, what a glorious thing," he said, "if I could only now fire the old house, and so scorch some of those idiots, who are no doubt running from room to room full of mad delight at the opportunity to do so, and at the prospect that they may light upon me, and so share the money among them that is offered for my blood. It is a tempting thought."

Todd felt in his pocket for the matches that had been supplied to him by his departed friend, Mr. Lupin, and he found that he had some of them left, although all the little bits of wax ends of candles were gone.

"A match will do as well as a torch to set fire to a house. I will chance it, for afterwards I shall most bitterly repent not having done so. Oh, yes, I will go back and chance it. I know how to do it; and if that Sir Richard Blunt, whom I yet hope to see in death, has not removed the materials I placed for the firing of the house, I can do it easily. Oh, that will be most capital! I think it will make me laugh again! Ha! — ha! yes, it will make me laugh again!"

He stood for the space of time of about two minutes in deep thought, with his hands compressed upon his brow; and then he muttered —

"Yes, there is no difficulty. If I can but reach the flooring of that cupboard beneath the parlour, it will do."

He rapidly made up his mind to attempt this most perilous act of setting fire to his old house, after all; notwithstanding it was now to his knowledge filled with his enemies, and that his returning was a matter of the greatest danger to himself.

He crept back by the way he had gone, and soon reached the cellar again under his shop. That cellar run partially under the parlour likewise; and it was upon that circumstance, well known to him, that Todd based his hopes of being able, with safety to himself, to fire the old house.

He shook a little as he reached the cellar underneath the shop. It was a natural thing that he should do so; for he knew that he was doing the very reverse of what impulse would have prompted him to do, namely, fly from his enemies. The mode of getting into that cellar might, for all he knew to the contrary, be found out at the most inopportune moment for him that could be conceived, and he might find himself surrounded almost at any moment by his foes.

No wonder Todd shook a little.

He quite forgot that the bodies of the two men were there — his two latest victims; and as he went crawling along with excessive care, the first thing he did, was to fall over them both, and measure his great length upon the floor of the cellar. It was quite astonishing how Todd controlled his temper, when he had any object in view which an ebullition of rage would have had the effect of jeopardising in any way. At another time, his oaths upon the occasion of such a fall would have been rather of the terrific order; but now he uttered not a word, but gathered himself up again with all the calmness and serenity of an

ancient martyr, who feels that he is suffering for some great and good cause, dear to the interests of humanity.

Sweeney Todd, however, was very anxious to discover if in his fall he had made noise enough to alarm those who were above; but he was soon satisfied that such was not the case, and that the lower part of the house was quite deserted, while they had made their way to the upper, intent upon searching in all the rooms for him (Todd). Ah! they little knew the piece of obdurate cunning that they had pitted against them there!

"I shall do it! — I shall do it!" muttered Todd, "I shall easily do it. There is no one to prevent me. Ha! — ha! I do believe that I shall smother some of them, before they can possibly find the means of getting down stairs. That would be quite a mercy of providence — oh, quite!"

CHAPTER CL.

TODD SETS FIRE TO HIS HOUSE, AND THEN HIDES IN THE CHURCH.

IMMEDIATELY BENEATH THE PARLOUR, where a portion of the cellar went, there was a quantity of old lumber. Perhaps if that lumber had been looked very carefully over, among it there might have been found some fragments of old, and some of new coffins from St. Dunstan's; for with the rich, who had vaults of their own, it was the arrogant fashion to adorn the last sad and narrow home of humanity with silver plates and nails; and Todd had despoiled the grave of some of those costly trappings.

Upon the heap of rubbish he scrambled, and that just enabled him comfortably to reach the floor of that parlour. That portion of the floor went under a cupboard in one corner, and in the floor of it three or four coarse round holes had been drilled with a centre-bit. Todd had had his own motives for drilling those holes in the cupboard floor.

He now put his finger through one of the holes, and when he did so, he gave a chuckle of delight, for he was convinced that the contents of that cupboard had not been in any way interfered with; and that, as a consequence, he should find no difficulty in firing the house completely.

"So," he said, "this is the cleverness of your much-vaunted Sir Richard Blunt. He has left a cupboard as crammed with combustible materials as it well can be, to the mercy of the first accident that may set fire to them; and now the accident has come. Ha!"

TODD SETS FIRE TO HIS HOUSE, THEN HIDES HIMSELF IN ST. DUNSTAN'S PULPIT.

Again Todd listened attentively, and was still further satisfied that all was profoundly still in the parlour, although he heard the racket and the banging of doors in the upper part of the house.

"This is good," said Todd. "This is capital. All is well now. The fire will have made most excellent progress before they will discover it, and I will warrant that if once it takes a firm hold of the wood-work of this old house, it is not a trifle that will stop its roaring progress."

With this, Todd ignited one of his matches and thrust it alight through

one of the holes in the floor of the cupboard.

A slight cracking noise ensued immediately.

"That will do," said Todd, and he withdrew the match and cast it upon the ground. The crackling noise continued. He turned and fled from the place with precipitation.

In the lower portion of that cupboard there was a quantity of hay, upon which oil and turpentine had been poured liberally. High up upon a shelf was a wooden bowl, with eight pounds of gunpowder in it, and Todd did not know a moment when the flames might reach it, when a terrific explosion would be sure to ensue.

"It is done now," he said. "It is done, and they do not know it. More revenge — more revenge! I shall have more revenge now, and there will be more death."

He knew that there was only one thing that could by any possibility prevent the gunpowder in the wooden bowl from becoming speedily ignited, and that that would be in consequence of the hay being packed too close to do more than smoulder for a little time before bursting into a flame; but that it must and would do so eventually, there could be no possible doubt, and it was in that hearty conviction that Sweeney Todd now most fully gloried.

And now, as he had done before, he kept his arms outstretched before him to prevent him from injuring himself against any of the walls or the abrupt turnings in the passages between his own house and old St. Dunstan's. He stooped, likewise, in order that he might not strike his head against the roof at in places where it was very low, and rough, and rugged.

Once only Todd got a little bewildered, and did not well know his way, and then he ignited one of the matches, and by its small light he saw in a moment which way he was to go.

"All is well," he said, and he rushed on; but yet he began to be a little surprised that he heard no noise from the house — no sound of the explosion; and inclining his ear to the ground, he stopped in one of the old vaults to listen.

A low moaning sound came upon his ears like the muttering of distant thunder, and then a report as though some heavy piece of timber had fallen from a great height to the earth. He fancied that the vault in which he was shook a little, and in terror he rushed forward. The gunpowder had exploded in the cupboard, and Todd's imagination was left to revel in the thought of the mischief which it had done to the house and to all within it.

In five minutes more he reached the foot of the little flight of stone-steps that led to the church. All was profoundly dark still, as he thought; but he had not got up above six of those steps when he became conscious that the light of early dawn had already found its way through the windows of the church, and was making everything within it dimly visible. Todd recoiled at this. He and daylight were decidedly not upon good terms with each other by any means.

"It is morning — it is morning!" he exclaimed. "What will become of me now? It is light."

He staggered right back into the vaults again, and there gave himself to painful thought for awhile; as he did so, he heard loud shouts in the streets — shouts that awakened echoes in the old church; and if anything could have given to Todd, at such a time as that, very great satisfaction, it was to hear that those shouts were all commingled with the one prevailing cry of — "Fire — fire — fire!" That was a joy, indeed, to him.

"It burns — it burns!" he said; "but I am here a prisoner; I dare not go out into the daylight; but the old house, with all that it contains, is wrapped in flames, and that is much — much! It is now everything. Oh, that I could hear the cries of those who find themselves wrapped up in the unappeasable element, and have no means of escape! They would, indeed, be music to my ears."

This state of mental exultation passed away very quickly, as it was sure to do, and gave place to the most lively fears for his own personal safety; for, after all, that was the great thing with Todd — at least it was while any portion of his deep revenges remained yet to be accomplished.

"What shall I do?" That was the question that he kept repeating to himself. "What shall I do?" He advanced now right up the steps into the body of the church. There, at least, he knew that he was safe for the present; and as he stood and listened, he thought that in the bustle and in the confusion that men's minds were in regarding the fire, he might emerge from the church and no one notice him, and fairly get away without observation. If he only got a few streets off it would be sufficient, and he should be able to tell himself that he had indeed and in truth escaped.

With these thoughts and feelings, he approached the church door.

The nearer he got to the old doors of St. Dunstan, the more appallingly and distinctly there came upon his ears the cries and the shouts of the people who were hurrying to the fire, and he muttered to himself —

"Ah, it must be blazing briskly now — very briskly. It must be quite a sight to the whole of London to see the old den burning so bravely."

An engine came rattling on, and with a roar and a crash went past the church door.

"Capital!" said Todd. "Upon my word this is capital!"

Another engine, with the horses at a mad gallop, went by, and Todd quite rubbed his hands at the idea of the scene of confusion that he had by his own unaided efforts succeed in making in old Fleet-street.

"They did not think," he said, "when they closed the gates of the old prison upon me, and told me I should die, that there was one half the mischief in me yet that they now find there is. Ay, and there is much more yet, that they dream not of, but which they shall know some day."

He laid his hand upon the lock of the church door. A long ray of the faint

early gray light of dawn streamed through the massive keyhole, and at the moment Todd laid his hand upon the lock that ray of light vanished. It was obstructed by some one on the outside. He recoiled several steps, and then from the outside he heard a voice say —

"Lor bless us, yes, it's that old villain Todd's house, gentlemen, in course. It's come to a bad end, like its master will come to, if he hasn't. When I saw the flames and heard 'em a-roaring, I said to my missus 'Conwulsions!' says I, 'if that ain't Todd's house in a blaze.'"

"You are right, Mr. Beadle," said a voice in reply.

"Yes, gentlemen, perhaps I says it as oughtn't to say it, but I is commonly right in my way, you know, gentlemen; and so, as I says, 'Conwulsions! It's Todd's house a fire.'"

"And you think," said another voice, "we shall get a good view of it from the old church tower?"

"Yes, gentlemen," replied the beadle, whom the reader will not fail to recognise as our old acquaintance. "Yes, gentlemen. I'll warrant as you will get a capital view from the top of the old tower, where I will take you. Lor' a mussy, how it is a roorin, that fire! I know'd it was Todd's house, and I said to my missus, 'Conwulsions!' says I, 'that's old villanous Todd's house a-fire!'"

Todd ground his teeth together with rage as he listened to this; but he felt that if he would provide for his own safety, there was indeed now no time to lose, and he rapidly retreated into the body of the church.

His first thought was to hide himself in one of the pews, but the divisions between them were not so high as to prevent a person of very moderate height indeed from looking over one of them, and there was quite light enough now for any one in such a case to have seen him, if they had chosen to glance into the pew in which he might take shelter. The case was urgent, however, and he had not much time for thought, so being close to the pulpit he ran up its steps, opened the little door, and ensconced himself within it in a moment.

There, at all events, he felt that he was hidden securely from any merely casual observation.

The church door was opened almost before he could get the pulpit door shut; but he did manage to close it, and he was satisfied that he had done so without exciting the attention of those who were entering the church. Todd could, of course, from where he was, hear, with the greatest clearness and precision, every word that they said to each other, as they walked up the aisle.

One of the persons who were coming with the beadle to view the fire from the tower of the church went on speaking to his companions.

"And so," he said, "I think, if no one be hurt, and the fire can be kept just within the limits of Todd's house, it will be no bad thing to have a place that is such a continual reminder of atrocious guilt, swept from the face of the earth."

"Yes," said the other, "the only pity is, that Sweeney Todd is not in it to go with it. Then the good thing would be complete."

"It would, gentlemen," said the beadle. "Oh, when you comes to think of what he did and what he might have done — Oh, it makes my hair stand o' end, and my parochial blood curdle, to think of what he might have done, gentlemen."

"He could not do worse than he did."

"Not wus? not wus? Oh, — oh!"

"How is it possible? He committed a number of murders, and if you can find me anything worse he could have done, I shall indeed be very much surprised."

"Gentlemen, he might have polished *me* off. That's what he might have done, for he has actually had me hold of by the nose. Oh, conwulsions! if I had only then thought that there was a chance of his polishing off, as he used to call it, a parochial authority, I should have — I should have —"

"What, Mr. Beadle?"

"Flewed through the window, sir, that's what I should have done, and told the world at large what had happened."

"Well, certainly, that would have been something."

"Everything," said the other gentleman, in a tone of voice that showed how much he was inclined to enjoy a joke at the expense of the beadle. "It would have been everything. But how plain you can hear the roaring of the flames now, even in this church, with the door shut."

"You can, indeed," said the other. "Ah, there dashes past another engine. Come, Mr. Beadle, the sooner we get on this tower the better."

"In a minute, gentlemen; but now as you is here arter the blessed old church has been shut up all night, I jest ask you to say if it has the 'orrid smell as it used to have, which offended the holy nose of the bishop when he came to confirm the people."

"I smell nothing."

"Nor I."

"Very good; then that's so far satisfactory. 'Cos you see, sirs, only yesterday Sir Christopher Wren and two gentlemen come and left in the church a pailful of chemists, for the express purpose of taking away the smell."

"A what?"

"A pailful of chemists."

"Of chemicals, you mean, I suppose, although that would be a singularly inappropriate term. But come on, Mr. Beadle, we are very anxious to get on the tower."

"This way, gentlemen, if you pleases. This will lead you nicely and fairly up those little stairs and right on. Oh, what a world we does live in, to be sure!"

With this general philosophical remark, the beadle, opening a little door

at the extremity of the south aisle, pushed his friends up a narrow staircase that led to the top of the tower of old St. Dunstan's, and from which certainly a very good view of the surrounding streets and of the Temple could be obtained; and in the clear light of early morning, before the million fires in London were lighted, that view was seen to be a tolerably distinct one.

Todd muttered the bitterest maledictions upon them, as he heard them go up the little stairs.

There he was, certainly, to all appearance, safe enough; and he might, for all he knew, be safe enough until the next Sunday; but how was he to live in a pulpit even for the whole of a day? It might be that he would have to wait there until the dim shadows of the night should come again, and wrap up the whole church in gloom; but how many weary hours must pass before that time would come, and what infinite danger there was, that he might drop into sleep after all his fatigues, and so forget his caution, and discover himself!

Already the great fatigues he had passed through, and the many hours he had been debarred from rest, began to tell upon him; and it was with difficulty that he kept himself from dropping into slumber. He began to get fearfully alarmed at his situation.

"What shall I do?" he said, "I must escape — escape! Yes. How the fire roars! I will not sleep. Oh, no — no! It is done now; the old house is gone — gone!"

Todd fell fast asleep in the pulpit.

CHAPTER CLI.

SHIFTS THE SCENE TO ONE OF QUIET GOODNESS AND SERENITY.

THE NECESSITIES OF OUR STORY force us for a short space of time to leave Sweeney Todd in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church, and his house in process of demolition by fire, while we take the reader back again to Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where the Ingestries resided in such loving and pleasant union.

The communication that Sir Richard Blunt had made to them, had had the effect of disturbing the serenity of Mark Ingestrie to a much greater extent than he would have liked to admit, or than he was at all likely to let Johanna know.

She, too, the fair and gentle Johanna, felt an acute pang as she thought on the stern, revengeful character of Todd; and began to fancy, that if he wished to work her any woe, he would take a means of doing so which would touch

her much more severely than as if he aimed at her own life, by attacking that of her husband, to whom, after so many perils, she was at length so very happily united.

"Oh, Mark," she said, "you will, you must promise me that you will depart at once from here."

"We will be gone directly, Johanna. But who have we here? Why, there is an arrival already. I will go and see who it is. It is some one in a coach."

"Oh, no — no, Mark, do not go."

"Not go?"

"No. You do not know but it may be some horrible scheme of that fiend in the shape of man, Todd, to lure you to the door, and kill you. I am full of fears, Mark, and cannot bear to let you go from my sight a moment."

"Oh, Johanna, this is unlike you, indeed. There now, look from the window, dear, and you will soon see how little you have to fear. Why, it's your father and your mother. Do you not see them, or does your tears, and your fears together, blind you?"

"A little of both, Mark," said Johanna, with a faint smile; "but I see that my dear father is there, and my mother, too. I will fly to welcome them. They have heard of the escape of Todd, and cannot endure to have us out of their sight."

As Johanna spoke, she hurried to the door to receive Mr. and Mrs. Oakley. The old man caught her in his arms, as he said —

"Oh, my own dear child! Thank God I see you safe again!"

"Safe, father?"

"Yes, my darling. You know that dreadful man? — that — that — Oh, I don't know what to call —"

"The horrid Todd," put in Mrs. Oakley, as she kissed Johanna. "He has escaped, my dear, from Newgate; but, of course, Sir Richard Blunt has been here to tell you, as he said he would; so you know all about it."

"Oh, yes — yes. Come in; I am so glad you have come."

"And so am I," said Mark Ingestrie, making his appearance in the hall; "for here is Johanna starting at every little noise, and I do believe if a mouse were now to run across the floor she would fancy that it was that old rascal, Sweeney Todd."

"Ah! but, my dear boy," said Mr. Oakley; "you really don't seem to have any idea of what a dreadful man he is — you don't, indeed."

"I don't care either, father; but I only wish one thing, and that is, that he would be so good as to trust himself, for about half a minute, within arms-length of me, that's all."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Mrs. Oakley. "My dear son, you don't know he used to — to — what did he call it, Johanna?"

"Polish people off, ma."

"Ah, to be sure."

"Well, it's no use talking," said Mark; "but if ever I get hold of him, I'll polish him off to some purpose. But you have just come in time for me to say a very serious thing to you, mother, indeed."

"Oh, what is it?" cried Mrs. Oakley.

"Don't agitate us," said old Mr. Oakley, putting on his spectacles upside-down. "Don't agitate us, my boy, but tell us at once what the dreadful thing is."

"Why, pa," said Johanna, "Mark did not say it was a dreadful thing he was going to say."

"Well, then, my dear, what is it?"

"Ah, that, indeed, I don't know; but I would wager — yes, I would wager anything, that it is something not dreadful at all. Come, Mark, what is it? — Speak out."

"Then, it's just this," said Mark. "We are going out of London, and I want you both to come with us, for I know very well if you don't, that you will be as miserable as possible, thinking of Johanna, and that Johanna will be in much the same state thinking of you, and that you will dream every night of Todd."

The old couple looked at each other with surprise and gratification. Mr. Oakley took off his spectacles, and said —

"My dear boy, do you know, I was just going to say that — that — "

"That, in fact," put in Mrs. Oakley, "we would be glad to go with you, if you would let us, for Sir Richard said he would advise you both to go out of London, and leave him to find out and hang Todd at his leisure, you know."

"Yes, that was it," said the old man. "That was the very thing that brought us over here, my dears; so if you will only be so good — "

"Come, come," said Mark, "it is, you must be so good. I asked you first, you know, so you do us the favour. Is not that it, Johanna? Of course it is."

"You are very, very good and kind, Mark."

"Oh, stuff! not at all; I say what I like, that's all, and when I say that it would please me mightily to have your father and mother with us, Johanna, where we are going, I mean it from my heart, as you know well."

"I know you do, Mark. And poor Tobias, father, is to be with us likewise. You have heard all about poor Tobias?"

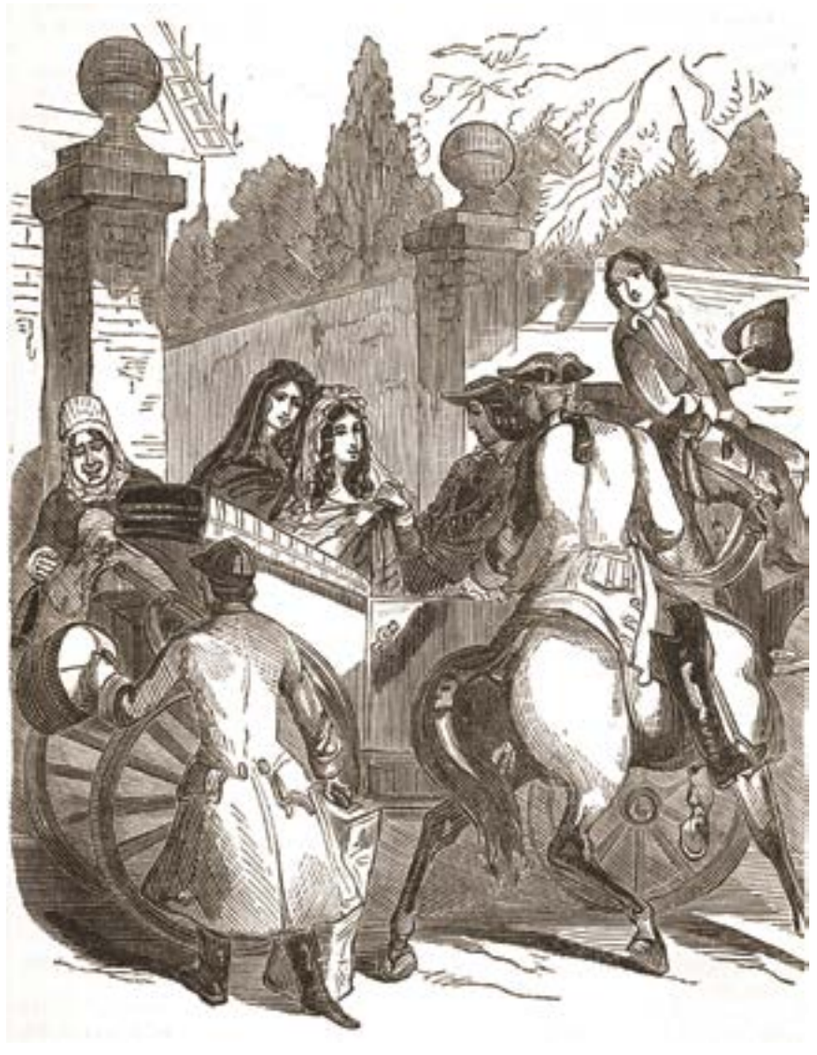
"Oh, yes — yes."

"Well, then, Sir Richard Blunt told us that it would be the death of the poor lad if he should be in London and hear that Todd has escaped from Newgate. So we gladly agreed to take him with us, for he — more than any one — has suffered deeply from Todd's wickedness."

"Hilloa!" cried Mark, as he glanced from the window. "If here is not another coach at the door!"

"Oh, who is it?" said Mrs. Oakley. "It's Todd, of course, come to kill us all!"

"I hope it is," said Mark. "I'll soon set you all at rest about him. But only



JOHANNA AND COMPANY LEAVE CHELSEA TO AVOID THE VENGEANCE OF TODD.

look! If it ain't the colonel, and Arabella, and Tobias. Well, if Todd wants to be down upon us all at once, now is his time certainly to do so."

In a few moments, the colonel and Arabella were shown into the room, and they were quite surprised to see the Oakleys there; but while Johanna and Arabella were embracing each other, Mark Ingestrie went up to the colonel, and pointing slightly to Tobias, he whispered —

"Does he know?"

"Oh, no — no."

"Very good; but he had better, I am convinced, for it will be sure to slip out in conversation, some time or another, and then the poor lad will think much more of it than as if it were told to him in a quiet manner by his friends, for he will think that there is more to conceal than there really is. I am convinced that such will be the case."

"Then we will take an opportunity of telling him, but not just now. I want to speak to Johanna."

"There she is, then."

"And what does he want to say to me?" said Johanna, as she shook hands with the colonel.

"Why, a — the fact is that — that, in fact, Sir Richard told me he would advise you to go out of town; and as I am pretty well aware that you set sufficient store by his advice to follow it, I think it is very likely you will go out of town."

"And so, dear," put in Arabella, "and so, dear, in a word, we want to go with you, if you think that such an arrangement will not be disagreeable to you."

"Now, that is the unkindest thing you have said, Arabella, for a long time. How could you suppose that it would be other than most agreeable to me to have with us such valued friends?"

"There, I told you that," said the colonel. "Of course it will be all right, and we shall make quite a merry party, I'll be bound; so that's as good as settled, and a very satisfactory thing it is, and the sooner we all set off the better. Here's Tobias quite delighted with the idea of his little excursion."

"Ah, yes," said Tobias, "and it is so kind and good of you, colonel, and of all of you; but you know I leave my heart in London still, let me go where I may."

"Never mind, Tobias," said Johanna. "I feel quite sure that you will find it in good keeping when you do come back again; so now we will make preparations at once for departure, and I hope we shall be quite delighted with where we are going. It is one of the pleasantest places, they tell me, on the coast, and will in time be a place of great importance."

"Well," said the colonel, with a laugh, "it's quite a pleasant thing to hear that it is on the coast, for that is something towards a knowledge of where it is."

"Ah, my dear — by-the-bye," said Mrs. Oakley, "I should like to know where you really intend to take us all."

"To the little fishing village of Brighthelmstone, for it is nothing more; but then it lies pleasantly between the hills, and you can see the Channel opening fairly before you, and there is an air upon the Downs that is full of life and joy. You will be sure to like it, mother, and so will you, father, and you, colonel, and you, my dear Arabella."

"You don't mention me," said Mark.

"Oh, that is because you know you are of no sort of consequence at all. You are nobody."

"Thank you!"

"Well now, my dears," said Mrs. Oakley, "don't begin to quarrel now, I beg of you, for that is the worst thing you can do; and so long as we get out of the way of having all our throats cut by that horrid Todd, I don't care where I go to or how many inconveniences I put up with, so long as it is a great way off; and I do hope that Sir Richard will soon catch him again, and regularly hang him, as he deserves, the wretch, that I do."

A complete silence followed the utterance of the indiscreet speech of Mrs. Oakley's, which, if it did not at once open the eyes of poor Tobias to the real reason of the sudden journey, nothing would. All eyes were bent upon the lad; and rising from the seat which Johanna had made him take, he looked about him with dismay.

"Oh, tell me, some one," he then said, "what does it all really mean? Believe me, my kind and dear friends, that I shall suffer less from the truth than as if I were left to make myself mad by thought. Oh, tell me all!"

"You shall know all," said the colonel.

"Oh, mother — mother," said Johanna. "Why did you — "

Mrs. Oakley sat looking the picture of dismay, and Colonel Jeffrey added —

"This is an accident that I don't think is to be much lamented. Tobias must have known at some time, and it is better that he should know now that he is surrounded by his friends. Give me your hand, Tobias. You see that I smile, so it cannot be of great moment after all."

"Oh, tell me — tell me!"

"I will. Todd has made his escape from Newgate, that is all; but he is friendless and penniless, and it will be quite impossible that he can remain many days at large, as Sir Richard Blunt is already upon his track. Let me beg of you not to be in the least alarmed at this intelligence. It ought not to alarm you. Todd will have too much to do to look after his own affairs to enable him to give a thought to anybody else."

"You will save me?" said Tobias.

"I will. We will all stand between you and any harm; but, I repeat, I do not apprehend any danger to you."

They all spoke to Tobias cheeringly, and in the course of half an hour they got him into quite a different state of mind; and then, as he was to form one of the party, it was quite a relief to them all that they did not feel compelled to keep a guard upon their tongues in his presence. In the evening of that day they were all at Brighton.

CHAPTER CLII.

TODD HAS SOME FURTHER ADVENTURES IN FLEET STREET.

We left Todd in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church, while his old house was rapidly burning down. A perilous position for Todd!

Perhaps, if he had courage sufficient to have made the attempt, he might have escaped at several junctures, but the dread of the consequences of capture was so strong in his heart and brain, that while he felt that he was undiscovered in the pulpit, he preferred remaining there to making any precipitate means of escape.

It will be remembered how the beadle had taken up several gentlemen to the roof of the church, in order that they might get a good view of the fire; and it was during that time that Todd thought of escaping, but the rapid approach of daylight daunted him.

"Oh, that I had remained in the wood at Hampstead, or anywhere but here in London, where the hands of all men are raised against me! Oh, I was mad — mad to come here. But I am not quite lost. If I thought that, my senses would go from me this moment. Oh, no — no, I will be calm now again; I will not believe that I am quite lost yet."

Of a truth, Todd felt that if he really gave up in despair, that he might commit some extravagance which would at once draw down upon him his enemies; and there he lay in the pulpit, his gaunt form huddled up so as completely to hide himself in it, and dreading to stay as much almost as he dreaded to leave.

He heard still the loud shouts of people at the fire, and at times he thought he heard even the flames that were rapidly consuming the old den of iniquity in which he had committed so many crimes. The regular clank, clank, too, of the engine pumps came upon his ears, and he muttered —

"No, no, you may try your hardest, but you will not subdue that fire. It will blaze on in spite of you. You will not — you cannot, I say, subdue it. The house is too well prepared. I had a care for that before I left home. It will burn to the very ground — ay, and below the ground, too; and the spot of earth only will remain that held the foundation of my old house. Would that all whom I hate were at this moment writhing in the flames! Then I might feel some sort of satisfaction with myself, and even this place of peril would be for the time quite tolerable to me."

No doubt it would have been a vast satisfaction to Todd to have all that he hated in the flames of his burning house; but as yet he could only tell himself that the puny vengeance he had achieved had been upon the most inferior tools of those who had wreaked his ruin, while the principals remained untouched and most completely unscathed.

What had he yet done to Sir Richard Blunt? What to Tobias? What to Johanna? What even to the dog that had played no inconsiderable a part in his final conviction of the murder of its master? Little, indeed; and the thought that his revenges were all to do, scared his imagination, and filled him full of rage as well as terror.

He heard the sound of the footsteps of the people who had gone to the roof of the church with the beadle to see the fire, coming down again, and he shrunk still closer into the bottom of the pulpit.

"Oh," he said, "if they could but for one moment guess that I was here, what joy it would give them to drag me forth to the light of day! To once again cast me into the condemned one's cell, and then to hoot me to the gallows! But, no — no; I will not die a felon's death. Rather by my own hands will I fall, if my fortune should reach such a wretched extremity. Hush! — oh, hush! Why do I speak? They come — they come."

"Well, gentlemen, as you say, the old house is gone at last," said the beadle, "and I must say, though fires always gives me a turn, and, as a parish authority perhaps I ought not to say it, I think it is a very good job."

"A good job, Mr. Beadle?" said one. "How do you make that out?"

"Why, sir, who would have lived in it? Who would have paid rent, and rates, and taxes, and given his Christmas-box to the beadle like a Christian, in Todd's old house, I should like to know?"

"Well, you are right there."

"I know I is, sir. The fact is, that house would have been like a great blot, sirs, in the middle of Fleet-street; no one would have taken it for love or money; and it a very good thing as it's gone at last."

"You reason the matter very well, Mr. Beadle," said another, "and I for a certainty subscribe to your opinion, that it is a good thing it is gone at last, and I only hope that its late owner will soon be in the hands of justice. Somebody is trying the door of the church."

The beadle went to it, and upon opening it two persons entered the church. One of them spoke at once, saying —

"Is the beadle of St. Dunstan's in the church?"

Todd knew the voice. It was Sir Richard Blunt, and he shook so that the pulpit creaked again most ominously, so that if the attention of any one had chanced to be directed towards it, they might have felt a kind of suspicion that it was occupied. Luckily for Todd, no one looked up, nor in any way noticed the pulpit.

"Lor', sir, yes," said the beadle. "Here I is, and if I don't make a great mistake, sir, you is Sir Richard Blunt."

"I am."

"Lor' bless you, sir, that's the way with me. If I sees a indiwidal once, and knows 'em, I knows 'em again."

"It's a capital faculty, Mr. Beadle. But my friend, Mr. Crotchet, here, will just go down with you through the vaults to make sure that the fire in Todd's house has in no way connected with this. We don't want to burn down the church."

"Burn down the church, sir? Oh, conwulsions! Me go down into the vaults with this gentleman? Bless you, sir, I should only obstructify him in the discharge of his duty. I couldn't think of doing it, I assure you, sir. He can go by himself, you see, and then he will have the advantage of nobody to contradict him."

"I'd rather go without him, Sir Richard," said Crotchet, who was the gentleman. "He's only a idiot!"

The beadle marched up to Crotchet, until he got within about two inches of that gentleman's nose, and then slowly shaking his head to and fro, he said—

"Did you call me a hidiot?"

"Yes, I did."

"You did? Now, young man, mind what you say, because if you call me a hidiot, I shall be bound to do—"

"What?"

"Nothing at all. I see you are rather a low fellow, so I shall treat you with the same contempt as I did the very common person that pulled my nose last week—Silent contempt! That's how I serve people. I despise you, accordingly."

"Werry good," said Crotchet. "That's by far the safestest way, old feller. So now I'll go down into the vaults."

"No news of Todd yet, Sir Richard?" said one of the gentlemen, walking up to the magistrate.

"Oh, Sir Christopher Wren, I beg your pardon," said the magistrate. "I did not see you at the moment. I am sorry to say that although we have some news of Todd, we have not yet been able to catch him. But we must have him, England is not so very large a place after all, and I don't think he has any means of getting away from it."

"The sooner the rascal expiates his crimes upon the scaffold the better. I never before heard of a criminal in whose whole career there was nothing found that could excite the faintest feeling of compassion."

"He is a desperate bad fellow, indeed," said Sir Richard Blunt, "but I hope that he will not long trouble society. I have determined to give up all other pursuits until I take him, and I have a carte blanche from the Secretary of State to go to any expense, and to do what I please, in the way of capturing him."

Todd's heart sunk within him at these words. Had they come from any one else, he would not have heeded them much but from him they were of fearful import.

"Oh, that I could kill that man," he muttered, "then I should know some peace; but while he lives and while I live, we are like two planets in one orbit, and cannot long exist together."

"I wish you every success," said Sir Christopher Wren.

"I am obliged to you, Sir Christopher. The fact is, that Todd left his house pretty full of combustibles, and my men were unwise enough, contrary to my positive orders, to let them be there; and I am afraid that he may have contrived some mode of blowing up the church by a train or some other equally diabolical means, as he had such free and unrestrained access to it for so long."

"What!" cried the beadle. "What did you say, Sir Richard?"

"I merely said that I was apprehensive Todd might have concocted some means of blowing up the church, that is all."

"And me in it! And me in it! Conwulsions!"

The beadle did not pause for another moment, but rushing to the door, he flew out of the church as if a barrel of gunpowder had been rolling after him, nor did he stop until he got right through Temple-bar and some distance down the Strand.

"I am afraid I have frightened away our friend, the beadle," said Sir Richard Blunt.

"And I don't wonder at it," replied Sir Christopher Wren. "I should not like exactly to be blown up along with the fragments of old St. Dunstan's Church myself, so I will go."

"Ah, I am sorry I mentioned it."

"Are you though? I am very much obliged to you for so doing. Excuse me, Sir Richard, for bidding you good-morning rather abruptly, if you please."

Sir Richard Blunt laughed as he bade Sir Christopher and his friend good-morning—by-the-by, the friend had already made his way outside the church-door, and was waiting for Sir Christopher in no small degree of trepidation.

"For God's sake," he said, "come along at once, or we may all be blown up together."

"Well," said Sir Richard Blunt, as he paced up the aisle of the old church, "I would risk a little scorching, if at the end of it I could only lay my hand upon the shoulder of Sweeney Todd. What on earth can have become of the rascal? But I must be patient—yes, patience will do it, for that we shall come face to face again, I feel to be as established a fact for the future, as that of my own existence now."

"Oh," thought Todd, "if I now only dared to shoot him! If I only dared do it! And I would if it were not for the other one in the vaults—that wretch they call Crotchet. And yet I have a pistol here. If I thought that after shooting

him through the head or through the heart, I could by one bold rush get out of this church, what a glorious piece of work it would be! This Sir Richard Blunt is the only man that I dread. Were he no more, I should feel completely at peace. I could shoot him now."

Todd took a pistol from his pocket and presented it through the little crevice of the very slightly open door of the pulpit. The door would open a little in spite of him.

"Yes, oh, yes, I could shoot him now; but the report of the pistol would perhaps bring that other villain they call Crotchet from the vaults, and then who shall say what would happen? And yet I have another pistol, and could shoot him too. Oh, how glorious, if I could take the lives of both these men! It would indeed be a good work."

The magistrate paced to and fro waiting for Crotchet, and little suspecting that Todd was so near to him, and with a pistol aimed at him! If he had only guessed as much, he would have freely risked the shot, and would soon have been in the pulpit along with Todd. But it was not to be. Sir Richard Blunt had not any supernatural power by which he could tell of the proximity of Todd from no evidence of that fact at all.

"Yes," said Todd suddenly, "I will shoot him. I will risk all and shoot him now. If I die for it, I shall have, at least, had a great and glorious revenge! I will shoot him now, when he turns and walks up the aisle again."

Todd felt calm and pleased now that he had actually made up his mind to shoot Sir Richard. He projected the barrel of the pistol about an inch or so through the crevice caused by the spring of the door, and he calmly waited for the opportunity of sending its deadly contents into the heart of the magistrate.

The aisle down which Sir Richard had slowly paced was rather a long one, and he had walked down it some half-dozen times, in deep thought, and waiting for Crotchet. There was no reason on earth why he should not come up it again, and so expose himself to the deadly aim of Todd.

He did commence the walk up it. If he had taken twenty steps he would have been a dead man; but chance, or providence — it is not for us to say which — had it otherwise. After going about ten paces, he turned abruptly to the left, and made his way down a long narrow passage between the pews to the opening that led down to the vaults, where Crotchet was pursuing his inquiries.

Todd was foiled.

He drew back with a deep sigh.

"He is saved!" he said. "He is saved! It is not to be!"

Quite unconscious of the serious danger he had so narrowly escaped, Sir Richard went to the mouth of the opening to the vaults, and called out —

"Crotchet! Crotchet!"

"Here you is, sir," replied Crotchet; "I was just coming. It's all right. The old wagabone hasn't done nothing, sir, to spread the fire out of his own blessed premises, as I can see. The church isn't in danger, sir, I take it."

"Very good, Crotchet; then we need not remain here any longer. I cannot, for the life of me, think what has become of our man that we left in Todd's house. In all the riot and racket of the fire, no one seems to be at all aware of what has become of him. Is he a steady sort of a man, Crotchet?"

"Why yes, Sir Richard, he is. But if the truth must be told, he has got the fault of many. He is fond of the — "

Here Crotchet went through expressively the pantomime of placing a glass to his lips and draining it off, after which he rubbed his stomach, as much as to say — "Isn't it nice!"

"I understand, Crotchet: he drinks."

"Rather, Sir Richard."

"Ah, that is the case of all — or of nearly all — men in his class of life. I should not wonder now, at all, if he has not been taking a glass of something, in consequence of feeling lonely, and so set fire to the old house."

CHAPTER CLIII.

TODD ASTONISHES THE BEADLE, AND ESCAPES FROM ST. DUNSTAN'S.

"OH!" GROANED TODD TO HIMSELF. "Oh, if I had but shot the villain before the other one came up from the vaults, and all would have been well; but I cannot shoot them both at once. It is not often that I lose anything by procrastination, but I have now — Oh, yes, I have now! It is maddening! — It is quite maddening! and I could find in my own heart almost to turn this pistol against my own life, only that I hope yet to live a little while for vengeance."

A smart tap came against the church door.

"Open the door, Crotchet," said Sir Richard. "We are alone in the church now, for the beadle was too careful of himself to remain after he found that there was some little danger."

"Oh, sir," said Crotchet, with an expression of disgust in his face, "beadles is humbugs, sir; and this beadle of St. Dunstan's is the very worst of the worst of beadles. Didn't you notice, sir, what an old humbug he was before, when we was a-coming here on the hunt about Todd and that beautiful creature Mrs.

Lovett? Then, sir, we found out what sort of a beadle that was. I rather think I despises beadles, sir; I does, your worship."

Tap came the knock at the church door again.

"You forget, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, pointing to the door.

"Lor', yer worship, so I did. I begs his blessed pardon whosomever it is. Come in. There's nobody but the right sort here, whoever it is. Hilloa! it's our friend, Green."

"Ah, Green, are you looking for me?" said Sir Richard.

"I was, sir."

"Then you have news. What is it?"

"Todd is in the neighbourhood, sir, or was an hour or two ago, I am well assured."

"Todd?"

"Yes, sir. He was in his own house. A man came to the door of it to see the person minding it, and the door was opened a little way, and Todd tried to pull him in, and would have pulled him in, but his neckcloth gave way, and then the fire broke out directly after. The man has been in too great a fright till just a little while ago to venture into the street again."

"You have seen him?"

"I have, sir."

"Bring him here, Green."

Green immediately left the church, and Mr. Crotchet set up a long and melancholy whistle.

"In my heart I thought this might be," said Sir Richard, "and yet having no evidence to justify the suggestion of my fancy, I did not like to nurse the idea. Todd in this neighbourhood — Todd in his own house! Oh, what a chance!"

"Your worship," said Crotchet, shaking his head and speaking slowly, with an appearance of great wisdom. "Your worship, it's mostly always the case. There's a special providence that always brings back folks as has done a murder back again to the place where they has done it; and the next time I'm on the lay for a cove as has done a slaughtering job, I shall sit myself down, yer worship, in the room where he did it and wait for him. It's a special thing of Providence, it is, sir, I feel as sure as though I did it myself, as isn't Providence at all, but just Crotchet, and no sort of mistake."

"You are right, Crotchet, as far as examples go. We will only just listen to what this man that Green has gone for has got to say, and then we will be off and do our best."

"Yes, yer worship, we will; and here he is."

Green, the officer, now brought into the church the very man with whom Todd had had the little adventure at the door of his shop; and notwithstanding the time that had elapsed since that little incident, the man was still in a state of terror, which was quite manifest in every feature of his face.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" said Crotchet, as he dealt the man a blow on the back that nearly took all his breath away. "You look as scared as if you had just seen a ghost, old fellow, that you do."

"It was worse than a ghost."

Sir Richard Blunt stepped up to the man, and said —

"Do you know me? I am Sir Richard Blunt the magistrate."

"Oh, yes, sir, I know you."

"Answer me then, clearly and distinctly, for much may depend upon it. Who was it opened the door of Todd's house for you, and strove, as I hear, to drag you into it?"

"Sweeney Todd, sir."

"Are you quite sure? Do you know him well by sight?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I could swear it."

"And you thought it very natural that he should be there, and if anybody there had so laid hold of you in the dark, you would, of course, at once have naturally concluded that it must be Todd?"

"Oh, dear no, sir, I hadn't an idea that it could be him, sir; and if I hadn't seen his face, that I know quite well, I couldn't possibly have believed it to be him."

"That is enough. I will not trouble you any further. I am much obliged to you for your information."

"You are very welcome, Sir Richard; and I do hope you may catch the rascal soon. I shall never forget his having hold of me, for the longest day I have to live."

Still shaking at the bare remembrance of the danger that he had run, the man left the church; and peeping over his shoulder every now and then as he went, for fear Todd should be close at hand, he took his route to quite a different quarter of the town, where he fancied he should feel more secure; for he could not make up his mind to anything but that Todd must have some special desire to lay hold of him, and add him to the already formidable muster-roll of his victims.

When he left the church, Sir Richard Blunt turned to Crotchet, and said —

"Crotchet, you may depend, now, that Todd is in London, and fancies that among its crowds will be his greatest chance of safety. I will take measures at once to discover him. Come along with me to Craven-street, and you too, Green, and I will explain to you both what I think will be the best plan to adopt."

"All's right, sir; we'll have him," said Crotchet.

"I think we shall," said Green, "for, large as London is, I rather think we know how to search it as well as most folks. I attend you, sir, and I will run any risk in the world to take the scoundrel prisoner."

"And so will I," said Crotchet.

"I know you both well," said Sir Richard, "and I cannot desire to be aided by better men than you both are. Come on. I will not speak further of any plans or projects except in my own office, where I know that there are no spies or eaves-droppers."

"This blessed church is pretty safe," said Crotchet. "It ain't very likely that anybody is on the listening lay in it. It would be rather cold work, I take it. But, howsomdever, there's nothing like being on the right side of the hedge, and in one's own crib, that one knows all the ins and all the outs of, after all."

They both followed Sir Richard Blunt from the church, and Todd felt that he was once again alone within that sacred edifice, the very atmosphere of which was profaned by the presence of such a wretch, so loaded with crimes as he was.

"Gone," said Todd, looking up put of the pulpit, "and may all — "

We cannot repeat the maledictions of Todd. They were additionally awful spoken in such a building, and from such a place in that building. It was dreadful that the roof of a place reared to the worship of God, should be desecrated by the raving curses of such a man as Todd.

He was silent after he had satisfied his first ebullition of rage, and then he was afraid that he had gone too far, and endangered his safety by making an appearance at all above the level of the pulpit, or by speaking. How did he know but that Sir Richard Blunt might, after all, have some sort of suspicion that he was not far off, and be listening close at hand?

As this supposition, wild and vague as it was, and quite unsupported by any evidence, found a home in the brain of Todd, the perspiration of intense fear broke out upon his brow, and again he shook to the extent of making the old pulpit creak dreadfully.

"Oh, hush! hush!" he moaned. "Be still — be still. I am safe yet. There is no one here. I am safe, surely. There is no one in the church. Why do I suffer more, much more, from what does not happen, than from what does?"

Still the notion clung to him for a little while, and he remained at the bottom of the pulpit quite needlessly for the next half hour, listening with all his might, in order to detect the slightest noise that might be indicative of the presence of a foe. But all was as still as the grave, and by slow degrees Sweeney Todd got more assured.

"I breathe again," he said. "They do not suspect that I am here. It is much too unlikely a place for them to dream of for a moment. Even Sir Richard Blunt, with his utmost prescience, does not think of looking for me in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church. I am safe — I am safe for the present."

He agreed with this feeling that he was quite alone in the church, and he was right. He looked over the edge of the pulpit. How still and solemn the place looked!

The morning had advanced quite sufficiently now to shed a dim light into the church, and the noise in the street contingent upon the fire had nearly passed

away. The fact was, that the firemen had, after making a few efforts and finding them of no use, let Todd's house burn to the ground, and turned all their efforts towards saving the edifices on either side. In that object they were successful, so that the conflagration was over, and nothing remained but the frail wall of Todd's house.

And so the clank of the engine-pumps no longer sounded in his ears, but he could yet be certain that there was a great crowd in Fleet-street, for he heard the hum of voices, and occasionally the trouble that ensued when a vehicle tried to force its way through the dense mass of people that blocked up the thoroughfare, which at the best of times was none of the clearest.

"Is there a chance now of escape," said Todd, "if I could only make up my mind to it? I do not forget that I am disguised — I ought not to forget that. Who will know me? and yet that man knew me — that man that I missed killing at the old place. Yes, he knew me. He said he could swear to me. Confound him! I wish I could have sworn to his dead body. I wonder if they have left the church-door open, or, rather, only upon the latch? I — I will descend from here, and make a bold attempt."

He opened the pulpit-door, and had got about three steps down the little ornamental flight of winding stairs that led from the pulpit to the body of the building, when the church-door was suddenly opened, and he fled back with a precipitation that made some noise, when he might have done so in perfect quietness, for it was not very likely that any one would have looked up to the pulpit immediately upon their entrance to the building.

A glance towards the door convinced Mr. Todd that it was the beadle.

"Oh, dear, I thought I heard something," said the beadle, as he closed the door after him. "But I suppose it was only fancy, after all. Now they say that all the fire is out, and that it is quite impossible for the church to be blowed up, I suppose I may come in without any danger. Lor' bless us, that Sir Richard Blunt, I do believe, would think no more of blowing up a beadle, than he would of eating a penny bun, that's my opinion of him."

"Curses on your head!" muttered Todd.

"Bless me, what a world we live in," said the beadle.

"Wretch — beast," muttered Todd; "what does he want here at this time of day?"

"Yes, to-morrow's Sunday," said the beadle, as if pursuing a train of thought that had found a home in his brain. "How the weeks do run round, to be sure, and one Sunday comes after another at such a rate, that it seems as if there was weeks and weeks and weeks of 'em, without any of the other days at all. I wish I hadn't to come here."

Todd uttered faintly some dreadful imprecations, and the beadle continued talking to himself to keep his courage up, as was evident from his nervous and fidgetty manner.

"Ah, dear, me. Convulsions! I tried to persuade my wife to come and dust the communion table and the pulpit-cushions for to-morrow, but she politely declined; she needn't have thrown the bellows at my head though, for all that."

"Dust the pulpit-cushions!" thought Todd. "The wretch is coming up here! I shall have to cut his throat, and leave him at the bottom of the pulpit for the parson to tread upon the first thing he does to-morrow, upon coming up here to preach."

As Todd spoke, he took a clasped knife out of his pocket, and opened it with his teeth. "Oh, yes, my old friend, I shall, I see, be under the painful necessity of cutting your throat, that I shall, and I shall not hesitate about it at all."

"Yes," added the beadle, "I mean to say that to throw the bellows at the man is like adding insult to injury, for it is blowing him up in a kind of way that's anything but agreeable. Lor! how cold and rum the church does feel. Rum? why did I say rum and put myself in mind of it? Oh, don't I like it, rather! If I only now had a glass of real fine old Jamaica rum at this moment, I'd be as happy as a bishop."

"Oh, I'll rum you!" growled Todd.

"Eh? Eh?"

The beadle turned round three times, as though he were going to begin a game at blind-man's-bluff, and then he said —

"I thought I heard something. Oh dear, how shivery I do get to be sure, when I'm alone in the church. I'll just get through the dusting job as quick as I can, and no mistake. Amen! Amen! I'm a miserable sinner — Amen!"

CHAPTER CLIV.

DETAILS THE PERILOUS SITUATION OF THE BEADLE.

TODD HAD HEARD ALL THIS WITH ANGER and impatience rankling at his heart. He began to have the most serious thoughts of sacrificing the beadle — indeed, if any good could have been got to himself by so doing, he would not have scrupled to do so with the greatest speed. As it was, however, he could not concoct any plan of proceedings quickly which would benefit him, and so he was compelled to remain an auditor of the beadle's private thoughts, and a spectator of what he was about, when he chose to peep over the edge of the pulpit.

"Well, it's astonishing," continued the beadle, "what a fever that fellow Todd has kept me in for I don't know how long, one way or another: me and Fleet-street have been regularly bothered by him. First of all, I was in all sorts of doubts and uncertainties about the matter before they took him and tried him, and was a-going to hang him, and then I did think that he was as — good — as done — for — "

As he uttered these last words, the beadle was banging one of the cushions of the communion-table, so that he was compelled for want of breath to utter them at intervals.

"Oh, confound you!" muttered Todd, "if I only had hold of you, I would throttle you, and then think of what to do afterwards."

Todd's great difficulty arose from the fact that he thought if he tried to descend from the pulpit, the beadle might see him and get the start of him in leaving the church, in which event the alarm that he would raise in Fleet-street would be such, that any attempt to escape would be attended by the greatest hazard.

"There is nothing for it but to wait," said Todd to himself gloomily. "I can do nothing else; but woe to him when I do catch him!"

"This dusting job on a Saturday," said the beadle, "does seem to me to be one of the most disagreeable of all that has to be done with the church. I don't mind one's duty on a Sunday, but this is horrid. On a Sunday there's lots of people, and the old place has a sort of cheerful look about it, but now I don't like it, and I've a good mind to get one of the charity-boys of the blessed parish to keep me company."

"I will kill him, too, if you do," muttered Todd.

The beadle paused upon this thought concerning the charity-boy; but as he had finished the communion-table, he did not think that for the mere dusting the pulpit and its cushions, it was worth while to make any fuss.

"It will soon be over," he said, "very soon. I'll just pop up and settle the pulpit, and then get home again as quick as I possibly can. I do wonder, now, if that old Todd will be caught soon? The old wretch!"

The beadle began the ascent of the pulpit.

"It's my opinion," he said, "that Todd — as he had other folks made up into pies — ought to be made into one himself, and then given to mad dogs for a supper — Ha! ha! That's a very good thought of mine, and when I go to the 'Pig's-eye, Tooth, and Tinder-box,' to-night, I will out with it, and they will knock their pots and glasses against the table beautifully, and cry out — 'Well done, bravo! — bravo!' I rather think I'm a great man at the 'Pig's-eye, Tooth and Tinder-box.'"

By this time the beadle had got quite to the top of the pulpit stairs, and had his hand on the door. Todd was crouched down at the bottom of the pulpit, waiting for him like some famished tiger ready to pounce upon his

prey. He fully intended to murder the unfortunate beadle.

"Well, here goes," said that most unhappily-situated functionary, as he stepped into the pulpit.

Todd immediately grasped his legs.

"If you say one word, you are a dead man!"

The shock was too much for the nerves of the poor beadle of St. Dunstan's, and on the instant he fainted, and fell huddled up at the bottom of the little place.

Todd immediately stood upon the prostrate form of the parochial authority.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "I have him now, and I shall be able to leave St. Dunstan's yet."

He trampled as hard upon the beadle as he could, and then he took the clasp knife from his pocket, and said —

"It will be better to kill him. Rise, idiot, rise, and tell me if you can, why I should not cut your throat?"

The beadle neither moved nor spoke.

"Is he dead?" said Todd. "Has the fright killed him? It is strange; but I have heard of such things. Why it surely must be so. The sudden shock has been the death of him, and it would be a waste of time for me to touch him. He is dead — he must be dead!"

Todd, full of this feeling, retreated two or three steps down the little winding staircase of the pulpit, and then reaching in his hand, he caught hold of the poor beadle by the hair of his head, and dragged him sufficiently out of the pulpit to be enabled to look him in the face. The eyes were closed, the inspiration seemed to be stopped, and there was, in truth, every appearance of death about the unfortunate functionary of the old church.

"Yes, dead," said Todd; "but it will be better for me. He will be found here, and as no violence will show upon him, the doctors will learnedly pronounce it a case of apoplexy, and there will arise no suspicion of my having been here at all. It is much better, oh, much, than as if I had killed him."

With this feeling, Todd pushed what he considered to be the dead body of the beadle back into the pulpit again, and then himself rapidly descended the little spiral flight of stairs.

The clock of St. Dunstan's struck the hour of ten, and Todd carefully counted the strokes.

"Ten," he said. "A busy hour — a hour of broad daylight, and I with such a price upon my head, and the hands of all men lifted against me, in one of the most populous streets in the City of London! It is a fearful risk!"

It was a fearful risk, and Todd might well shudder to find that his temerity had brought him into such a position; but yet he felt that if anything were to save him, it would be boldness, and not shrinking timidity. One great cause of dread had passed away from Todd when Sir Richard Blunt left the church. If

in any way Todd had had to encounter him, he would have shrunk back appalled at the frightful risk.

When he gained the body of the church, he glanced again up to the pulpit, but all was there profoundly still; and the fact of the death of the beadle appeared to him, Todd, to be so very firmly established, now, as to require no further confirmation.

Although the beadle had closed the church door, he had placed the key, most probably for security, in the inner side of the lock, and there Todd found it. He thought it would be a good thing to put it in his pocket, and he did so accordingly; and when the key was removed, he placed his eye to the keyhole, and peeped out into Fleet-street.

Todd could see the people passing quickly, but no one cast a glance towards the old church, and he began to reason with himself, that surely there could be no difficulty in getting into the street quite unnoticed, if not quite unobserved. Again he told himself that he was well disguised.

"I dread no eye," he said, "but that of Sir Richard Blunt, and he is not here to look upon me. There is not one else, I think, in London that would know me through this disguise. There was never but one who could do so, and she is dead. Yes, Mrs. Lovett might have known me, but she is no more: so I will venture. Yes, I will venture now."

His heart failed him a little as he placed his hand upon the lock of the church-door. It well might do so, for the risk he run, or was about to run, was truly fearful. He was on the point of sallying out among a population, the whole of whom were familiar with his name, and to whom he was as a being accursed, who would upon the slightest hint of identity be gladly hunted to the death.

Truly, Todd might well hesitate.

But yet to hesitate was perhaps to be lost. How could he tell now one moment from another when some one might come to the church-door? and then he would be in a worse position than before. Yes, he felt that he must make the attempt to leave, whether that attempt should involve him in destruction or not, for to stay were far worse.

He opened the door and coolly closed it again, and marched into Fleet-street.

We say he did this coolly, but it were better to say that he acted a coolness that he was far from feeling. A very tempest of terror was at his heart. His brain for a moment or two felt like a volcano, and he reeled as he felt himself in the broad open light of day in Fleet-street among the throng of the population, and yet in that throng was in truth his greatest safety.

"Ain't you well, sir?" said a man.

Todd started and placed his hand upon the knife that he had handy in his pocket; and then he thought that after all it might only be a civil inquiry, and he replied —

"Oh, yes, thank you — thank you, sir. But I am old."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

The man passed on.

"Oh, curse you! I should like to settle you," said Todd to himself as he passed through Temple Bar; but what a relief it was to pass through Temple Bar at all! To leave that now frightfully dangerous Fleet-street behind him. Oh, yes, that was a relief indeed; and Todd felt as if some heavy weight had been taken off his heart upon the moment that he set foot in the Strand.

"Am I safe?" he muttered. "Am I safe? Oh, no, no. Do not let me be too confident."

He was superstitiously afraid of pluming himself upon the fact of having got so far in safety, lest at the moment that he did so, malignant destiny might be revenged upon him, by bringing in his way some one who might know him, even though his capital disguise; so he went on tremblingly.

Todd did not like large open thoroughfares now, and yet, perhaps, if he had set to work reasoning upon the subject, he would have come to the conclusion that they were quite as safe, if not a few degrees safer for him, than by-streets; but there was something in the glaring publicity of such a thoroughfare as the Strand that he shrunk from, and he was glad to get from it into the gloomy precincts of Holywell-street.

That street then, as now, was certainly not the resort of the most choice of the population of London, but Todd liked it, and he was wonderfully attracted by a dirty-looking little public-house which was then in it. A murder was committed in that house afterwards, and it lost its licence, and was eventually destroyed by fire.

"Dare I go in here?" said Todd. "I am faint for want of food, and if I do not have something soon I feel that I shall sink, and then there will be a fuss, and who knows what horrible discovery might then take place? This house is dark and gloomy, and in all likelihood is the resort of gentlemen who are not in the habit of having any superfluous questions asked of them; so it will suit me well."

He dived in at the narrow doorway, and found himself in one of the smallest and darkest public-houses that he had ever beheld in all his life, for although he had lived so long in Fleet-street so close at hand, he had never ventured into that den.

"A nice parlour to the right, sir," said a rather masculine-looking specimen of the fair sex in the bar.

"Thank you, madam."

Todd went to the right, and opening a little door, which, in consequence of having a cord and pulley attached to it, made a great resistance, he entered a little grimy room, the walls of which were of wainscot, but so begrimed with tobacco smoke were they, that they were of the colour of the darkest rose-wood,

and the ceiling in no way differed from them in tint. A fire was burning in a little wretched grate, and the floor was covered with coarse sand, which crackled under Todd's feet.

The furniture of this little den, which certainly had the name of 'Parlour' from courtesy only, consisted of the coldest-looking rigid wooden chairs and tables that could be imagined. Two men sat by the fire trying to warm themselves, for a cold wind was blowing in the streets of London, and the season was chilly and wintry for the time of the year.

Todd, when he found the parlour had some one in it, would gladly have effected a retreat; but to do so, after he had made his way into the middle of the room, would have only aroused suspicion, so he resolved to go on, and carry the affair through; and for greater safety, he put on a very infirm aspect, and appeared to be bent double by age and disease.

He coughed dreadfully.

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

"Oh, dear me, no," said Todd. "When you are as old as I am, young man, you won't wonder at infirmities coming upon you."

"Young man, do you call me? I am forty."

"Ah, forty! When I was forty, and that was thirty years ago, I thought myself quite a youth. Oh, dear me, but what with the gout, and the lumbago, and two or three more little things, I am nearly done for now. Oh, dear me, life's a burthen."

"What would you like to have, sir?" said a girl who waited upon the parlour guests, and who came in for Todd's order.

"Anything, my dear, you have in the house to eat, and some brandy to drink, if you please."

"Sit by the fire, sir," said one of the men; "you will be more comfortable. We ought to make way for age."

"Oh, dear no, I thank you. I must be somewhere where I can rest my poor back at times, so I like this corner." It was a dark corner, and Todd preferred it. "It will do very well for me, if you please. Oh, dear me; don't disturb yourselves, gentlemen, on my account, I beg of you. I am an old broken-down man, and have not long to live now in this world of care and sorrow."

CHAPTER CLV.

TODD GETS THE BETTER OF THE SHARPERS, AND TAKES A BOAT.

THE GIRL BROUGHT TODD A PLATE of roast-beef, a loaf, and some brandy, with which he regaled himself tolerably well; but he was uncomfortably conscious that the two men were looking at him all the while.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it's a very odd thing, but my appetite continues good notwithstanding all my infirmities. I eat well, and I drink well, and the doctors say that that is what keeps me alive."

"I should not wonder," said one of the men drily.

"Yes," said the other, with a laugh, "you are like us, old gentleman; we live by victuals and drink."

"Ah, I didn't mean that," said Todd; "you young people are so fond of your jokes. Dear me, when I was young I used to be fond of my joke, likewise, but now I am so old, that what with my winter cough, and the gout, and all that sort of thing, my joking days are long since gone by. I lost my poor wife, too, a little while ago — bless her heart! Ah, me!"

Todd had the greatest inclination in the world to make up one of his old diabolical faces at this juncture; but he restrained himself, for he felt the danger of doing so; and then affecting to wipe away a tear, he added —

"But I find my consolation in religion. There's where, gentlemen, an old man may look for comfort, and that strength of heart and soul, which in this world is denied to him."

"Very true, sir — very true."

"Ah, gentlemen, it is true; and there's nothing in all the world like an easy conscience. That's the sort of thing to make a man feel serene and happy in this world, while he is preparing for the joys of the next."

"How delightful it is, sir," said one of the men, "for us to meet with a gentleman who has the same opinion as ourselves. Will you join us in a glass, sir, if you please?"

"Oh, yes — yes, with pleasure. What a shocking bad fire, they tell me, has been in Fleet-street."

"Yes, it's the notorious Todd's house."

"In-deed!"

The man who had proposed the social glass rang the bell, and ordered three tumblers of brandy-and-water, and then he said —

"Ah, sir! if you or I could only lay hold of Sweeney Todd it would be rather a good day's work."

"Oh, dear, God forbid!" said Todd. "He would soon lay me low if I were to try to lay hold of him, with, as I may say in a manner of speaking, one foot in the grave. I am not, in the natural order of things, long for this world, gentlemen, and it is not for me to lay hold of desperate characters."

"That's true, sir; but do you know the reward that is offered for him by the Secretary of State?"

"No! Is there really a reward for him?"

"Yes, a thousand pounds clear to any one who will lodge him in any jail. A thousand pounds! Why, it makes a man's mouth water to think of it. One might retire, Bill, mightn't one, and give up all sorts of — "

Bill gave his enthusiastic comrade rather a severe cautionary kick under the table, and it seemed to have the effect of stopping the word 'thieving' from coming past his lips quite at unawares — at least that was the way Todd translated it. He had not the smallest doubt but that the public-house was a very indifferent one, and that the two men whom he was in company with in it were two of the most arrant thieves in all London.

Todd resolved to act accordingly, and he did not let them see that he had the least suspicion of them; but he kept such a wary eye upon their movements, that nothing they did or looked escaped him. They little supposed that so keen an observer watched them as Sweeney Todd was.

The brandy-and-water that had been ordered soon made its appearance; and Todd, while perpetrating a very well-acted fit of coughing, saw one of the men just slightly wink at the other, and take a little way from his waistcoat pocket a small bottle.

"Oh!" thought Todd, "my brandy-and-water will be prepared, I see; and if I do not look sharp, these fellows will rob me of all that I have run so much risk, and took so much trouble to get out of the old house."

After a moment's thought, he rose and said —

"I will only go and pay for what I have had at the bar, and you must permit me likewise to pay for this."

"Oh, no — no!"

"Oh, yes, but I will — I will! I dare say that I have the most money, after all, for I have been very careful in my time, and saved a trifle, so you must permit me."

The two thieves were so delighted at getting rid of him for a few moments, that although they declared it was too bad, they let him go. The moment he was gone, one said to the other, with a grin —

"Bill, put a good dose into the old chap's glass. He has got a rare gold watch in his pocket, and there's a ring on his finger, that if it isn't a diamond, it's as near like one as ever I heard of. Give him a good dose."

"Well, but you know that even a few drops will settle him?"

"Never mind that. It's all right enough; pour it in."

They put enough of some deadly drug into the glass of brandy-and water that stood next to where Todd had been sitting to kill a horse; and then he returned and sat down with a groan, as he said —

"It's quite a funny thing! There's a man at the bar inquiring for somebody; and he's got a red waistcoat on."

"A red waistcoat!" cried both the the thieves, jumping up. "Did you say a red waistcoat?"

"Why, yes; and I think he is what they call a Bow-street thingamy — Lord bless my old brain! what do they call them —"

"A runner?"

"Ah, to be sure, a Bow-street runner, to be sure."*

Both the thieves bundled out of the parlour in a moment, and Todd was not idle while they were gone. The first thing he did was to decant his own brandy-and-water — which had been drugged — into an empty glass. Then he filled his glass with the contents of one of the thieves' glasses. After that, he half filled that glass with the drugged spirit, and filled it up from the other thief's glass, and that again he filled up with the drugged spirit.

By this means, each of them had half from the glass they had — as they thought — so very cleverly drugged for him, to drink from; and as they had not scrupled to put in an over dose, it may be fairly presumed that there was in each of their glasses quite enough to make them very uncomfortable.

They both returned.

"There's nobody there now," said one. "Are you sure you saw him, sir? We can't see any one."

"Didn't I tell you he was going away when I saw him? It was only the latch of the door catching his top-coat that made me see his red waistcoat; and it was a wonder then that I saw it, for I am not very noticeable in those things. Oh, dear, how bad my cough is."

"Take some of your brandy-and-water, sir," said one of the thieves, as he winked at the other. "It will do you good, sir."

"Not a doubt of it," said the other.

"Do you think so? Well — well, perhaps it may. Here's my friendship to both of you, gentlemen; and I hope we shall none of us repent of this happy meeting. I am much pleased, gentlemen, to see you both, and hope the brandy-and-water will do us all a world of good. I will give you a toast, gentlemen."

"Ah, a toast! — a toast!"

* *"Bow Street Runners" was the popular term for members of England's first organized police force.*

"But mind gentlemen, you must take a good draught, if you drink my toast — Will you?"

"Will we? Ay, to be sure, if you will."

"I promise, gentlemen; so here's the toast — It's to the very cunning fox who laid a trap for another, and caught his own tail in it!"

"What a droll toast!" said the two thieves. They paused a moment, but as they saw their new friend drink at least one-half of his brandy-and-water in honour of the toast, they did the same thing, and looked at each other quite contented and pleased as possible that the drugged spirit, at the very first pull, had been so freely partaken of — for they had found, by experience, the victims they would have made perceived a disagreeable taste, and would not drink twice.

"Hilloa!" said Todd.

"What's the matter, old gentleman?"

"Do you know, this is very good brandy-and-water?"

"Glad you like it."

"Like it? — I couldn't be off liking it. It's capital! Let's finish these glasses, and have others at once."

As he spoke he finished his glass, and the two thieves were so delighted that he had taken it all, that they at once finished theirs likewise; and then they looked at him, and then at each other, until one said to the other, as he made a wry face —

"I say, Bill, I — I don't much like my glass. How did yours taste, eh, old fellow?"

"Very queer."

"How strange," said Todd; "mine was beautiful! I hope, gentlemen, you have not made a mistake and put anything out of the way in your own glasses instead of mine?"

"Oh, dear. Oh — oh! I am going, Bill."

"And so am I. Oh, murder! My head is going round and round like a humming-top as big as St. Paul's."

"And so is mine."

"Then, gentlemen," said Todd, rising, "I shall have the pleasure of bidding you good day, and I hope you have just sense enough left to appreciate the toast of the 'cunning fox that laid a trap for another, in which he caught his own tail,' and I have the further pleasure of informing you that I am Sweeney Todd."

The two thieves, quite overcome by the powerful and death-dealing narcotic they had placed in the liquor, fell to the floor in a state of perfect insensibility, and Todd very calmly walked out of the public-house.

"This will not do," he said, when he reached the west-end of Holywell-street. "I must not run such risks as this. I must now be off. But where to? That is the question. Out of London, of course. The river, I think — aye, the river. That will be the best. I will house myself until night, and then I will hire a boat

and go to Gravesend. From there I shall not find much difficulty in getting on board some foreign vessel, and with what I have in my pockets I will bid adieu to England for a little while, until I can sell my watches and jewels, and then I will come back and have my revenge yet upon those whom I only live now to destroy."

Full of these thoughts, Todd went down one of the narrow streets leading to the Thames, and as he saw a bill in a window of lodgings to let, he thought he should be safer there than in a house of public entertainment. He resolved upon taking a lodging for a week at any cost, and then leaving it in the evening after he should have had some rest at it, which he might do for the remainder of the day, provided the people would take him in, which he had very little doubt of them doing, as he did not intend to object to their terms, and he did intend to pay in advance.

Todd knocked at the door.

It was answered by a woman of the true landlady species, who, upon hearing that it was the lodging Todd was after, was all smiles and sweetness immediately.

"I have come up from the country, madam," said Todd, "and my luggage is at an inn in Gracechurch-street. I intend to send for it in the morning; and as I am weary, if you can accommodate me with a lodging, as I have some business to transact for my son, the Deacon, in London, I shall be much obliged."

"Oh, dear, yes sir; walk in. We have every accommodation. The drawing-room floor, sir, at three guineas and a few extras."

"That will just do," said Todd. "Will you be so good as to show me the rooms, madam?"

Todd saw the rooms, and of course admired them very much; and then he said, in the blandest manner —

"I think the rooms very cheap, madam, and will take them at once, if you please. The reference I will give you, is to the Principal of Magdalen College, Oxford, the Reverend Peter Sly, madam. My own name is Bones, and my son is the Reverend Archdeacon Bones. I will pay you now a week in advance; and all I have to beg of you is, that you do yourself justice as to charges. I will lie down and rest for a few hours, if you please, madam."

"Oh, dear, sir! yes, certainly, Mr. Bones. There shall be no noise to disturb you, and anything you want, if you will be so good as to ring for, I will supply you with the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you, madam."

Thus then was it that Todd secured himself what appeared to be a wonderfully safe asylum until night. He got into the bed with all his clothes on; for he did not know how sudden the emergency might be that might induce him to rise; and he soon fell into a deep sleep, for he had undergone the greatest fatigues of late.

CHAPTER CLVI.

SIR RICHARD BLUNT IS VERY NEAR TAKING HIS PRISONER.

We left the poor beadle in anything but a pleasant situation in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church.

Now it so happened that the beadle was particularly wanted at home; and as he did not make his appearance, his wife repaired to the church to search for him; but it was locked by Todd, who had swung the door shut after him, and as he had taken the key with him, she could not make her way into the sacred edifice.

As she stood at the door, however, she distinctly heard deep groans issuing from some one within the church; and in a state of great alarm, she ran off to one of the churchwardens, who had a duplicate key, and related what she had heard.

The churchwarden not being one of the most valorous of men, rather, upon the whole, declined to go into the church with no other escort than the beadle's wife; and as he, too, upon listening at the key-hole, heard the groans distinctly, he called upon the passers-by to assist, and got together quickly enough about twenty people to go into the church with him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I don't know what it is, but there's groans; and in these horrid times, when, for all we know, Sweeney Todd is about the neighbourhood, one can't be too cautious."

"Certainly," said everybody.

"Then, gentlemen, if we all go in together when I open the door, it will be the very best plan."

This was duly agreed to; and the churchwarden, with a trembling hand, turned his key in the lock, and opened the door. He then stepped aside, and let all the crowd go in first, thinking that, as he was a man in office, the parish could not afford to lose him, in case anything serious should happen.

"Well, gentlemen," he cried, "what is it?"

"Nothing," said everybody.

"Then I will soon let nothing see that I, a churchwarden, am not to be frightened with impunity — that is to say, when I say frightened, I don't exactly mean that, but astonished, I mean. Come, come — if any one be here, I call upon them to surrender in the king's name!"

A deep groan was the only response to this valorous speech; and the moment

the churchwarden heard it, he bolted out of the church, and ran right across the way into a shop opposite.

For a moment or two, this precipitate retreat of the churchwarden had something contagious in it, and the whole of the men who had been induced to stop and go into the church with him were inclined to retreat likewise; but curiosity detained some three of four of them, and that gave courage to the others.

"What was it?" said one.

"A groan," said another; "and it came from the pulpit."

"The pulpit!" cried everybody.

"Who ever heard of a pulpit groaning?" cried a third.

"You stupid!" cried the second speaker: "might it not be some one in the pulpit? — and — Oh Lord — there's a head!"

At this they all took to flight; but at the door they encountered a man, who called out —

"What's the matter? Can't you tell a fellow what the blessed row is — eh?"

This was no other than our old friend Crotchet, who was returning from a conference with Sir Richard Blunt at his private office in Craven-street.

"Oh, it's a ghost! A ghost!"

"A what?"

"A ghost in the pulpit, and there is his head."

"You don't say so?" said Crotchet, as he peered into the church, and shading his eyes with his hand, saw the beadle's head just peeping over the side of the pulpit in a most mysterious kind of way. "I'll soon have him out, ghost or no ghost."

Courage is as contagious as fear, especially when somebody else volunteers to run all the risk; and so when Crotchet said he would soon have the somebody out of the pulpit, the whole crowd followed him into the church, applauding him very greatly for his prowess, and declaring that if he had not then arrived, they would soon have had the ghost or no ghost out of the sacred building, that they would. But they kept within a few paces of the door for all that, so that they might be ready for a rush into Fleet-street, if Mr. Crotchet should be overcome in the adventure.

That was only prudent.

But Crotchet was not exactly the man to be overcome in any adventure, and with an utter oblivion of all fear, he marched right into the middle of the church, and commenced the ascent of the pulpit stairs.

"Come — come," said Crotchet. "This won't do, Mr. Ghost, if you please; just let me get hold of you, that's all."

"Oh!" groaned the beadle.

"Oh, yer is remarkably bad, is yer? but that sort of thing won't answer, by no means. Where is yer?"

Crotchet opened the pulpit door, and reaching in his hand, he caught hold of the beadle by the leg, and fairly dragged him out on to the little spiral stairs, down which he let him roll with a great many bumps, until he landed in the body of the church all over bruises.

"Why, goodness gracious!" cried the beadle's wife, "it's my wretch of a husband after all!"

The beadle had just strength to assume a sitting posture, and then he cried — "Murder! — murder! — murder!" until Mr. Crotchet, seizing a cushion from a pew, held it up before his mouth, to the imminent danger of choking him, and said —

"Hold your row! If you wants to be murdered, can't you get it done quietly, without alarming of all the parish? If you has got anything to say, say it; and if you has got nothink, keep it to yourself, stupid."

"Todd!" gasped the beadle, the moment the pew-cushion was withdrawn from his mouth. "Todd — Sweeney Todd!"

"What?" cried Crotchet.

"Here! — he has been here, and I'm a dead man — no, I'm a beadle. Oh, murder! murder!"

"Don't begin that again. Be quiet, will you? If you have got anything to say about Todd, say it, for I'm the very man of all the world as wants to hear it. Speak up, and don't wink."

"Oh, I've seen him. He's been here. I came to dust the bellowses, you see, after my wife had thrown the pulpit at my head, for asking her to come with me."

"Oh, he's a-raving gentlemen," said the wife. "As I'm a sinner, it was the bellowses as I throwed at his stupid head, and not the pulpit as never was."

"Go on," said Crotchet. "Confound the pulpit and the bellows too. It's about Todd I want to hear. Drive on, will you?"

"Oh, yes. I'm a coming to that; but it curdles my blood, and makes my wig stand on end. I had dusted the communion table, and banged the cushions, and up I goes to the pulpit, meaning to do for that as soon as I could, when who should be there but Sweeney Todd!"

"In the pulpit!" cried everybody.

"In the pulpit," said the beadle.

"Why didn't you nab him at once?" roared Crotchet.

"Because, my good friend, he nabbed me at once. He laid hold of me by this leg — no, it was this — no it wasn't. It was this — that is — no — "

"Confound both your legs! Where is he now?"

"Why, really I can't exactly say, for after stamping upon my inside for about half an hour, he left me for dead, and I was about half gone that way, and I have been a groaning ever since, till now. I am going fast — very fast,

and there will be an election for beadle again in this here parish. Oh dear — oh dear! Murder — murder — mur —"

"What, you is coming that agin, is you," cried Crotchet, as he again caught up the pew-cushion. "I shall be obligated, after all, for to push this down your blessed throat. Hold your noise, will you, Mr. What's-your-name."

The beadle was so terrified at the idea of the pew-cushion again nearly smothering him, that despite all his injuries, he sprang to his feet and bolted out of the church.

"Well, did yer ever know sich a feller?" said Crotchet. "Why, one would think he was afraid of Todd."

The spectators thought that nothing was more probable; and as Mr. Crotchet considered that he had got all the information he was at all likely to get from the beadle, he did not at all trouble himself to go after him, but after considering for a few moments, decided upon seeking Sir Richard Blunt, and telling him that he had heard some unexpected news of Todd.

Crotchet knew where to pitch upon Sir Richard at once; and when he related to him what had taken place, a look of great chagrin came over the face of the magistrate.

"Crotchet," he said, "I have missed Todd, then, by what may be considered a hair's breadth. He must have been in the pulpit while I was in the church alone. Oh, that I could but for a moment have guessed as much! You, if you recollect, Crotchet, were in the vaults, and I was waiting for you."

"To be sure, Sir Richard."

"And so the rascal was almost within arm's length, and yet escaped me."

Sir Richard Blunt paced to and fro in an agony of impatience and regret. To be so near apprehending Todd, and yet to miss him, was truly terrific.

"Lor', sir," said Crotchet, "what's the use of fretting and pining about it? That won't bring it back, sir, I can tell you. After all, sir, you can't do better than grin and bear it, you know, which is the out and outest policy on all these here occasions, you know, yer worship. I wish as I'd a knowed he'd been in the church as much as you do; but you don't see me a-cussin' and a knocking my own head about it, no how."

"You are right, Crotchet, but in good truth it is most desperately provoking. You will proceed as I have directed you, and I will run down to Norfolk-street river, for fear Todd should try to escape us that way. You will be so good, Crotchet, as to be as vigilant as possible. You know how to find me if you want me."

"Rather, sir."

At this moment, and just as Crotchet was upon the point of leaving the room, an officer brought in a little slip of paper to Sir Richard Blunt, upon which was the word "Ben."

"Ben — Ben?" said Sir Richard, "who is Ben? Oh, I think I know. Pray show him in at once. It is my friend the beef-eater, from the Tower."

"Easy does it," said Ben, popping his head in at the door of the room. "Easy does it."

"So it does, Ben. Come in. I am glad to see you. You can go, Crotchet. Pray be seated, Ben, and tell me how I can serve you in any way, my good friend, and you may be assured that I shall have exceeding pleasure in doing so, if I possibly can in any way."

"Lord bless you," said Ben, "I hardly knows. There's ups and downs in this here world, and ins and outs."

"Not a doubt of it, Ben."

"And retreats within retreats, Sir Richard, and foxes, and laughing hyenas, as you can't concilliorate no how, if you wollop 'em till you can't wollop 'em no more."

"Precisely, Ben. If I were a hyena, I don't exactly think, do you know, that such a process would conciliate me."

"Oh, dear yes — it's the only way. But what I've come about, Sir Richard, is what I calls a delicate affair. Oh, dear yes — I tries to take it easy but I can't — I'm — I'm —"

"What, Ben?"

"I'm in love! Oh!"

"Well, Ben, there is no great wonder in that. I have been in love myself, and I believe very few indeed escape the soft impeachment. I hope your love is prosperous, Ben?"

"Thank you kindly, Sir Richard, thank you; but, you see, I thought you might tell me if there was any vice or natural kicking running in the family, and that's why I comed here."

"I tell you, Ben? Why I don't even know the name of the family."

"Yes, you does, Sir Richard. The young woman as I fell in love with, is Miss Julia Hardman, and her father is one of those chaps as nabs the bad 'uns for you, you know, Sir Richard."

"One of my officers?"

"To be sure he is."

"Does he reside in Norfolk-street, Strand?"

"Does he? Ay, he does; and that's how I came to know the little morsel of a cretur as has made for the first time an impression upon my heart. Oh, Ben, Ben, little could anybody think as you was a marrying sort of person, and here you is in love with Miss Julia!"

"It does seem to me a little extraordinary, Ben, for I must confess I have heard you say some rather severe things against the married state."

"I have — I have; and if it hadn't a been for all the marrying set-out with those two girls, Johanna and Arabella, I never should have got sich a idea in my head. Howsomedever, there it is, and there it is likely to remain. It's a agravation, but there it is!"

"And how did you get acquainted with Julia Hardman?"

"Oh, dear! There's a public house at the corner of her street, and after I had been to Cousin Oakley's, I used to go there at times and get a dram of something, you see, and then she used to come tripping in with a mug for the family beer, you see; and once it rained, so I took her up and carried her home beer and all, and that was how we got acquainted, you see, Sir Richard."

"A very natural way too, Ben. All I can say is, that I know her father to be a very worthy man indeed, and I believe the daughter is a good and virtuous girl."

"You don't say so? Then as there's no vice and kicking, I do believe I shall have to marry her out of hand."

CHAPTER CLVII.

TODD FINDS THAT HE HAS GOT OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

After this little explanatory conversation between Ben and Sir Richard Blunt, the reader will probably guess that Todd's evil fortune had actually carried him to that very house in Norfolk-street, Strand, occupied by the Hardman family, to which he, Sir Richard, talked of going to, to give instructions to his officer, and in which resided the identical Julia, that Ben had carried home, beer and all, in the shower, and to whom his large heart had become so deeply attached.

Todd could hardly have fairly expected to be way-laid by such a conjunction of events; and certainly when he laid himself down so comfortably and easily in the bed at the lodging-house for the luxury of a few hours' sleep, for which, if sleep he could, he had paid the moderate price of three guineas, he little dreamt that his enemies were rallying, as it were, around that house, and that in a short time their voices would be actually within his hearing.

Truly it seemed as though there were henceforth to be no peace in this world for Todd; although, by circumstances little short of absolutely miraculous, he did continue to avoid absolute capture, near as he was to it at times.

The great fatigue he had undergone, combined with the little refreshment he had taken at the public-house in Hollywell-street, induced a feeling of sleep in Todd's frame; and after he had lain in the bed at the lodging-house for about a quarter of an hour, and found the house perfectly still, and that the bed was

very comfortable, he pulled the clothes nearly right over his face, and fell fast asleep.

Nothing but sheer fatigue could have given Todd so unbroken a repose as he now enjoyed. It was for an hour or more quite undisturbed by any images calculated to give him uneasiness; and then he began — for there was some noise in the house — to dream that he was hunted through the streets of London by an infuriate mob; and by one of those changes incidental to dreams, when the reason sleeps and imagination ascends the mental throne, he thought that the heads of all the mob were armed with horns, like those of cattle, and that they come raging after him with a determination to toss him.

This was not a dream upon which any one was likely to be very still for any length of time, and Todd groaned in his sleep, and tossed his arms to and fro, and more than once uttered the word — "Mercy! — mercy!"

Suddenly he started wide awake as a knock came at the door and roused him. Todd blessed that knock at the moment; for by waking him it had rescued him from the dream of terrors that had been vexing his brain.

He sat up in bed, and for a moment or two could hardly collect his scattered senses sufficiently to assure himself that it was all a dream, and that he was in the lodging-house in Norfolk-street; but the brain rapidly recovers from such temporary confusions; and Todd, with a long breath of immense relief, gasped out —

"It was, after all, but a dream — only a dream! Oh, God! but it was horrible!"

He fell back upon the pillow again; but sleep did not again come to him, and he began to feel a vague kind of curiosity to know who it was that had knocked at the door; and yet, he told himself, that it could not matter to him, for that in a house like that, of course, there must be plenty of people coming and going, and that, although the persons who kept it might control noises within the house, they could not possibly have any influence upon the knocker.

"Oh, it's all right," said Todd. "It's all right. I will sleep again — I must sleep again; for it yet wants hours and hours to the night, when I may, at least, make the attempt to get off from — from England for ever!"

A faint sort of doze — it could not be called a sleep — was coming over Todd, when he suddenly heard the sound of voices; and he was startled wide awake by hearing his own name pronounced. Yes, he clearly heard some one say — "Todd!"

In a moment he sat up in bed, and intently listened. He held his breath, and he shook again, as his imagination began to picture to him a thousand dangers.

There were footsteps upon the staircase, and in a few moments he heard persons go into the next room — that is to say, the front one to that in which he lay, the room that he had paid for a few weeks' occupation of, and which was only divided from that in which he lay by a pair of folding-doors, that he knew

were just upon the latch, and might, at any moment, be opened to discover him.

He then heard a female voice say —

"I do wish you would be quiet, Mr. Ben."

"Ah," said another voice, "keep him in order, Julia, for he has been quite raving about your beauty as we came along the street, I can tell you. Do you think the servant will be able to find your father?"

"Oh yes, Sir Richard. If ma were at home she could have said at once where he was; but Martha will find him, I dare say."

Todd threw the bed-clothes right over his head. It was no other than Sir Richard Blunt who was in the front-room of that diabolical lodging-house, and Todd looked upon himself as all but in custody. His sense of hearing seemed to be preternaturally acute, and although the bed-clothes covered up his ears, and he could not be said to be exactly in his usual state, inasmuch as terror had half deprived him of his reasoning powers, yet he heard plainly, and with what might be called a perfect distinctness, every word that was spoken in the front room.

Perhaps, even in the condemned cell of Newgate, Todd did not suffer such terrors as he was now assailed with in that lodging, where he thought he was so safe, and which he had, as he fancied, managed so cleverly.

"Will you be quiet, Ben!" said the girl's voice again.

"Make him — make him, Julia," said Sir Richard.

"Lor' bless your little bits of eyes," said Ben. "Do now come and sit in my lap, and I'll tell you such a lively story of how the leopard we have got at the Tower lost a bit off the end of his tail?"

"I don't want to hear it."

"You don't want to hear it? Come — come, my lambkin of a Julia — when shall we be married? Oh, do name the day your Ben will be done for for life. I want it over."

"Well, I'm sure," said Julia, "if you think you will be done for, you had better not think of it any more, Mr. Benjamin."

"It won't bear thinking of, my dear. It's like a cold bath in January: you had better shut yer eyes and tumble in."

"Upon my word, Ben," said Sir Richard, laughing, "you are anything but gallant; and if I were Julia, I would not have you."

"Not have me? Lord, yes, she'll have me. Only look at me."

"Ah," said Julia, "you think, because you are a great monster of a fellow, that anybody would have you; but I can tell you that a husband half your size would be just as well, and I only wonder, after you have made all the neighbours laugh at me, that I have a word to say to such a mountain of a man, that I do, you wretch!"

"Laugh!" cried Ben, "Why, my duck, what do they laugh at? I should like to catch them laughing."

"Why, you know, you wretch, that that day it rained as if cats and dogs were coming down, you took me up as if I had been a baby, you did, and carried me home, and me with a jug of porter in my right hand, and the change out of a shilling in my left, so that I could not help myself a bit, and all the street laughing. Oh, I hate you!"

"She hates me!" said Ben. "Oh!"

"But she don't mean it, Ben," said Sir Richard.

"Do you think she doesn't, sir?"

"I am sure of it. Do you, now, Julia?"

"Yes, Sir Richard, indeed I do, really now, for he is quite a horrid monster, and I only wonder they don't put him in one of the cages at the Tower along with the other wild beasts, and make a show of him. That's all that he is fit for."

"Oh, you aggravating darling," said Ben, making a dart at Julia, and catching her up in his arms as you would some little child. "How can you go on so to your Ben?"

"Murder!" cried Julia.

"Oh, if you are going to have a fight for it," said Sir Richard, "I will go and wait down stairs, Julia."

Bang came a knock at the street-door.

"Oh, Ben, there's ma or pa," said Julia. "Let me down directly. Do Ben — oh, pray do. Let me down, Ben."

"Do yer love your Ben?"

"Anything you like, only let me down."

"Very good. There yer is, then, ag'in on yer little mites of feet. Lor' bless you, Sir Richard, that girl loves the very ground as I walks on, she does, and she has comed over me with her fascinations in such a way as never was known. Ain't she a nice 'un? — sleek and shiny, with a capital mane. But you should see her at feeding-time, Sir Richard, how nice she does it — quite delicate and pretty; and you should see her — "

The door of the room opened, and Hardman, the officer, made his appearance.

"Your humble servant, Sir Richard. I hope I have not kept you waiting long? I was only in the neighbourhood."

"No, Hardman, thank you, it's all right. I have not been here above a quarter of an hour."

"I am glad of that, sir. How do you do, Mr. Ben?"

"Pretty well," said Ben, "only a little hungry and thirsty, that's all; but don't trouble yourself about that, Mr. Hardman; I always do get hungry when I look at Julia."

"I hope, Mr. Ben, that don't mean that you will dine off her some day when you are married?"

"Oh, lor', no. Bless her heart, no. She loves me more and more, Mr. Hardman."

"I am glad to hear it, Ben — very glad to hear it. But I presume, Sir Richard, that you have some orders for me?"

"Why, yes, Hardman. There's that rascal Todd, you know, still continues to elude us. What I want you to do is, to take charge entirely on the river, and to make what arrangements you like at the various quays and landing-places, and with all the watermen, so that he shall not have a chance of escaping in that way."

"Certainly, sir; I will set about it directly."

"Do so, Hardman. Expense in this case is of no object, for the Secretary of State will guarantee all that; but of course I don't wish you to be extravagant on that account."

"I quite understand you, Sir Richard, and will do my best."

"That I am sure you will, Hardman; and now I will go. I shall feel no peace of mind until that man is dead, or in the cell again at Newgate."

Todd popped his head out from under the clothes, and making the most hideous face, he shook one of his clenched fists in the direction of the front room. It would have been some satisfaction to him to have given a loud howl of rage but he dared not venture upon it; so he was forced to content himself with the pantomime of passion instead of its vocal expression.

"I do hope, sir, we shall soon have him," said Hardman. "It seems to me to be next thing to impossible he should escape us for long. Do you think he has any money, sir?"

"He cannot have much, for all he has, if any, must be but the produce of depredation since his escape from Newgate. He certainly has not extensive means, Hardman."

"Then he must fall into our hands, sir. Julia, is that your mother just arrived, do you think?"

"Yes, pa, it is ma's step. She has been out to get something or another, but I don't know what, as I was out myself all the morning; but it is ma, I know."

Mrs. Hardman came into the room, looking very red and flushed, and with a large basket on her arm. She looked from one to the other of the assembled guests with surprise and horror.

"What's the matter?" said her husband. "Why wife, you look panic-stricken. What has happened?"

"Oh, gracious! where's the gentleman?"

"The gentleman?" cried everybody.

"Yes, the lodger. The highly respectable gentleman who took the first-floor only a couple of hours ago. Oh, gracious, where is he? and a capital lodger too, who paid in advance, and didn't mind extras at all."

"But what lodger, mother?" said Julia.

"Oh, mum, I forgot — I forgot," said Martha, suddenly coming into the room, "I forgot to tell Miss Julia, mum, that an old gentleman had taken the first floor, mum, and gone to bed in the next room."

"In bed in the next room?" said Sir Richard Blunt.

"I am lost!" thought Todd. "I am lost now, I am quite lost! and the only thing I can do is to kill as many of them as possible, and then blow my own brains out."

"Do you mean to say, ma," said Julia, "that there's a gentleman asleep in the next room in the bed?"

"Lor'!" said Ben, "you don't mean to say that, Mrs. Hardman?"

"He may be in bed, but if he is asleep," said Sir Richard, "he is a remarkable man; of course if we had had the least idea of such a thing, we should not have come up here; but here we were shown by the servant."

"Oh, yes, it's all that frightful Martha's fault. I'll — I'll kill — no — I'll discharge that odious hussy without a character, and leave her to drown herself! For Heaven's sake go down stairs all of you, and I'll go and speak to the old gentleman, and apologise to him."

"Let me go," said Ben, "and roll on him on the bed, and if that don't settle him I don't know what will."

"Shall I apologise to him?" said Sir Richard.

Todd nearly fainted when he heard this proposition; but when Mrs. Hardman rejected it, and insisted upon going herself, he felt quite a gush of gratitude towards her, and breathed a little more freely once again.

CHAPTER CLVIII.

TODD'S FEARFUL ADVENTURES ON THE RIVER.

"SHALL I LAY HOLD OF HER," THOUGHT Todd, "and choke her the moment she comes into the room, or shall I answer her, and let her go again? Which will be the safest course? I suppose I must let her go, for she might possibly make a noise. Ah! how I should like to have my hand upon all their throats!"

Mrs. Hardman came into the room on tip-toe, leaving the folding-door just a little ajar.

"My dear sir," she said, "are you awake?"

"Oh, go to the deuce," said Todd.

"What did you remark, my dear sir?"

"Go along — go along — Eugh! — eugh! Oh, dear, how bad my cough is. I dreamt that no end of people were talking and talking away in the next room; but that can't be, as I have paid for it. Oh, dear! — oh!"

Mrs. Hardman took her cue from this; and she was at once resolved to pass off the disturbance in the next room as merely a dream of her new lodger.

"Dear me, sir," she said in the blandest possible accents; "have you indeed had a dream? What a singular thing!"

"Eugh! Is it? I don't think so."

"Well, sir, when I say singular, of course I mean that it's very natural. I always dream when I sleep in a strange bed, do you know, sir, and sometimes the most horrid dreams."

"Oh, go along."

"Yes, sir, directly. Would you like anything got for you, sir? A nice mutton chop for instance, or — or — "

"No — no! Good God, why don't you go?"

"I am going, sir. Thank you. There will be a very quiet house here, I assure you, sir."

With these words, Mrs. Hardman was about to leave the room, flattering herself that it was all passing off quite comfortably as a mere dream, when Ben, thinking it incumbent upon him to do something civil, suddenly popped his head into the room, and in a voice that sounded like the growl of some bear for his food, he said —

"Take it easy, old gentleman. You'll find that easy does it all the world over; and if so be as you ever comes near the Tower, just you ask for Ben, and I'll show you the beasteses, all gratis, and for nothing. Feeding time at four o'clock."

"Oh, you great ugly wretch!" cried Mrs. Hardman, dealing Ben a sound box on the ear. "How dared you interfere, I should like to know, you monster in inhuman shape?"

"Oh, lor!" said Ben, "I only hope another of the family ain't so handy with her front paws."

"Oh — oh!" said Todd. "No peace! — no peace!"

Mrs. Hardman at once closed the door of communication between the two rooms; for she quite despaired now of being able to make any apology to her lodger, and she seemed much inclined to execute further vengeance upon Ben, but Sir Richard Blunt interfered, saying —

"Come — come, Mrs. Hardman, you should recollect that what Ben said was with the very best of motives, and any one, you know, may go wrong a little in trying to do good. Let us all adjourn down stairs, and be no further disturbance to this old gentleman, who, taking everything into consideration, has, I think, shown quite an exemplary amount of patience."

Todd heard those words. They seemed to him quite like a reprieve from death.

"I will come down stairs, of course," said Mrs. Hardman, in an under tone; "but for all that, this great monster of a Ben ought to be put in one of his own cages, at the Tower, and there kept as a warning to all people."

"A warning o' what, mum?" said Ben.

Mrs. Hardman was not very clear about what he would be a warning of, so she got out of the difficulty by saying — "What's that to you, stupid?" — and as Ben was rather slow in explaining that it did rather concern him, she walked down stairs with a look of triumph that was highly amusing to Sir Richard Blunt, as well as to Mr. Hardman, the officer.

How Todd listened to the footsteps as they went down the stairs! How his heart beat responsive to every one of them! and when he felt for certain that that immediate and awful danger had passed away, he peeped out from amid the mass of bed-clothes, with his eyes almost starting from his head.

"Gone! gone!" he gasped. "He has really gone. My mortal enemy — the only man who can make me tremble, that terrible Sir Richard Blunt! That he should be within half-a-dozen paces of me; that he should hear me speak; that he should only have to stretch out his hand to lay it upon my shoulder, and yet that I should escape him! Oh, it cannot be real!"

Todd heard some accidental noise in the house, and he immediately dived his head under the bed-clothes again.

"They are coming again! — they are coming again!" he gasped.

The noise led to nothing, and after a few moments, Todd became convinced that it had nothing to do with him, so he ventured, half-suffocated, to look up again.

"I must listen — I must listen," he said, in a low anxious tone. "I must listen until he has gone. When I hear the street-door of the house shut, I shall think that they have let him go and then I shall be able to breathe again; but not before. Oh, no — no, not before — hush — hush! What is that?"

Every little accidental sound in the house now set the heart of Todd wildly beating. If one had come into the room, and said — "You are my prisoner," — the probability was, that he would have fainted; but if he did not, it is quite certain that he could not have offered any resistance. A child might have captured him then, during the accession of terror that had come over him in that house, whither he had slunk purposely for safety and for secrecy.

At length he heard a noise of voices in the passage, and then the street-door was opened. As he lay, he could feel a rush of cold air in consequence. Then it was closed again, and the house was very still.

"He has gone! He has gone!" said Todd.

The manner in which Todd pronounced these few words it would be impossible to describe. No shivering wretch reprieved upon the scaffold, with the rope round his neck, could feel a greater relief than did Todd, when he found that the door of that house was really closed upon Sir Richard Blunt.

And then he began to felicitate himself upon the fact that, after all, he had come to that place; "for now," he thought, "I know that, although I have been in great danger, it has passed away; and as Sir Richard Blunt has transacted all his business in this house, he is not likely to come to it again."

That was a pleasant thought, and as Todd dashed from his brow the heavy drops that intense fear had caused to assemble there, he almost smiled.

A very profound stillness now reigned in the house, for Mrs. Hardman was resolved to make up to her lodger — as well as she could — for the noise and disturbance that had been so unwittingly caused in her front room. She had made Ben go away, and as her husband had likewise gone, in pursuance of the orders of Sir Richard Blunt, to take measures lest Todd should make an escape by the Thames, the place remained as calm and still as if no one were in it but herself.

Todd closed his eyes, and wearied nature sought relief in sleep. Even Sweeney Todd, with more than twenty mortal murders on his conscience, slept calmly for no less than six hours of that, to him, most eventful day.

Twice during this long sleep of her lodger's had Mrs. Hardman stolen into the front-room to listen, and been quite satisfied by the regular breathing, that, at all events, her lodger was not dead; and she kept herself upon the alert to attend to him whenever he should awake from that deep sleep.

THE LONG SHADOWS OF THE HOUSES on the other side of the street had fallen upon the windows of the Hardmans' abode, and a slight fog began to make itself perceptible in London, when Todd awoke.

"Help — help! Oh, God, where am I?" he cried.

He sprang half out of the bed, and then the full tide of recollection came back to him, and he fully comprehended his situation in a moment.

"Hush! — hush! — hush!" he said; and he listened most intently to hear if his sudden exclamation had attracted any attention.

He heard a footstep on the stairs.

"Hush! — hush!" he said again, "hush — who is it? I must be very careful now! — Oh, very!"

The footstep paused at his door, and then he heard it in the next room, and Mrs. Hardman advancing to the folding doors, said, in the blandest of accents —

"Are you awake, sir, if you please?"

Todd at once assumed the tone in which he had formerly addressed her, and replied —

"Yes, madam, yes. I am awake!"

"And how do you feel now, sir, if you please?"

"Oh, a great deal better, ma'am, a great deal better. Indeed, I feel quite refreshed. I will come out directly, my dear madam. Pray have the goodness to take this guinea. I shall want a cup of tea at times, and I think I could take a

cup now, my dear madam. You can get it out of that, and keep the change, you know, till I want something else."

"Oh, really, sir," said Mrs. Hardman, as she put her hand through a small opening of one of the folding doors and took the guinea. "It is quite delightful to have so pleasant a lodger as yourself — oh, quite. — I will get the tea directly, my dear sir, and pray make yourself quite at home, if you please."

"Yes, ma'am, I will — I will."

"Do, sir. I should be really unhappy now, if I did not think you were comfortable."

"Oh it's all right, ma'am. Eugh! Oh, dear! I do think my cough has been better since I have been here."

"How delightful to hear you say that!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardman, speaking in quite a tremulous voice of sympathetic emotion. "I will get the tea, directly, sir."

She left the room, and as she went down the stairs, she said to herself —

"What a pearl of a lodger, to be sure! He pays for everything over and over again. I should not, now, in the least wonder but the dear old gentleman will quite forget the change out of this guinea; if he does, it is not for me to vex him by putting him in mind of it. I know well, that old people never like it to be supposed that their memory fails them; so if he says nothing about it, I am sure I shall not. Oh, dear, no!"

"Wretch!" muttered Todd, as he crept out of the back room into the front. "Wretch, I find that money will purchase anything in this house; but am I surprised at that? Oh, no — no. Will not money purchase anything in this great world? Of course it will. Why, then, should this house be an exception to the rule so general? No — no. It is no exception; and I may be very safe for a few guineas well spent; and they are well spent, indeed. Oh, so well!"

Todd then, as he flung himself into the depths of an easy chair, that was really easy for a wonder, considering that it was in a lodging-house, began to arrange in his own mind his course of proceeding for the night.

"Let me think — let me think," he muttered. "I am now very much refreshed indeed, and feel quite strong and well, and equal to any emergency. That sleep has done me a world of good, and it is strange, too, that it has been the calmest and the quietest sleep I have enjoyed for many a month. I hope it is not prophetic of some coming evil."

He shuddered at the thought. Todd was each day — aye, each hour — becoming more and more superstitious.

"No — no. I will not think that. I will not be so mad as to disarm myself of my courage, by thinking that for a moment. I will take my tea here, and then I will sally forth, telling this woman that I will soon return, and then, after a dose of brandy, I will hire a boat and take to the river. What is that?"

The wind with a sudden gust came dashing against the windows, giving

them such a shake, that it seemed as if it were intent upon getting into the room to buffet Todd.

He immediately rose, and going to the window, he placed his hideous face close to one of the panes, and looked out.

The sky was getting very black, and huge clouds were careering about it. The wind was evidently rising, and there was every appearance of its being most squally and tempestuous. Todd bit his lips with vexation.

"Always something!" he said. "Always something to annoy me, and to cross me. Always — always!"

"The tea, sir, if you please."

Todd turned round so suddenly, that he almost upset the servant with the tea equipage.

"Oh, very well. That will do — that will do. You are the servant of the house?"

"If you please, sir."

"Ah, you will then have to attend upon me while I am here, my dear, I presume?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Very good — very good. You are a very nice young woman, and there's half-a-guinea for you. Eugh! I shall give you that sum every week while I stay here, you know."

"Lor,' sir, will you?"

"Yes, yes. You can go now. Is the tea all right?"

"Oh, dear, yes, sir. You are very good indeed. Misses said as you was a very good lodger, which I knowed to mean as you didn't be petikler about your money, and now I sees you ain't. Thank you, sir, for me. I'll get up in the night if you want anythink."

CHAPTER CLIX.

TODD MAKES A VIGOROUS ATTEMPT TO REACH GRAVESEND.

THE SERVANT WAS SO PROFUSE in her acknowledgments for the half-guinea, that she seemed as if she would never get out of the room, and Todd had to say —

"There — there, that will do. Now leave me, my good girl — that will do," before she, with a curtsey at every step, withdrew.

"Well," she said, as she went down stairs. "If I tell misses of this, I'm a

Prussian. Oh, dear, I keeps it to myself and says nothing to nobody, excepting to my Thomas as is in the horse-guards. Ah, he is a nice fellow, and out o' this I'll make him a present of a most elegant watch-ribbon, that he can put a bullet at the end of, and let it hang out of his fob all as if he had a real watch in his pocket."

"Humph!" said Todd. "I have bought her good opinion cheap. It was well worth ten-and-sixpence not to have the servant watching me, with, for all I know to the contrary, eyes of suspicion — well worth it."

It was not very often that Todd indulged himself with a cup of tea. Something stronger was commonly more congenial to his appetite; but upon this occasion, after his long sleep, the tea had upon him a most refreshing effect, and he took it with real pleasure. Mrs. Hardman, in consideration of the guinea she had received beforehand, had done him justice, as far as the quality of the tea was concerned, and he had it good.

"Well," he said, after his third cup, "I did not think that there was so much virtue in a cup of tea, after all; but of a surety, I feel wonderfully refreshed at it. How the wind blows."

The wind did, indeed, blow, for all the while that Todd was taking his tea it banged and buffeted against the window at such a rate, that it was really quite a fearful thing to listen to it.

A couple of candles had been lighted and brought into the room, but the gale without soon laid hold of their little flames, and tossed them about so, that they gave but a dim and sepulchral kind of light.

Todd rose again, and went to the window — again he placed his face close to the pane of glass, and shading his eyes with his hands, he looked out. A dashing rain was falling.

"They say that when the rain comes the wind moderates," he muttered; "but I see no signs of that, yet, it is almost a gale already."

At that moment there came such a gust of wind howling down the street, that Todd mechanically withdrew his head, as though it were some tangible enemy come to seek him.

"Always something to foil me here," he said; "always something; but out I must go. Let it look as strange as it may, I cannot stay a night in this house, for if I were to do so, that would involve the staying a day likewise; and it would be this time to-morrow before I dared venture abroad; and who knows what awful things might happen in that space of time? No, I must go to-night. I must go to-night."

He could not help feeling that his going out while the weather was in such a state would excite a great amount of wonder in the house; but that was a minor event in comparison to what might possibly ensue from remaining, so he put on his hat.

Tap — tap! came against the panel of his door.

Todd muttered an awful oath, and then said,—

"Come in."

Mrs. Hardman entered the room.

"I hope I don't intrude upon you, sir, but I was so very anxious to know if the tea was just as you like it, sir?"

"Oh, yes — yes. I am going out a little way, my good madam. Only a little way."

"Out, sir?"

"Yes, and why not? — why not? Oh, dear me! How bad my cough is to be sure, to-night. Eugh! — eugh!"

"Goodness gracious! my dear sir, you will not think of venturing out to-night? Oh, sir!"

"Why not, madam?"

"The wind, sir — the rain, sir — and the wind and the rain together, sir. Oh, dear! It isn't a night to turn out a dog in, not that I like dogs, but I beg, sir, you won't think of it. Only listen, sir. How it does blow, to be sure!"

"Madam!" said Todd, putting on a solemn look, "I must go. It is my duty to go."

"Your duty, sir?"

"Yes. Whenever the wind blows and the rain comes down, I put a quantity of small change in my pocket, and I go out to see what objects of distress in the streets I can relieve. It is then that I feel myself called upon in the sacred name of heavenly charity to see to the wants of my poorer fellow-creatures. It is then that I can find many a one whom I can make happy and comfortable for a brief space, at all events; and that's the way that I am always, you see, madam, with a bad cold."

"Generous man!" said Mrs. Hardman, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Not at all, madam, not at all. It is one's duty, and nothing else. I feel bound to do it. But I shall want a little something for supper. A nice boiled chicken, if you please, and you will be so good as to get it for me, madam. Take this guinea, if you please, and we can talk about the change, you know, when I want anything else, my good madam."

"My word!" thought Mrs. Hardman. "He is a wonderful lodger, for he forgets all about his change. I feel that it would only vex the poor old gentleman to remind him of it, and that I do not feel justified in doing. A-hem! yes, sir. Oh, certainly, I will get the finest chicken, sir, that can be had."

"Do so, madam, do so. Now I'm going."

"Oh, Lord! there's a gust of wind!"

"I like it — I like it."

"And there's a dash of rain!"

"So much the better. Delightful, delightful, my dear madam, I shall find

plenty of poor objects to relieve to-night. Under gateways, I shall find them, crouching upon door-steps, and shivering on spots where a little shelter can be found from the inclemency of the weather. This is my time to try and do a little good with that superfluous wealth which Providence has given me."

Mrs. Hardman made no further opposition to the benevolent intentions of a lodger who continually forgot his change, and Todd fairly left the house.

Little did the landlady think, while she was grasping at the guineas, that there was a reward of a thousand pounds for the apprehension of her lodger, and that it would every penny-piece of it have been duly paid to her at the Treasury, if she could but have managed to lock him in a room until the officers of justice could be sent for, to pounce upon him and load him with irons, and take him off to prison.

But poor Mrs. Hardman had really no idea of how near she was to fortune; and when the street-door closed upon Todd, she little suspected that she shut out such a sum as one thousand pounds sterling along with him.

"That is managed so far," said Todd, as he shrank and cowed before the storm-laden gale that dashed in his face the rain, as he reached the corner of the street.

There Todd paused, for a new fear came across him. It was that no waterman would venture upon the river with him on such a night; and yet after reasoning with himself a little time, he said —

"Watermen are human, and they love gold as much as any one else. After all, it only resolves itself into a question of how much I will pay."

Full of this idea, which, in its way, was a tolerably just one, he sneaked down the Strand until he got right to Charing Cross. He had thought of going down one of the quiet streets near that place, and taking a boat there; but now he considered that he would have a much better chance by going as far as Westminster Bridge; and, accordingly, despite the rain and the wind, he made his way along Whitehall, and reached the bridge.

A few watermen were lounging about at the head of the stairs. They had little enough expectation of getting a fare at such a time, and upon such a day. One of them, however, seeing Todd pause, went up to him, and spoke —

"You didn't want a boat, did you, sir?"

"Why, yes," said Todd, "I did; but, I suppose, you are all afraid to earn a couple of guineas?"

"A couple of guineas?"

"Yes, or three, for the matter of that; one more or less don't matter to me; but it may to you."

"Indeed, it does, sir. You are right enough there. But where do you want to go to sir? Up or down?"

"To Greenwich."

Todd thought if he mentioned Gravesend, he might frighten the man at once.

"Greenwich? Whew!" The waterman perpetrated a long whistle; and then, shaking his head, he said — "I'm very much afraid, sir, that it isn't a question of guineas that will settle that; but I will speak to my mate. Halloa Jack! — Jack! I say, old boy, where are you?"

"Here you are," said an old weather-beaten man coming up the steps. "I've only been making the little craft fast. What is the row now, Harry — eh?"

"No row, old mate; but this here gentleman offers a matter of three guineas for a cruise to Greenwich."

"Ay, and why not, Harry?"

"Why not? Don't you hear how it's blowing?"

"Yes, I do, Harry; but it won't blow long. I've seen more gales than you have, lad, and I tell you that this one is all but over. The rain, in another quarter of an hour, will beat it all down. It's fast going now. It will be a wet night, and a dark night; but it won't blow, nor it won't be cold."

"If you say as much as that, Jack," said the younger waterman, "I will swear to it."

The old man smiled, as he added —

"Ah, dear me, yes, and so you may, Harry. I haven't been so long out of doors that I don't know the fancies of the weather. I can tell you a'most what it's a going to do beforehand, better than it knows itself. There, don't you hear how it's coming in puffs, now, the wind, and each one is a bit fainter nor the one as comed afore it? Lord bless you, it's nothing! We shall get a wet jacket, that's all; and if so be, sir, as you really do want a cruise down to Greenwich, come on, and Harry and me will soon manage it for you."

These words were very satisfactory to Todd. He had no objection in the world to its being rather a bad night on the river; but he certainly had a great objection to risking his life. Discomfort was a thing that gave him no concern. He knew well that that would pass away.

"If you are willing," he said, "let us, then, start at once, and I will not hold you to your bargain if the weather should happen to turn very bad. We can, in such a case, easily, I dare say, put in at some of the numerous stairs on one side or other of the river."

"There will be no need of that, sir," said the old waterman. "If you go, and if you choose to go all the way, we will put you on shore at Greenwich."

"How about London Bridge?" said the younger man, in a tone of some anxiety.

"Better than usual," said Jack. "It is just the time to shoot it nicely, for the tide will be at a point, and won't know exactly whether to go one way or the other."

"It's all right, then?"

TODD ENCOUNTERS GREAT PERILS ON THE RIVER THAMES.

"It is."

Todd himself had had his suspicions that the passage of old London Bridge would be one of no ordinary difficulty on such a night as that, but he knew that if the tide was at that point which the old man mentioned, that it might be passed with the most perfect safety, and it was a matter of no small gratification to him to hear from such a competent authority that such was the fact just then.

"Let us go at once," he said.

"All's right, sir. Our wherry is just at the foot of the stairs, here. I will pull her in, Harry."

The old man ran down the slippery stairs with the activity of a boy, and as Todd and Harry followed him, the latter said, in quite a confidential tone of voice —

"Ah, sir, you may trust to his judgment on anything that has anything to do with the river."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Yes, sir, and so am I. Now I thought I knew something, and I shouldn't have ventured to take you, or if I had, it would have been with rather a faint heart; but now that the old man, sir, says it's all right, I feel as comfortable as needs be in the matter."

By this time they had reached the foot of the steps, which was being laved by the tide, and there the old man had the boat safely in hand.

"Now for it, sir," he said. "Jump in."

Todd did so, and the younger waterman followed him. He and his aged companion immediately took their places, and Todd stretched himself in the stern of the little craft.

The rain now came down in absolute torrents as the boat was pushed off by the two watermen into the middle of the stream.

CHAPTER CLX.

THE POLICE-GALLEY ON THE THAMES.

WHAT AN ANXIOUS AND PROTRACTED GLANCE Todd cast around him when he found that he was fairly upon the river. How his eyes, with fox-like cunning, glistening like two lead-coloured stars, were here, and there, and everywhere, in the course of a few moments. Then he contrived to speak, as he thought, craftily enough.

"There are but few boats on the river."

"No, sir," said the young waterman. "It isn't everybody that cares to come on the water in such weather as this."

"No — no. But I have business."

"Exactly so, sir. That's it."

"Yes," added Todd, in quite a contemplative tone of voice, "the fact is, that I have just heard that at Gravesend there resides a family, with whom I was once intimate, but had lost sight of. They have, as I hear, dropped into poverty, amounting to destitution, and I could not rest until I had gone after them to relieve them."

"Did you say Gravesend?" said the old man.

"Why, yes; but I don't ask you to go so far. I will try and find a conveyance on land at Greenwich; but — if — you like to pull all the way to Gravesend, I don't mind paying, for I prefer the water."

"Couldn't do it," said the old man.

"Certainly not," said the young one.

Todd felt mortified that his plan of getting to Gravesend, by the aid of the boat, was thus put an end to; but he could not help feeling how very impolitic it would be to show any amount of chagrin upon such a subject, so he spoke as cheerfully as he could, merely saying —

"Well, of course, I don't want you to do it; I merely offer you the job, as I am so fond of a little boating, that I would not mind a few guineas more upon such an account."

"No use trying it," said the old man, sententiously. "There's several turns in the river, and we should be down one at this time before we could get there. Gravesend is quite another thing."

"So it is," said Todd.

He felt perfectly certain by the tone and the manner of the old man, that it would be of no use urging the matter any further; and the great dread he had of exciting suspicion that he was a fugitive, had the effect of making him as cautious as possible regarding what he said. In stern and moody silence, then, he reclined in the stern of the boat, while it cleaved through the black water; and, as the old boatman prophesied, the wind each moment went down until it left nothing but a freshness upon the surface of the water, which, although it was bitterly cold, in no way effected the progress of the boat.

But a slight rain now began to fall, and every moment the night got darker and darker still, until the lights upon the banks of the river looked like little stars afar off; and it was only when they got quite close to it, that they became aware of the proximity of Blackfriars Bridge. It was Todd that saw it first appearing like some gigantic object rising up out of the water to destroy them. He could not resist uttering an exclamation of terror, and then he added —

"What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"What — what?" said the young waterman, shipping his oars and looking rather terrified.

The old man gave his head a slight jerk as he said —

"I fancy it's Blackfriars."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Todd, with a feeling of great relief. "It's the bridge, of

course — it's the bridge; but in the darkness of the night, it looked awful and strange; and as we approached it, it had all the effect as if it were something big enough to crush the world rising up out of the water.

"Ay — ay," said the old man. "I have seen it on all sorts of nights, and was looking out for it. It's all right. Easy with your larboard over there. That will do — there we go."

The boat shot under one of the arches of the old bridge, and for a moment, the effect was like going into some deep and horrible cavern, the lower part of which was a sea of ink.

Todd shuddered, but he did not say anything. He thought that after his affected raptures at sailing, that if he made any sort of remark indicative of his terrors at the passage of the bridge, they would sound rather inconsistent.

It was quite a relief when they had shot through the dim and dusky arch, and emerged again upon the broad open water; and owing to the terrible darkness that was beneath that arch, the night upon the river, after they had passed through it, did not seem to be nearly so black as it had been before, thus showing that, after all, most of our sensations are those of comparison, even including those dependant upon the physical changes of nature.

"This is cheering," said Todd. "It is lighter now upon the river. Don't you think it is?"

"Why," said the old man, "perhaps it is just a cloud or two lighter; but it's after coming through the arch that it makes the principal difference, I take it."

"Yes," said the other, "that's it; and the rain, to my thinking, will be a lasting one, for it comes down straight, and with a good will to continue. Don't you think so?"

The question was addressed to the old man, who answered it slowly and sententiously, keeping time with his words to the oars as they made a slight noise jerking in the rollocks.

"If it don't rain till sun-rise, just ask me to eat the old boat, and I'll do it!"

"That's settled," said the young waterman.

The weather, in so far as rain or not rain was concerned, was not to Todd a matter of much concern. So long as there was no stormy aspect of the elements to prevent him from speeding upon his journey, he, upon the whole, rather liked the darkness and the rain, as it probably acted as a better shield for his escape, and he rather chuckled than not on the idea that the rain would last. Besides, it was evident that as it fell, it smoothed the surface of the river, so that the oars dipped clear into the stream, and the boat shot on the better.

"Well — well," he said, "we can but get wet."

"That's all," said the old man, "and I hold it to be quite a folly to make a fuss about that. If you sit still, the rain will, of course, soak into your clothes;

but if you go on sitting still, it will in time give you up as a bad job, and begin to run out again. So you have nothing, you see, to do, but take it easy, and think of something else all the while."

"That is very true, my friend," said Todd, in a kind and conciliatory tone; "but you get wet through in the process."

"Just so. Pull away."

The younger man, for the last five minutes, had glanced several times through one of his hands along the line of the surface of the river, and the injunction to pull away was probably on account of his having been a little amiss in that particular. The old man had spoken the words rather sharply than otherwise.

"Yes — yes," said the other. "I'll pull away; but there's another craft upon the river, in spite of the rain, and they are pulling away with a vengeance rather. Look, they're in our wake."

"It's no use me looking. You know that well enough. I ain't quite so good with my eyes as I was a matter of twenty years ago. I suppose it's the police-craft. Of late, you know, they have taken to cutting along at all times."

"Yes, it's them!"

Todd stooped in the boat, until his eyes went right along the line of the water's edge, and there he saw coming on swiftly a biggish bulky object, and as the oars broke the water, he could see that there were five or six of them on each side. It looked altogether like some great fish striking through the water with a number of strange-looking fins.

The coward heart of Todd smote him, as well it might, when he saw this sight. For a moment or two he sat bewildered, and he thought that he should faint in the stern of the boat, and then that nothing in the world could save him from capture, if that were in reality the police-boat. It was, perhaps, only the rain falling upon his face that revived him, as it came upon him with its cold, refreshed splash. To be sure he was well armed for one individual, but what could he do against some dozen of men? Suppose that he did shoot two or three of them, that would be but a poor recompense for his capture by the others. He was bewildered to know what to do. He spoke in a low, anxious tone, —

"Are you, from your knowledge of the river, quite sure that that is a police-boat?"

"Ah, to be sure."

"Do you, then, think likewise that that is upon our track? Answer me that. Answer it fairly."

"Our track!" said the old man, as he almost ceased rowing. "Hilloa! There's something more in this affair than meets the eye. It won't exactly pay us to be overhauled by the police, after a chase. Who and what are you, my friend? If you are afraid of the police-boat, we are not, and you ain't quite the sort of customer to suit us exactly, I should say."

"I have both their lives," thought Todd, as in the dark he felt for his pistols. "I have both their lives, and if they show any disposition to give me up, they shall not live another five minutes. I will shoot them both — cast their bodies into the river, and land myself at the first stairs I come to."

"Listen to me," he said, in a mild tone of voice. "It would only tire you, and, besides, it would take too long to tell why I have a fear of the police. But I have such a fear. I assure you, that I am quite innocent of what they accuse me. But until I can get from Hamburgh the only witness who can prove my innocence, I do not want to fall into the hands of my enemies. I implore you not to sacrifice me!"

"Humph!" said the old man, "What have you done?"

"Nothing — nothing! as Heaven is my witness!"

"But what do they say you have done?" said the young waterman.

"Ay!" said the other, "that's the question!"

"Why, they say that I was wrong in helping a poor lad, who certainly had done some wrong thing, to escape from the country; but then it would have broken his poor mother's heart if they had hanged him. It was for forgery only, and it was all owing to bad company he did it. Alas! I did not think it a crime to aid the poor boy to get away. What good would his death have done to any one?"

"Was that all?"

"Yes; that was all. But it appears in law, you see, a very serious offence to aid and abet, as they call it, a felon. Poor boy! — poor mother!"

"Oh, hang it, we won't give you up to the bloodhounds of the law for that," said the old man; "but, hark you, sir, it's out of the question that we two should be able to hold our way against the police-galley, with six young fresh rowers; so all we can do is to put you ashore somewhere, and then you can shift for yourself the best way you may. I don't see what else we can do for you."

"Nor I," said the young waterman; "and in a few moments it will be best to do that. Is there a stairs close at hand?"

"Not one," said the old man. "It's a done thing. We can't land you, except in the water, if that can be called landing you at all. I don't know what to be at."

"Oh, save me!" said Todd.

"But how can we?"

"Yes," said the young waterman, "there's one way of managing that, I think, will do it, and do it well, too."

"Oh, how can I thank you?"

"Don't mention it. Suppose we put him on to the first craft we come alongside of in the river, that is moored, and has got no one on board? It won't be noticed, like our putting into a landing would, you know. They would be sure to say we had put some one on shore. But if we just ease the boat for a moment

as we pass some craft, our fare can scramble on board, and we can go right on, and let the police overtake us, and overhaul us in due course. I'll be bound that by this light there's not a man on board of yonder craft can take upon himself to say whether there's one, two, or three people in our wherry."

"Yes," said the old man, "that will do if anything will, and if that don't do, nothing will."

"It will do," said Todd; "it will do. I thank you from my heart for the suggestion. It will do well. All you have to do is to let me board the craft in the river, upon the side furthest removed from the police boat. Oh! you will have the prayers of the widow and the fatherless, for this kind act."

"Never mind about that. Pull away."

"And — and when the police-boat is past, will you then come and take me off again?"

"That's awkward," said the old man.

"We will, if we can," said the young one; "but don't depend upon us. We don't know, as yet, what the police may say to us. For all we know, they know more than we would wish them, of your being in our boat; and all we can say, then, is, that we put you ashore; but they may keep a watch upon us after that, and if they do, it will be only to give you up to them that we could push off to you."

"Yes — yes, I understand," said Todd. "I thank you, and will take my chance of all that may happen."

"You must."

"There's something a-head," said the old man. "What is it?"

"It's the pile-driving barge. They are mending up the bank of the river. I know that the men leave that all night, as there is nothing to take from it that any one can lift. Will you go on board that, sir?"

"Yes, yes," said Todd, "That will do."

"Be quick, then, about it," said the old man, "for they gain upon us."

"Boat a-hoy!" cried a voice over the river.

CHAPTER CLXI.

THE POLICE-GALLEY'S FATE.

TODD, WHEN HE HEARD THAT VOICE, quite sank down into the bottom of the boat, and felt as though his last hour were come.

"Don't answer," said the old man. "Pull away for the pile-driving barge as hard as you can."

"Oh, yes, pull — pull!" cried Todd. "Save me!"

"If you make that noise," added the old man, "we may as well be off at once, for the river, when it is as smooth as it is now, carries voices well."

"Boat a-hoy!" cried the voice again.

"We must answer them now," said the old waterman. "Aye, aye! Is it here? Boat a-hoy!"

"Aye, aye!" came the voice from the police-galley.

At that moment the two watermen succeeded in reaching the broad stern of the barge, in which was centred the pile-driving machinery, and the young man said to Todd —

"Now clamber in, and good luck attend you. If we don't come to you in the course of an hour, don't expect us, that's all."

Todd was not very young and supple in his joints, but the sense of present and serious danger has an effect upon every one, and in a moment he seized the side of the pile-driving barge, and drew himself in.

"All right," said the old man.

"Oh, yes — yes," said Todd, as he crouched down with his chin touching the side of the barge.

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night! You will come for me if you can?"

"Yes, but don't expect us. Pull, now, as hard as you can, and get out into the stream. Pull! pull!"

By the strenuous united exertions of the two men, the boat shot along at good speed, and soon got to a considerable distance from the barge in which Todd had taken refuge. It was then that the police-galley hoisted a strong light that shed a bright glare through the rain, and over the surface of the river.

"Am I saved?" said Todd. "Am I saved, or am I not?"

He sank quite down into the body of the barge. There was a sort of platform over one-half of it, and upon that platform he felt the mass of iron, weighing about a couple of hundredweight, or more, which was used for driving piles into the bed of the river, and which, when liberated from a height, and allowed to fall upon the end of the pile, comes with a most tremendous force.

That piece of metal so used is called "the monkey."

"They come — they come!" said Todd. "Oh, if they only chanced to see the boat place me here, I am lost. Quite lost! What will become of me, then, with nothing but the cold, cold river all round me? Death, indeed, now stares me in the face!"

Truly, the situation of Todd now was rather a critical one. There was no saying how far the men on board the police-galley might not think themselves justified in boarding any craft that was moored upon the river; and, indeed, if

they were searching for him, and had really any idea that he was trying an escape by the Thames, it was highly improbable that they would omit to have a good look in the barge where he was. There was another great danger, too, that suddenly flashed across his mind, and drove him nearly mad.

"If the police, when they overtake the wherry," he thought, "should mention who it is they are in pursuit of, may not the two watermen at once, upon finding that their sympathy has been excited for me, declare where I am, and even aid in my apprehension?"

This idea, either because it was the last one that came into his head, or because it really was the one that seemed most full of real dangers, clung to him with desperation; and more than once the thought of ending all his miseries by a plunge into the river, crossed his mind. But it is not such men as Sweeney Todd who commit suicide.

"They come — they come!" was all he could now say.

The light from the police was, by the aid of a revolving reflector, capable of being cast pretty strongly in any direction that those who had the care and control of it chose; and for a moment it rested upon the barge where Todd was. He felt as if, at that moment, he could have crept right through the bottom of the barge, and taken refuge in the Thames.

The broad beam of light was then shifted off the barge on to the little wherry, which was at rest upon the water waiting for the approach of the police-galley.

And now, with vigorous sweeps of its six oars, that galley made its way right past the barge. Oh! what a relief it was that it went past! It did not follow that all danger was gone because the police-barge had gone past; but it was a sufficient proof that the glare of light they had sent in that direction, by the aid of the reflector, had not had the effect of discovering him to them.

"That is something," muttered Todd.

He then slowly permitted his eyes to peer over the side of the barge in order, as far as he could, to watch the interview that was about to take place between the police and the two watermen in the wherry where he had been so lately a passenger. Upon that interview, now, he thought that his fate depended.

"Hilloa!" cried one of the police. "Why did you not wait for us when we first called to you?"

"We did," said the old man, "as soon as we saw your light, and knew what you were; but there are so many jokes played off upon the river, that if we were to rest-oars to everybody who call — 'Boat a-hoy,' we should have enough to do."

"Who are you?"

"A couple of regestered watermen. Here we are. You can overhaul us at once, if you like."

"You have no passenger?"

"No. I only wish we had. Times are very bad."

"Well, it's all right. But we are placed here by the orders of Sir Richard Blunt the magistrate, who suspects that the notorious murderer, Sweeney Todd, may try to escape by the Thames."

"Sweeney Todd!" cried the young waterman in a tone of horror. "What, the fellow that killed all the people in Fleet-street, and made them into pies?"

"The same."

"It's coming now," thought Todd. "It's coming now. They will tell him where I am."

The next words that were spoken, were uttered in a tone of voice that did not reach his ears. It was the old man who had spoken, and he did not utter his words so clearly as his younger companion; and although he tried his utmost to hear what he said, he could not possibly make it out, and he remained in a perfect agony of apprehension.

"Very well," said the officer in the police-barge, who had conducted the brief conversation. "It is a miserable night. Give way, my men. Steady there. Put the light out."

In an instant the light was lowered and extinguished, and the darkness that reigned upon the surface of the Thames was like a darkness that could be felt. It was difficult to conceive that it was not really tangible.

"Are they coming back?"

That was the question that Todd asked of himself, as he grasped, to steady himself, the heavy piece of iron that belonged to the pile-driving machine. He listened most intently, until it was positively painful to do so, and he began to fancy all sorts of strange noises in the air and from the water. In a few moments, though, an actual splashing sound put to route all imaginary noises, and he felt convinced that the boat with the police was slowly returning towards the barge in which he was concealed.

There was, to be sure, still a hope that they would pass it; but it was only a hope.

Oh, how awfully full of apprehension was each passing moment now. It might be that the police-galley was only going quietly back to its proper station, after overtaking the wherry; but then it might be quite otherwise, and the doubt was terrific. While that doubt lasted, it was worse than the reality of danger.

And now it was quite evident to the perception of Todd that the police-boat was close to the barge, and he heard a voice say—

"Is that the pile-driving barge?"

"Yes, sir," replied some one.

"And they leave it, I suppose, as usual?"

"No doubt, sir."

"Well, pull alongside, and a couple of you jump in and see if all is right.

People leave their property exposed to all sorts of depredations, and then blame us for not looking after it. Mind how you go, my men. Don't run foul of the barge."

"No, sir. All's right."

From the moment that this conversation had begun, Todd had remained crouching down in the barge, like a man changed to stone. He heard every word—those words upon which hung, or seemed to hang, his life, and his grasp upon the massive piece of iron tightened.

The police-boat gradually advanced, and finally just grated against the side of the barge.

A sudden thought took possession of Todd. With a yell, like that of a mad-man, he, with preternatural strength, moved the heavy mass of iron, and in one moment toppled it over the edge of the barge.

Crash it went into the police-galley. There was then a shriek, and the men were struggling in the water. The piece of iron had gone right through the boat, staving to pieces. It filled and sank.

"Help—help!" cried a voice, and then all was still as the grave for a few moments.

"It is done," said Todd.

"Help! mercy!" said a voice again, and a dark figure rose up by the side of the barge, clinging to it.

Todd drew one of his pistols. He levelled it at the head of the figure. He was upon the point of pulling the trigger, when it struck him that the flash and the report might be seen and heard from the shore. The pistol was heavily mounted with brass at the butt-end of it.

"Down!" said Todd. "Down!"

He struck the clambering, half-drowned man upon the head, and with a shriek he fell backwards into the water and disappeared. In another moment Todd felt a pair of arms twining round him, and a voice cried—

"Murderer, I have you now! You cannot shake me off!"

Todd made an effort, but, in truth, those wet and clinging arms held to him like fate.

"Fool," he said. "You will find drowning the easiest death for you to meet."

"Help—help! murder!" shouted his assailant.

The pistol was still in Todd's grasp. With a devilish ingenuity, he thrust the barrel of it under his arm and felt that it touched his assailant. He pulled the trigger, and then he and the man who held him fell to the bottom of the barge together.

Todd kicked and plunged until he got uppermost, and then he felt for the throat of the other, and when he got a clutch of it he held it with a gripe of iron.

"Fool," he said. "Did you think that one driven to such desperation as I am, would be conquered so easily?"

There was no reply. Todd lifted up the head of the man, and it hung limply and flaccidly from the neck. He was quite dead. The pistol-bullet had gone through his heart, and death was instantaneous.

"Another one," said Todd, as he sprang to his feet and stood upon the dead body. "Another one sacrificed to my vengeance. Let those only interfere with me who are tired of life."

He placed his hand to his ear now, to listen if there were any indications of others of the boat's crew stirring; but all was still. No sound, save the lazy ripple of the tide past the old barge on which he was, met his ears.

"It is over," he said. "It is quite over now. That one great danger is past now."

The rain began to fall quicker, and splashed upon the half deck of the barge. Todd felt that he was thoroughly wet through; but all minor ills he could now laugh at, that he had escaped the one great peril of capture. He felt that his life had hung upon a thread, and that only the recent accident had saved him; for to be captured, was to him equivalent to death.

"All gone!" he whispered. "They are all gone! Well — well! They would have dragged me to a prison, and then to a scaffold! Self-defence is a sound principle, and for that I have fought!"

A sudden gust of wind got up at that moment, and came howling past Todd, and ruffling upon the surface of the river; but all was still around the barge. There was now no cry for mercy — no shout for help — no bubbling shriek of some swimmer, who was yet sinking to death, as the waters closed over him.

"Yes," said Todd, as his long hair blew out like snakes in the wind, "I am alone here now. They are all dead, and I could do it again if it had to be done."

CHAPTER CLXII.

ANOTHER BOAT.

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

"What am I to do now?" he said. "Oh, what am I to do? I dare not wait

TODD SINKS THE POLICE-GALLEY WITH ALL HANDS.

here until daylight. That would be destruction. What is to become of me?"

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

Any one without Todd's load of guilt upon his soul, and upon better terms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Hilloa!" cried Todd.

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

The boy stopped rowing and looked about him. It was evident at the

THE MURDER ON THE THAMES — TODD'S NARROW ESCAPE.

moment that he could not tell where the sound came from.

"Hilloa!" said Todd, again.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Thank you, I should like."

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

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

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

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

"Running down, sir, but not fast."

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

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

"Indeed?"

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

"What's your name?"

"Bill White, sir."

"Very well, Bill White. I dare say you have ears at your age, and guess that

TODD COMPELS BILL WHITE TO ASSIST HIS ESCAPE FROM THE THAMES POLICE.

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

Todd uttered these words in such a tone of fiendish malignity, and glared

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

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

"Murder!" cried the boy.

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

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

"Oh, no — no —"

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

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

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

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

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

"I am obeying you, sir."

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

"Yes, sir."

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

"Of course I do, sir."

"Go on then."

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

The river began to widen — the pool was left behind, and the dull

melancholy shore of Essex soon began to show itself, as the tide, by each moment increasing in strength, carried the light boat swiftly along its undulating surface, with its frightfully wicked load.

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

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

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

"You don't want it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No we won't."

"Ah?"

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

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

CHAPTER CLXIII.

ANOTHER POLICE-GALLEY.

"BILL WHITE," SAID Todd.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Good-bye, Bill — good-by. Remember me to your father, and tell him all the joke."

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

"Ha! ha!" laughed Todd. "Well — well, I forgive you, Bill — I forgive you.

Mind you take my message to your aunt, and tell her I shall be at the chapel on Wednesday."

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

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

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

"Lor'!" said one of the men.

"You looks tender-hearted," said another.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes it is, idiot."

"Well — fifteen bob and a tanner*."

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

"I will give the fifteen shillings."

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

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* *A "tanner" was a sixpence, or half-shilling coin.*

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

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

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

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

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

"I say, Bill," said one.

"Well, say it."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE POLICE-GALLEY CHASING TODD TO GRAVESEND.

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

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

The murderer breathed a little more freely.

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

"Oh, a matter of nine miles yet."

"And how long will it take you?"

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

"Where?" said Bill.

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

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

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

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

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

"What is it then?"

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

"Yes, yes!"

"And you heard them fire a gun?"

"To be sure."

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

"How very droll? But what did he do it for?"

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

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

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

"You will, old fellow?"

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

"Won't we! If Mr. Anthony Strong, with all his sail and his six hands,

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

"They is," said the other.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Does he?"

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

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

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

CHAPTER CLXIV.

TODD GOES BACK ON LAND.

"Oh, quicker — quicker!" cried Todd.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, nonsense — nonsense."

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

"This excuse won't serve you."

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

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

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

The officer saw at once that this was the only mode of proceeding that promised him the least chance of capturing the fugitive, whether he were Todd or not; for, after all, the persons in the police-galley had nothing like positive

evidence that it was Todd of whom they were in pursuit. A couple of officers were left in the charge of the boats, and the whole of the remainder of them landed along with Bill, and ran up the steps to the road along which Todd had been seen to run.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, it's all right, sir," said another voice. "We have him as safe as if he

were lying at the bottom of our boat with the darbies on him; and as far as I can judge of him, sir, I should say it is Todd."

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

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

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

"No, sir, I don't."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To remain where he was, with such an idea prevailing in his mind, would have been madness and, accordingly, crawling down close to the hedge, he ran

along, splashing, like some gigantic water-fowl, in the ditch, until he came to a thickly-planted fence, at right angles with the hedge that bordered the road. There he was forced to come to a stand-still.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Help! help! Murder! Thieves!" cried the woman.

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

"Another word," he said, "and I fire!"

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

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

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

"I do not—I do not, indeed."

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

"You will spare my child?"

TODD RESORTS TO A FRIGHTFUL STRATEGEM WITH A MOTHER AND CHILD.

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

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

CHAPTER CLXV.

TODD HIDES IN A CUPBOARD.

"IT IS IN VAIN," SAID TODD; "my safety is wound up now with the safety of this little one. If you would save it, you will save me."

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

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

"Oh, no, no, no!"

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

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

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

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

"Can you hide me?"

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

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

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

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

"Not yet."

The woman looked at him in an agony of tears.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It is here — it is here!"

"Ah! that will do."

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

"I will do so."

Todd did not feel any apprehension of treachery from the mother of the child. He was not slow to perceive that every other feeling was in her breast weak in comparison with the all-absorbing one of love for the infant; and so he calculated that, rather than run the shadow of a risk of injury to it, she would do all that he required. The cupboard was a deep one; but it was not high enough for Todd quite to stand upright in. That, however, was a trifling inconvenience, and he got into it at once. The child's cot was placed against

the door; and the young mother, with a thousand fears tugging at her heart, pretended to busy herself about her household affairs.

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

"Courage — courage — all will be well."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No," said the woman.

Todd breathed a little more freely.

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

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

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

At this moment, the child began to cry violently.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ah, indeed?"

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

"Ah! I should like to get it."

"Not a doubt of it. Good-day, marm. If you should see any

suspicious-looking fellow about the fields, just give notice of it in some sort of a way, if you can, for you may depend upon it, it will be Todd."

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

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

"Oh, yes. Trust me for that."

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

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

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

"What do you mean?" said Todd.

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

"To death?"

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

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

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

"I am going — I am going."

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

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

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

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

terror, he had no resource but to calmly — calmly as he could — wait her return.

She came back again in a few moments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER CLXVI.

THE SHIP BOUND FOR HAVRE TAKES A PASSENGER.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, for I am foot-weary."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TODD'S ADVENTURE WITH THE SMUGGLERS.

"Am I a prisoner?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Nailed you?"

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

"Know me?"

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

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

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

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

"A what?"

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

Todd lowered his pistol.

"This is a foolish enough mistake," he said, "I am no more an exciseman

than I am Commander-in-chief of the forces. What could have put such a thing into your heads?"

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

"Well," said Todd, putting on a very candid look, "I don't know how a man is to set about proving that he is not an exciseman. I only know that I am not. The real truth is, that I am in debt, and being pressed by my creditors, have thought proper to get out of their way; and so I want to make the best of my way to Gravesend, that is all. I fancy, by your anger at the idea of my being an exciseman, that you are smugglers; and if so, I can only say that, with all my heart, you may go on smuggling with the greatest success until the day of judgment, before I would interfere with you in the matter."

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

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

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

"Where do you want to go to?"

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

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

"Perfectly well."

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

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

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

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

"I am very much obliged," said Todd.

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

"Exactly," said Todd. "I perceive that you are quite a philosopher in such

transactions. So now that we have a better understanding together, the sooner we get on board this *Lively William* you talk of, the better."

"Not a doubt of that. Come up."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I should like it much," said Todd.

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

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

"All's right."

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

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

Todd tossed off the contents of the cup.

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

"Scarcely," said the man, as he helped himself, and then handed the bladder

and the cup to his companion; "but we are going to put up our horse and cart now, and if you will be so good as to look at the old tree again, we will send the brandy away."

"Certainly," said Todd.

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

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

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

"That will do. This way."

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

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

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

"Here we are!" cried one of the men.

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

CHAPTER CLXVII.

TODD MEETS WITH A LITTLE ROUGH WEATHER IN THE CHANNEL.

TODD ALMOST THOUGHT THAT HE WAS SAVED, when he felt himself fairly upon the deck of the *Lively William*. It seemed to him such a miracle to get so far, that his faith in completely getting the better of his enemies increased wonderfully.

"Oh, this is a relief," he said. "This is, indeed, a vast relief."

"What do you mean?" said one of the men of the cart to him, as he eyed him keenly.

Todd was very anxious not to excite any suspicion that he was other than what he had represented himself to be; so he answered quickly —

"I mean that it is a relief to get out of the small boat into the ship. Ever so little a distance in a boat disagrees with me."

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

"Yes; and if you have no particular objection, I will go below at once. I daresay the cabin accommodation is very good on board the *Lively William*."

"Oh, quite wonderful!" said the captain. "If you will come with me Mr. — a — a — what's your name?"

"Wilkins," said Todd.

"Oh, Mr. Wilkins. Well, if you will come with me, I shall have the very great pleasure of showing you what a capital berth we can give you."

"Thank you," said Todd, and then, rather timidly, for the staircase down which the captain dived seemed to Todd better adapted for poultry than for human beings, he carefully followed his new friend.

The cabin of the *Lively William* was a woeful place. Any industrious housewife would have sneered at it as a linen-cupboard; and if it had been mentioned as a store-room in any establishment of pretentions, it would have excited universal reprobation. It had a roof which nobbed Todd's head if he attempted to stand upright; and the walls sloped to the shape of the sides of the *Lively William*. The window was a square hole, with a sliding shutter; and the furniture would have made the dingiest broker's shop in London blush to own it.

"This is the state cabin," said the captain.

"Really?" said Todd.

"Why, don't you see it is by its size and looks? You won't often see in a craft of this size a handsomer cabin than that of the *Lively William*."

"I dare say not," said Todd. "It will do very well for me, my friend. When a man is travelling, he must not be very particular, as it is soon over."

"That true; but now I want to say something to you, if you please, that's rather particular. It's quite clear to me and my mate, that you want to get out of England as quickly as possible. What you have done, or what you haven't is not much matter to us, except, so far as that, we daresay you have swindled the public to a tolerable tune. We don't mean to take you for nothing."

"Nor do I wish you," said Todd. "Nothing can possibly be further from my thoughts."

"Very good; then, in a word, we don't intend to do the thing unhandsome; and you shall have all the capital accommodation that the *Lively William* can give you to the Port of Havre for twenty pounds."

"Twenty pounds?"

"Yes. If you think it is too much, you may go on shore again, and there is no harm done, you know."

"Oh, no — no. That is, I cannot help thinking it is a large price; and if I were to say I thought otherwise, you would not believe me; but as I really wish to go, and you say you will not take less, I must give it."

"Very good. That's settled, then. We shall be off at ebb-tide, and I only hope we shall have good luck, for if we do, we ought to make Havre, at all events, this time to-morrow."

"I hope we shall."

"Keep up your heart, and make yourself comfortable. Here's lots of the most amusing books on this shelf. Let me see. Here is the 'Navy List' for about ten years ago, and here's a 'Ready-reckoner,' and here is 'The Exciseman's *Vade Mecum*,' and here is a 'Chart of the Soundings of Baffin's Bay,' so you can't say you are out of books."

"Oh, how kind," said Todd.

"And you can order whatever you like to eat and drink, provided you don't think of anything but boiled beef, biscuits, and brandy."

"Oh, I shall do well enough. Rest is now what I want, and a quick voyage."

"Very good," said the captain. "You will not be at all interrupted here, so you can lie down in this magnificent berth."

"What, on that shelf?"

"Shelf? Do you call the state berth of the *Lively William* a shelf!"

"Well — well, I dare say it is very comfortable, though the roof, I see, is only eight inches or so from one's nose. I am very much obliged. Oh, very!"

The captain now left Todd to himself and to his own thoughts, and as he really felt fatigued, he got into the state berth of the *Lively William*, which, to tell the truth, would have been very comfortable if it had only been a little wider and a little longer, and the roof higher, and not quite so damp and hard as it was.

But, after all, what where all these little disagreeables, provided he, Todd, fairly escaped? If he once set his foot upon the shores of France, he felt that, with the great continent before him, he should be free, and he did not doubt for a moment getting in any capital a ready enough market among the Jews for the watches and jewellery that he had about him.

The ship as the tide washed slowly by it, moved to and fro with a sluggish motion that rocked Todd to sleep, and he dropped off from a perception of the world and all its cares.

HOW LONG HE SLEPT HE KNEW NOT, but when he awoke all was darkness around him, and the first attempt he made to move brought his head into violent contact with the partition of his berth.

Then Todd felt that the ship was tossing upon the water, and he could hear the dash and ripple of the sea pass her sides, while every now and then a loud splash against the closed shutter of the cabin-window warned him that that sea was not in one of its quietest moods.

"We are off!" cried Todd, in the exultation of his spirits at that fact. "We are off, and I am all but free."

He attempted to get out of the berth, and he was materially assisted by a roll of the sea that sent him to the other side of the cabin, accompanied by a couple of stools and several articles that happened to be lying loose upon the floor.

"Murder!" cried Todd.

"Hilloa!" cried a gruff voice from the companion-way. "Hilloa! What now?"

"Oh, nothing," said Todd. "Nothing. Where are we now? Oh, dear, what a thing it is to live in a cupboard that won't stand still."

The gleam of a lantern flashed in Todd's eyes, and the captain came below with it swinging in his hand. He steadied himself against the table, which was firmly screwed to the floor, and hung the lantern to a short chain dependent from the cabin-roof.

"There," said the captain. "The chandelier is alight now, and you will be able to see about you. Hilloa! Where are you now?"

"Why, I rather think I fell off the shelf," said Todd. "I beg your pardon, the state berth, I mean."

"Then you had better turn in again, for we shall have, I think, a squally sort of night rather. There are symptoms of a sou'wester, and if so, you will know a little of what weather is in the Channel."

"Where are we now?" said Todd, mournfully.

"About fifteen miles off the North Foreland, so we are tolerably quiet just yet; but when we turn the head of the land, it's likely enough we may find out what the wind means to say to us."

While the captain spoke, he tugged on a complete suit of waterproof apparel, that seemed as thick and inflexible as so much armour covered with tar, and then up he went upon deck again, leaving Todd to the society of his own reflections and the chandelier.

The *Lively William* was going on just then with a flowing sheet, so that she was carrying a tolerably even keel, and Todd was able to get up and reach his berth; but at the moment that he laid hold of the side of it to clamber in, the ship was tacked, and away went Todd to the opposite side of the state-cabin with the rug in his grasp that did duty as a counterpane in the berth.

"This will kill me," he groaned. "Oh, this will kill me. But yet — yet I am escaping, and that is something. There will be a storm, but all ships are not lost that encounter storms."

Todd made up his mind to remain where he was, jammed up against the cabin partition, until the ship should right itself sufficiently for him to make another effort to reach his berth.

After a few minutes he thought he would make the attempt.

"Now," he said. "Now, surely, I can do it. I will try. How the wind howls, to be sure, and how the waves dash against the ship's sides, as though they would stave in her timbers; but all is well, no doubt. I will try again."

Very cautiously now Todd crept to his berth, and this time the winds and the waves were kind enough only to move the ship so that he knocked his head right and left a little, and managed then to scramble on to the little inconvenient shelf, with its damp mattress that served for a bed.

"Ah," said Todd, "and there are people who might, if they liked, stay on land all their lives, and yet they pretend to prefer the sea. There's no accounting for tastes."

By dint of jerking it a little from under him, Todd propped the mattress against the outer edge of the berth; so that provided the vessel did lurch in that direction, it was not so likely to tumble him out, and there he lay listening to the winds and the waves.

"A storm in the Channel!" he muttered. "From what that beast of a captain said, it appears we are to have one. Well, well, I have weathered many a storm on land, and now I must put up with one at sea."

At this moment, there was a tremendous bustle upon deck, and some orders were issued that were quite unintelligible to Todd. There was, however, a great flapping of canvas, and a rattling of chains.

The *Lively William* was weathering the South Foreland, and just going to do battle with half a gale of wind in the Channel.

Up to this point, Todd had, with something approaching to resignation, put up with the disagreeables about him; and upon the principle of the song which states that —

"When a man travels, he mustn't look queer,
*If he meets a few rubs that he does not meet here"**

— he regarded his position with philosophy; but now there came over him a dreadful sensation. A cold clammy dew burst out upon his face — all strength fled from his limbs, and with a deep groan, Todd began to feel the real horror of sea-sickness.

Nothing can be like sea-sickness but death, and nothing can be like death but sea-sickness. Todd had never suffered from that calamity before; and now that it came upon him, in all its aggravated horrors, he could not believe that it was a mere passing indisposition, but concluded that he must have been poisoned by the captain of the ship, and that his last hour was come.

And now Todd would fain have made a noise, and called for help. He would have liked to fire one of his pistols in the face of that captain, provided he could but have got him to the side of his berth; but he had not strength left to utter a word above a whisper; and as for moving his hand to his pockets to get out his fire-arms, he could not so much as lift a finger.

All Todd could do was to go on, and to get each moment worse and worse with that awful sensation of sickness, which resembles the sickness of the soul at parting from its mortal house, to which it had clung so long.

The wind howled upon the deck and through the cordage of the vessel — the spray dashed over her bulwarks, and each moment the storm increased in fury.

CHAPTER CLXVIII.

TODD GETS A WORLD OF MARITIME EXPERIENCE.

THE IDEA THAT HE WAS POISONED grew upon Todd each moment, and to such a man, it was truly terrific to think that he should come to so fearful an end.

"Help! Help!" he groaned; but after all, it was only a groan and not a cry — not that that mattered; for if he had had the lungs of ten men all concentrated in his own person, and had so been able to cry out with a superhuman voice, it would have been most completely lost amid the roar of the wind, and the wild dashing of the waves.

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* *The opening line from a song in* Patter Versus Clatter, *a popular 1838 stage burletta by Madame Vestris.*

The storm was certainly increasing.

"Oh, this sickness!" groaned Todd. "Oh, dear — oh, dear!"

At the moment that he was so bad that, in his want of experience of what sea sickness really was, he thought every moment would be his last, he heard some one coming down into the cabin, and one of the crew rolled rather than walked into it.

"Help!" said Todd; "oh, help!"

"You go to the devil!" said the man. "The captain is washed overboard, and we are all going to the bottom, so I am one who likes to take a little spirits with him to qualify the water that one may be obliged to swallow. That's it. Steady, craft, steady."

Practised as this man no doubt was in the art of keeping his footing upon an undulating surface, the pitching of the ship was so tremendous, that even he was thrown to the cabin floor with considerable violence, and had no easy task to rise again.

"No!" cried Todd, finding that positive fright lent him strength, "you do not mean that?"

"Mean what, you old sinner?"

"That we shall be lost?"

The man nodded, and having opened a little cupboard, he brought out a little bladder of spirits, and placing it to his lips, he drank a large quantity, while he held by the cupboard door to keep himself from falling.

"That will do," he said, as he dropped the bladder to the floor, and then, after several unsuccessful efforts to do so, he scrambled upon deck again.

"I, too, will drink," said Todd; "oh, yes, I will drink. I feel that if anything will give me strength to bear the horrors of the night, it will be my old and well-tried friend, brandy."

He cast his eyes upon the bladder of spirits that the sailor had thrown to the floor. The spirit was slowly weltering out of the bladder, and running in a stream across the cabin. As the odour of it saluted the nose of Todd, he exclaimed, —

"It is brandy! I must and will have some!"

It was all very well for Todd to say that he must and would have some of the brandy, but the difficulty of getting at it was one by no means easy to surmount. He recollected what a job he had to get into his berth again upon the occasion that he had got out of it before, and he dreaded to place himself in a similar predicament; yet he found the vessel was more steady, although the wind had not at all abated. Yes, it certainly was more steady.

"I will try," said Todd. "I must have some."

With a determination, then, to get at the choice liquor, which was wasting what Todd considered its sweetness upon the cabin floor, he slid out of his

little bed-place, and the ship giving a sudden roll in a trough of the sea, he fell sprawling to the floor.

"Oh, I shall be killed!" he yelled. "This frightful voyage will be the death of me! It is too terrible! Oh, Heaven! It is much too terrible! Help! — mercy!"

Todd lay upon his back on the cabin floor, with his arms and legs stretched out like a gigantic St. Andrew's cross. Something touched his hand; it was the bladder of brandy, that, as the ship rolled, had moved towards him. He clutched it with a feeling of despair, and brought it to his lips.

With the exception of about half a pint, the brandy had made its way on to the cabin floor; but it was strong, pure spirit — such brandy, in fact, as smugglers might well reserve for their own private drinking; so that the half pint was a very tolerable dose to take at once, and Todd drained it to the last drop.

"Better!" he said; "oh, yes, I am better, now."

The fumes of the strong spirit mounted to his brain, and got the better, for the time, of that frightful feeling of sickness which had been so like death, that Todd had mistaken it for the last pangs that he was likely to feel in this world.

"Oh, yes, I am better. How the wind howls now, and how the waves dash the ship hither and thither. The deck, yes, the deck will be the place for me. Oh, gracious! what was that?"

A loud crash, and a scream from some drowning wretches who had gone overboard along with a mast, had broken upon his ears. Terror sat at his very heart, and unable any longer to endure the frightful suspense of being below, he tried, upon his hands and knees, to crawl upon the deck.

By no other mode could Todd have had the slightest hope or expectation of reaching the deck of that fated vessel, but as he tried it, he did, after a time, succeed in dragging himself up from the cabin. The sea was washing over the deck, and for a few moments he could see no one. He watched for a lull in the wind, and then he cried —

"Help! help! Oh, help!"

"Who's that?" shouted a voice.

"I!" said Todd.

"Go to blazes, then!"

"Oh, how kind!" groaned Todd. "How very considerate at such a time as this, too."

The wind that had lulled for a few moments, now came with a frightful gush, and Todd was glad to find the fragments of a quantity of cordage, belonging to some of the top parts of the mast that had gone overboard, to cling to till the gust had passed over the ship. Then there came some tons of salt water over him, and he was nearly bereft of the power of breathing.

"Oh, this is dreadful!" he said. "This is truly dreadful!"

"Hands off!" growled a voice. "Everybody for himself here. Hands off, I say."

"What do you mean?" said Todd. "Do you speak to me?"

The voice had sounded close to him; and now again, with an angry tone, it cried —

"Some one has got hold of my leg!"

"Oh, I dare say I have," said Todd, "but I didn't know. There, I have left go. Who are you, sir, eh?"

"Oh! don't bother!"

"Well, but is there any danger?"

"Danger! I rather think there is. I suppose you are the love of a passenger that the captain brought on board?"

"Yes, I am the passenger," said Todd. Why he should be called a love of a passenger he did not exactly know; but he repeated his question concerning the condition of the ship; and at the next lull of wind, for it came now very strangely in gusts, he got a not very consolatory reply.

"Why, as to danger," said the man, "that's rather past, I reckon; but, perhaps, you are a landsman, and have not yet thoroughly made up your mind."

"To what?"

"To be drowned, some day or night, as I have."

"Oh, no — no! Don't say that. Drowning is a very dreadful death, indeed. I am sure it is."

"It may, or it may not be so," said the man, "but whether it is or not, you and I are very likely soon to find out, for the old craft is going at last."

"Going?"

"Yes. It's all up with her, and it will soon be all down with her, likewise."

"But the ship goes easier through the sea."

"Oh, ah, she's filling, you see, and settling lower down in the water, so you can't have quite so much pitching and tossing as you had an hour ago, hardly."

"You can't mean that? You do not mean to tell me that there is no hope? Oh, say not so!"

"Well, you can please yourself. I can tell you that the rudder has gone. — We have not a mast standing. There is already five feet of water in the hold, and we are drifting as hard as we can upon a lee-shore, so if you can make anything satisfactory out of that, I leave you to do it."

"Did you say we were drifting to shore?"

"A lee-shore."

"Oh, dear. I'm glad to hear it. Any shore will do for me, if I can but get out of this confounded ship. What is that afar off? Is it a light? Oh, yes, it is a light."

"It is. We are on the Sussex coast, somewhere, but I can't take upon myself to say where; but it don't matter a bit, for we shall go to pieces long before we

reach the surf, and then in such a sea as this you might as well try to swallow the Channel at a few draughts as to swim."

"But I can't swim at all."

"It don't matter a bit."

"But, my dear friend—"

"Hold your row—I am not your dear friend nor anybody else's, just now. I tell you we shall be all drowned, and the best thing you can do, is to take it as easy as possible. What can be the good of making a fuss about it?"

This information was to Todd of so deplorable a character—for to none is death so terrible as to the guilty—that he wept aloud and screamed with terror as the spray of the sea struck him on the face, and the wind roared and whistled over him.

"Oh, no—no!" he cried. "I cannot die yet—I must not. Spare me—spare me! I am afraid to die!"

"Oh, you stupid," said the sailors. "That comes now of not having had a proper sort of education. I make no doubt but your howling will pretty soon be put an end to."

The situation of the ship was undoubtedly one of the greatest possible peril. Having by the violence of the tempest lost all her masts, and having had her rudder torn away, she was quite at the mercy of the winds and the waves; and the set of the sea, as well as the direction of the wind, carried her sometimes stern foremost and at other times head foremost, and at times broadside, on to the coast of Sussex, upon which the lights were at intervals dimly visible through the thick haze of the storm.

It was truly a dreadful night, and such as fully merited the worst apprehensions of the sailor, who had spoken so coolly to Todd of his coming fate.

There was but one chance for those on board of the vessel, and that was that the wind might abate sufficiently to enable some boats to put off from the Sussex coast, provided they happened to be off a part of it where such accommodation was to be had, and rescue those upon the wreck. The lights that at intervals were visible, rather favoured the supposition that it was a populous part of the coast that the ill-starred struggling ship was driving fast upon.

Todd, however, did not know of that slender hope, and he gave himself up to despair.

To a landsman nothing could exceed the real horrors of the scene on board the ship, and, indeed, to one well accustomed to the sea, there was quite enough to produce much terror. All but three persons connected with the working of the ship had been washed overboard during the gale. Both of the men with whom Todd had had the meeting in the cart were at the bottom of the sea, and all their struggles and smugglings were over. Todd did not know that, though.

It was quite evident to practical observers that the gale was abating, for it

no longer was so steady and so continuous a wind that blew with fury over the fated ship; and although the sea still ran high, it did not break over the vessel with such thundering impetuosity.

A very faint glow of daylight, too, began to come over the sea.

If Todd had had mind enough left to look about him now, he would have seen that there was some food for hope, although not much; but the fact was, that he had so thoroughly made up his mind that all was lost, that he did not look for consolation.

How poor and how miserable appeared to him, at this moment, all his struggles for wealth—that wealth, for the attainment of which he had struggled through such gigantic crimes! How much happier, he could not help thinking, it would have been for him to have gone on all his life in plodding industry, than to endeavour as he had done to find a short road to fortune, and only to end in finding a short one to death.

One of the seamen cried out in a loud voice—

"Save themselves who can! We shall be on shore, now, in less than five minutes! We are all going now as safe as nuts!"

CHAPTER CLXIX.

TAKES A PEEP AT SOME FRIENDS OF THE READER.

FOR A BRIEF SPACE, NOW, IN ORDER to connect more closely the events of this narrative, we will leave Sweeney Todd to the perils and chances of the disabled ship, and the storm in the Channel, while we conduct the reader to the society of other persons, in whom it is to be presumed we are largely interested.

In the most cheerful room of one of the prettiest houses at Brighton, facing the beach upon the Esplanade, which is unrivalled, was a rather select party.

That party consisted of old and well-tried friends of the reader, and when we announce of whom it was composed, it will be seen that their society is decidedly good.

First of all, there was Ben the beef-eater. Poor Ben had never before been at a sea-coast town, and everything was consequently to him new and strange. Yet he felt amazingly happy, because he was surrounded by those whom he loved with all his heart; and if he had now and then a wandering thought, it

was to the animals in the Tower, to whom he was accustomed, and who, no doubt, missed Ben quite as much, if not more, than he missed them.

Then there was Tobias. Yes, Tobias was there, looking so fresh and so well, notwithstanding that he knew Sweeney Todd was at large, that it was quite a congratulation for those who felt that they were his friends to see him. The rest of the party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Ingestrie, and Colonel Jeffrey and his young bride, and Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, so that there was really quite an assemblage in that room.

The colonel holds a letter in his hands, and is speaking, while all eyes are turned upon him.

"Yes," said the colonel, "this letter is from Sir Richard Blunt, and I will read it to you, if you will be so good as to listen to it."

"Oh, yes — yes," said everybody.

"Very well. Here it is, then."

Upon this, the colonel read as follows: —

Craven-street, London.

My Dear Colonel, —

No news of Todd. We are sparing neither pains nor expense in tracking him; and it is an absolute impossibility that he should escape us long. Accident, I am convinced, much more than any design or luck upon his part, has had the effect as yet of keeping him out of our hands. But I do not think that it would be very difficult to count the time, in hours, between this and the period when he must be dead or a prisoner.

I hope that all our dear friends with you are quite well, and that they will banish from their minds all fear of the revenge of Todd. Nothing is more improbable than that he should dream of finding his way to the obscure little village where you are. I hope all of you are benefiting much by the health-giving breezes of the ocean.

With kind regard to all, I am, my dear colonel,

Yours very truly,

Richard BLUNT.

"Still at large!" said Mark Ingestrie, upon the conclusion of the letter. "So the rascal is still at large?"

"Yes," said the colonel; "but you hear what the magistrate says, that he will soon have him."

"Yes, but that is rather a hope than a certainty."

Tobias changed colour, and Johanna turned to him, saying, in a kind tone —

"Nay, now, Tobias, you have nothing to fear from Todd. Did you not hear what the letter said upon that point?"

"Yes oh, yes!" replied Tobias. "I will fear nothing while you are all so good to me."

"I tells you what it is," said Ben. "That 'ere fellow is for all the world just

like one of the wild beastesses as declines being tamed. We had one once as got away one night, and he swam over the river, you see."

"And did you catch him?" said Tobias.

"After a time, yes. Easy did it."

"Who did it, sir?"

"Easy — It ain't a who. It's a way of doing things. You take it easy, you know."

"Oh, yes, I understand now."

"Well, I went arter the fellow, and traced him up and down the streets on the Surrey side, till I got him into a court where there was no thoroughfare, and then I nabbed him."

"And he did no mischief?"

"None to signify. He settled a couple of old women and five or six children, that was all."

Tobias shuddered, and the colonel said —

"I cannot but be surprised that Sir Richard has not yet found out the retreat of Todd, and my own opinion is that he is dead."

"It is more than probable," said Ingestrie; "I have thought so several times. When he found that there was no hope for him, and that he was in a state of destitution, or something near it, which must be the fact, it is likely enough that he has laid violent hands upon himself, and his body may not be found for a long time."

"Well," said the colonel "let us get out for a stroll upon the beach. It will be dark in another half hour, and as there is no moon to-night, we shall not like to remain out."

They all rose upon this suggestion, but the evening dropped so rapidly, and several black clouds piled themselves up in the sky, that Ingestrie, after stepping out upon the balcony and looking at the weather, came back again, and said —

"You had better remain in, all of you. I have seen enough of the sea, and heard enough of the wind, to prophesy that this will be a rough night in the Channel."

"Will there be a storm, Mark?" said Johanna.

"There will be a very good imitation of one, you may depend, if not a real one."

"If there should be," said the colonel, "you will be rather surprised, for, I can tell you, that a gale off this coast is no joke. You would be truly amazed at the violence with which a regular south-western sets upon this shore."

"I can easily imagine it," said Mark Ingestrie. "See, it darkens every minute, and what an angry look that small cloud right away in the horizon has."

"It has, indeed," said Johanna, as she clung to the arm of her husband. "Do you think, Mark, that any poor souls will be wrecked to-night?"

"Probably enough; but the coast of Suffolk and the Irish Channel will be the worst. It will be child's play here in comparison."

A strange booming noise came across the sea at this moment, and the colonel cried out —

"Is that a gun, or is it thunder?"

"Thunder!" said Ingestrie; "hark! there it is again! There is a storm some forty or fifty miles off. It's right away in the German Ocean, most likely; but only look now even, dark as it is getting, how the sea is rising, and what an odd seething condition it is getting into."

They all stood on the balcony and looked out towards the sea. The surface of it was to the eye only undulating quite gently, and yet, strange to say, it was rapidly covering with white foam, and that from no perceptible cause, for as yet the wind was a mere trifle.

"How is that?" said Johanna. "The sea is not very rough, and yet it is all white."

"It is the worst sign of bad weather," said Ingestrie. "The commotion has begun below the surface in some mysterious way, and that white foam which you see each moment rapidly increasing is cast up; but soon the whole surface will begin to heave, and then you will find out what a storm is."

"We may hear it," said the colonel; "but if this darkness continues, I doubt very much if we shall be able to bring any other of our senses into requisition upon the occasion."

"Hush!" said Tobias, "what is that?"

He held up his hand as he spoke, and as they were then all profoundly still, a strange, low, wailing sound came over the water.

"What can it be?" said Johanna.

"Only the gale," smiled Ingestrie. "It's coming, now. That's the sigh of the wind over the water. You will soon hear it, I can tell you. Now, only notice how still everything is. There, look how that bird flies in a terrified manner close to the ground. It knows that the gale is coming. The sound you heard with intense listening, you will be able now to hear without listening at all. It will force itself upon your notice. Hilloa! There it comes! Look at the sea!"

A few miles out from the shore the sea seemed to rise like a wall of water, tipped with a ridge of foam, and then down it came with such a splash and a roar, that it was plainly heard on the shore, and then, in a moment or two, the impulse so given communicated itself to the whole of the sea, and it was fearfully agitated. With a roar and a shriek, the gale swept on, and from that moment conversation was almost out of the question.

The ladies of the party were glad to get into the house again, and in a little time the colonel and Ingestrie found it anything but comfortable to remain in the balcony; and as the night had fairly set in, they likewise retreated.

The gale lasted the whole of the evening, and when our friends retired to

rest it seemed to be rather increasing than otherwise. It was still dark when Ingestrie was awakened from his sleep by a knocking at the door of his room.

"Hilloa!" he said; "who's there?"

"It is I," said Colonel Jeffrey. "Will you get up, Mr. Ingestrie? It is nearly morning, and they say a ship is going down about a couple of miles off the coast."

"I'm coming!" cried Ingestrie, as he sprang out of bed and dressed himself with amazing rapidity. "If it does go down, it will not be the only one that finds the bottom of the Channel to-night."

When he reached the lower part of the house, he found the colonel and Ben waiting for him.

"This has been an awful night," said the colonel.

"Well, I don't know," said Ingestrie; "for I have been fast asleep."

"Asleep!" cried Ben; "I couldn't get a wink of sleep but once, and then I dreamt I was a mermaid. Why, what with the howling of the wind, which is a great deal worse than our lioness when she wants her knuckle of beef, and the washing of the water, I couldn't rest at all."

"The voice of the wind," said Ingestrie, "always has the effect of sending me fast asleep. But you said something of a ship in distress, did you not?"

"Yes. They say that in the offing there is a large ship, and that she is evidently water-logged, and must go down, unless she drives ashore."

"The deuce she must! Let us run down to the beach at once, and see what we can do."

With this, they all three left the house, and made the best of their way to the beach along the execrable shingle of the Brighton coast. It was far from being an easy task to proceed, for the wind was terrific, and now and then, when they did reach the beach, there came a sea washing in, that drenched them with spray.

A crowd of people had collected upon the coast; some were holding up lanterns on the end of poles, and many were prepared with ropes to cast to the aid of any of the crew of the vessel that might swim to the shore.

"There she is," said Ingestrie; "I see her! It's a small craft, and she is a wreck already."

"She must go down, then?" said the colonel.

"I don't know. She is drifting in shore, but evidently quite unmanageable. She is a sheer hulk. If they had the least control over her, they could run her in in ten minutes on to the beach; but she is going about like a log."

"Then, she may go down in deep water yet?"

"In truth, she may."

"Here are plenty of boats?"

"Boats? My dear friend, there never was a boat yet that could live in such a sea as this. It is out of the question. You find no one makes the attempt, and

I am quite sure that among the hardy fishermen of this place, there are many would do so if it were at all practicable; but it is most certain that death in the surf would be the result."

"I fear it would, indeed."

"There she goes!" cried a voice.

"Eh?" said Ben, turning round and round, "I don't see anybody in the female line."

"The ship!" cried Ingestrie. "They mean the ship. But she is not gone yet. There she is, still. Do you see her, colonel, like a tub upon the water? There, right away, by yon light-coloured cloud."

"I do — I do!"

The ship had not gone down. She had only settled for a moment or two in the trough of the sea; and it was now quite evident that the wreck was rapidly drifting towards the shore, so that there was an expectation that it might strike in shallow water, and so give the crew a chance of escape from death.

CHAPTER CLXX.

MARK INGESTRIE RESCUES A SHIPWRECKED MAN.

THE SCENE NOW UPON THE BEACH at Brighton was one of the most exciting that can well be imagined. No one who has not stood upon a beach under such circumstances, and seen a brave ship battling with the waters, can have any real idea of it.

Language is too weak to paint the feelings of such a conjunction of circumstances. It is so hopeless a thing to stand upon the shore, and listen to the wind roaring in its fury, and to see the waves dashing in mad gyrations hither and thither, while a few frail and creaking timbers only keep some poor mortals from sinking into the sea, which, like a seething cauldron, seems ready to devour them, that it is enough to unman the stoutest heart.

No wonder that persons with kindly sympathies and gentle feelings towards human nature, such as Colonel Jeffrey and Mark Ingestrie undoubtedly had, should suffer acutely to see others so suffer.

If there had been any likelihood of a boat reaching the ill-fated ship, Ingestrie would have been the first to propose such a measure, and the first, with hand and heart, to carry it out; but there was no such likelihood. Our friend had seen too much of service afloat, and was by far too good a sailor to

suppose for an instant that any boat could live for a cable's length from the shore in such a sea as that!

"Is it quite impossible to aid them?" said the colonel.

"Quite," said Ingestrie, "unless they strike close in shore. Then, something may, perhaps, be done."

"Ay, sir," said a weather-beaten boatman who stood close to Ingestrie, "you are right there. If they only drift a little further in, and are still afloat, when the keel touches ground they may get ashore some of them."

"No boat," said the colonel, "could reach her?"

"Boat, sir! My little bit of a craft will do now and then things that one ought not to expect, from anything in the shape of a boat; but that surf would toss it up like a piece of cork, and it would only be making bad worse to draw a few brave fellows from land here, because others are going down at sea."

"You are right," said Ingestrie. "Do you happen to know the craft out yonder?"

"No, sir. She is so swept clear, that it would be hard to know her if she were one's own; but I don't think she belongs to this port at all."

"The gale is going down a bit."

"It is, sir. Don't you see it's coming in puffs like — It won't last much longer."

"Gone!" cried a hundred voices at once.

"No — no!" cried Ingestrie. "Don't say that."

A wild shriek came across the surface of the water, and the ship that had been doing battle with the winds and the waves, disappeared.

"Oh, this is, indeed, terrible," said Colonel Jeffrey. "It is too horrible!"

"It is, indeed!" cried Ingestrie. "There is but one chance now of doing any good, and that is in case any poor fellow should get washed on shore through the surf with a few sparks of life in him. Hilloa, my men! Get out your tackle, and let us look out for the survivors. Some one may try to fight for it yet."

The sailors and boatmen upon the beach were charmed with the idea that they might be able to do some good in this way; and as they soon found that Ingestrie knew perfectly well what he was about, they listened to his orders, in the course they should take, and obeyed them with alacrity and skill.

He had some of the long line connected with the fishing-nets, and to which corks were attached, cast out into the sea by the aid of little kedge anchors, so that the waves did not bring them back again, and as the other ends of the lines were held firmly on the shore, any one might be struggling for life amid the surf, would have had a good chance of preservation by laying hold of one of those lines.

"We may do some good," said Ingestrie, as he tied one end of one of the ropes round his waist.

"What are you about?" said the colonel.

"Oh, nothing. Do not fancy I am going to throw myself into the waves.

But if I should chance to see any poor soul struggling for life, it would take something to prevent me from going after him."

"But think of yourself."

"Oh, I cannot come to any sort of harm, you know. They will easily be able to haul me on shore, you perceive, by the other end of the rope, and I have been rather used to fighting my way through the waves."

"Heaven speed you, if the occasion for your doing so again should arise, my gallant friend. Far be it from me to dissuade you against such an attempt; and I am sure that even she who loves you best of all, would be the first to encourage you."

"Of course she would."

"All lost, sir," said a sailor.

"No, don't say that!" cried Ingestrie. "Where is that night glass that some one had here a little while ago?"

"Here, sir."

Ingestrie placed the telescope to his eye, and looked fixedly in the direction of the wreck. He then handed it to the sailor, and said—

"Who has a good hold of the end of this rope that is about me?"

"All's right, sir. There will be no lack of hands with that. But you don't mean to go through the surf, sir?"

"I see a human being struggling with the foam, and from his actions he is no swimmer. I cannot stand here and see him die, while there is a chance of saving him. Hark you! Don't wait for me to sing out, but use your own eyes, and begin to pull in the moment you see me close with him. The dawn is coming rapidly, and you will see better each moment. Now, I'm off."

"For the love of Heaven be careful!" cried the colonel.

Ingestrie smiled, and then dashed into the roaring, bubbling surf of the sea, with the rope round his waist.

A loud cheer burst from the throats of all present, as the heroic action was witnessed. If anything had been wanting, which it was not, to urge the gallant Mark Ingestrie on his brave and noble adventure, that cheer would have done it; but amid the roar and din of the water about his ears, it is doubtful if he could have heard it at all, or any noise of ten times the intensity.

The figure in the sea, that had attracted the attention of Ingestrie, was now plainly perceived by the colonel, and by all who were upon the beach. To the practised eyes of the sailors then present, it was evident that the body must be lashed to some very buoyant substance, which enabled it to keep afloat, not-withstanding the roll of the sea, and the breaking of the waves over it. The person was evidently not swimming, although, by the wash of the tide, and the set of the wind, he was being driven into shore.

Mark Ingestrie felt that his only chance of getting through the surf was to dive under it, and that manoeuvre he executed with a skill that few could

MARK INGESTRIE RISKS HIS OWN LIFE TO SAVE A SHIPWRECKED MAN.

have commanded and to the admiration and delight of all the spectators of his heroic conduct, he appeared outside the roaring edge of the sea, quite able to swim gallantly towards the shipwrecked man.

As he had said, the dawn was coming fast now, so that there was no great difficulty in seeing him, and in watching, with some degree of accuracy, his movements.

"He will do it!" said the colonel.

"Do it?" said the sailor who had the first hold of the rope that was round the body of Mark Ingestrie. "Do it? Of course he will. The man who has the heart and hand to try these sort of things, always does them."

"I believe you are right, my friend," said the colonel.

"I know I am, sir. I have seen too much of this sort of thing, and if I had not been a little out of sorts in my larboard leg, I should have gone; but I'm not all right, you see, sir, so it won't do. Ah, there he has him! It's all right enough — I told you so."

The progress of Ingestrie was watched by many eyes with the most intense interest. Under no circumstances was distance so deceiving as at sea; and although the black object in the water, which the practised eye of Ingestrie had shown him, was a man, appeared to be only just without the line of the surf, he (Ingestrie) knew that the distance was, in reality, much greater, and that he would have a good swim through those troubled waters before he could get within arm's-length of the shipwrecked person. To be sure, as the body was drifting to the shore, he made better progress, and the distance between him and it was diminished much more rapidly than as if it had been stationary.

Colonel Jeffrey distinctly saw Ingestrie reach the body, at length, and the sailor who had hold of the rope, likewise saw him, and he sung out —

"Now, pull away; but easy, my lads — a steady pull, and no jerking, or you will hinder him instead of helping. That's it — easy now, easy."

"Ah!" said Ben, who had come down to the beach to see what was going on. "Easy does everything, as I always said. Pray, Colonel Jeffrey, what unfortunate animal is that you are dragging out of the water?"

"Don't you know, Ben?"

"Not I. But I suppose it is some poor half-drowned fellow from the ship."

"It is that, as well, I hope; but the person who is with him, and who is being hauled to the shore, is no other than our friend, Mr. Ingestrie."

"What, Johanna's husband?"

"The same."

"Oh, lor'! oh, lor'! I'm afraid easy won't do it then, and that my little girl will be a widow. Give me hold of the rope. If pulling will do it, I'll soon have him on shore again all right. The idea, now, of a man, with the nicest young creature of a wife in the world, going into the sea at the end of a rope, and covering himself all over with froth and sea-weed! Oh, dear! oh, dear! It's truly dreadful, it is; and easy certainly don't do it."

Ben would have lent his aid to pull the rope, but the colonel kept him back, as it was not strength but skill and tact that in the process was required, and the rope was in the hands of men who had both.

It was clear that Ingestrie had got hold of the floating object, whatever it was, and that, as he was pulled into shore, he brought it with him. When he reached the edge of the surf again, a quick pull brought him at once through

it, and a couple of the sailors, dashing into the waters, got a hold of him, and drew him right up on to the beach between them.

Half a dozen more brought to the shore the body of a man, tied to a plank of wood.

Poor Mark was nearly exhausted. He was just able only to smile faintly in answer to the colonel's anxious inquiries.

"He must be carried home," said the colonel. "Lend me some assistance, my brave fellows, to do so."

"No — no!" Ingestrie managed just to say faintly. "Take him — take him!"

He pointed to the man whom he had rescued, and the colonel immediately said,

"Make yourself easy about him, my dear friend. The sailors will carry him to the house, and if the vital spark has not quite fled, you shall have the pleasure of knowing that you have saved him. But it is yourself that I wish to have got home."

"Can you walk?" said Ben.

"I — don't think — I will try."

Poor Ingestrie did try, but he was really so completely exhausted by the efforts he had made, that it was quite evident that he was unequal to the task of walking along the shingle.

"Give it up," said Ben. "You can't do it."

"He must be carried," said the colonel.

"To be sure he must," said Ben; "and this is the way to do it."

With these words, Ben did not hesitate another moment, but taking Mark Ingestrie in his arms as though he had been an infant, he walked over the pebbly beach with him as easily as though he had been only a very ordinary kind of bundle to carry.

As he went on, it occurred to Ben that Johanna might see him carrying her husband home, and might imagine that some fearful accident had happened to him, so, by way of putting an end to that idea, he kept crying out as he got near the house —

"Here we are! All alive and kicking! It's only a joke. All alive — alive O! Here we are! it's only a joke! All alive! alive! and ready for feeding time!"

CHAPTER CLXXI.

A RATHER IMPORTANT DISCOVERY IS MADE.

THE MAN, WHO APPEARED TO BE the only one at all — dead or alive — who was preserved from the wreck of the ship off the coast of Sussex, was carried to the house where all our friends were staying, and being taken into the kitchen, was there placed in the care of a couple of medical men, who were hastily sent for, and who quickly restored animation to the seemingly drowned person. It was reported to Ingestrie that the stranger was all right, and as he himself had by that time thoroughly recovered, and had changed his saturated apparel for a dry suit, the news gave him the liveliest satisfaction.

"Well," he said, "it is something that I have not gone through that tremendous surf in vain."

"Yes, Mark," said Johanna, with the tears starting to her eyes, "but we must, indeed, get away from the sea-coast, and then you cannot be tempted to expose your life in such adventures. Only think of what might be the consequences!"

"Yes," said the colonel. "It is hardly fair, although, at the moment, one cannot help admiring the heroism of the act."

"I don't know how it can be avoided," said Ingestrie. "If you see a poor fellow struggling for his life, and you feel that you may save him at a little risk to yourself, it seems a strange thing not to do it."

"It does," said old Mr. Oakley, "and I should be the last to say no to the noble impulse; only if there are to be many storms off his coast, I shall second the resolution of Johanna that you ought to live somewhere else."

"And so shall I," said Arabella.

"And I," said Tobias.

"He's better, they say," cried Ben, popping his head into the room. "The doctors say he is better, and that, after he has had a sleep, he will be all right."

"The sailor belonging to the ship you mean?" said the colonel, "What sort of a person is he, Ben?"

"Haven't seen him yet, so can't tell; but they have made up a good fire in the back kitchen, and he is lying on a sofa there, and going to sleep, and the doctor says it will do him no good to disturb him, or bother him by talking."

"It certainly will not," said Ingestrie. "It matters very little to us who he is, poor fellow. He is saved — that is the principal thing."

"Yes," said Johanna, "that is everything; and, at all events, Mark, there is

one human being who through life, let his position and prospects be what they may, must look upon you as his friend and preserver."

"Ah!" said poor Tobias, "We should all be very happy if Sweeney Todd were but in the hands of justice. It is very strange why I tremble so to-day at the thought of him; and I did not tremble yesterday."

"You have no occasion to tremble to-day, nor yesterday either, Tobias," said Arabella. "Remember how surrounded you are by your best friends, and remember, likewise, that, after all, Todd is but a man, and by this time he must be but a poor, weak, dispirited one, and much more intent upon devising means for his own safety, than in carrying out his revenges."

"If, indeed, he lives," said the colonel.

"Just so," said Ingestrie. "My opinion will very much incline to the idea that he is dead, if Sir Richard Blunt does not very shortly get some news of him."

"That will be a pity," said Tobias, "unless it can be proved past all dispute, for while it continues only a likely thing, the dread of him will still cling to my heart, and I shall never be happy."

"Nay, Tobias," said the colonel, "you must pluck up a spirit. The probability is now, that Sweeney Todd, let him be where he may, is much more afraid of meeting you than you can possibly be of meeting him."

"I wish I thought so," said Tobias. "But only look now how sweetly the sun is peeping out on the water after the storm there. This is very beautiful."

Tobias walked to the window; and his praise of the beauty of the morning caused the breakfast-table to be, in a very few minutes, completely deserted. To be sure, the praise that the imaginative boy had lavished upon the young day, was by no means misapplied; for a more lovely day than that which broke over Brighton, after that terrific gale in the Channel, could not be conceived. It seemed as if the good genii of earth, sea, and sky, were striving to banish from the minds of all the inhabitants of that place the recollections of the frightful storm that had made the world dismal and terrific.

"Indeed, it is lovely," said Johanna, "Who, now, to look at that placid sheet of water, with scarce a ripple upon its surface to reflect the sunbeams, would think that only a few hours ago, it presented a scene of such fury that it was a shuddering terror to look upon it?"

"And yet," said Ingestrie, "it is these varieties that make the great world beautiful."

"Not a doubt of it; but they require more stern minds than mine, Mark, to stand them."

The party now, finding that the day was so delightful, sallied out to the beach to make some inquiry among the sailors and boatmen, concerning the damage that the gale had done. The moment Mark Ingestrie appeared with his friends, he was recognised as the person who had performed the gallant

exploit of going through the surf to the rescue of the shipwrecked man, and he became immediately the observed of all observers.

This sort of homage was at once flattering and embarrassing to Johanna. She felt proud that it was her husband who was entitled to so much popular consideration and respect, and yet, with her natural timidity of disposition, she shrank from sharing it with him.

Some eager inquiries were made of Ingestrie now, regarding the man he had saved, and it was a great gratification to him to be enabled to state that he was doing well, although he had not himself seen him since he grappled with him in the water, and brought him to the beach.

A few fragments only of the wreck had been washed to the shore, but nothing that could in any way enable them to identify the vessel; so that that was a species of information that must come from the man who had been saved, whenever he should be able to go through the fatigue of an interview with his friend and his deliverer.

After an hour's stroll upon the beach, the party, at a slow pace, returned to the house they had hired during their stay at Brighton. The moment they got to the door, the colonel's servant appeared with his horse, which he had ordered to be ready for him at twelve o'clock.

"Just walk him up and down," said the colonel, to the man; "I shall be ready in a few minutes. Hilloa! my friend, Hector, are you here?"

The dog was with the horse, and the man said, touching his hat —

"We were half a mind, sir, to let Hector loose last night during the storm, for he is a famous fellow in the water; but knowing how much you valued him, we were afraid to do so."

"I am glad you didn't," said the colonel. "You were quite right to keep him shut up. I would not have him come to any mischief for any money."

The colonel entered the house, and when he and all his friends had got into the drawing-room, they sent for a servant to inquire how the poor wrecked man was getting on; and after a little time, one of the domestics of the house came to say that he was up and sitting, dressed, in the front kitchen, and would be happy to see, and to thank those who had saved him from death in the raging sea.

"Shall we have him up here?" said the colonel.

"Yes, if you please," said Ingestrie; "and, I daresay, a glass of wine won't hurt him, while he tells us the name of his ship, poor fellow, and who and what he is."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Oakley. "I will get out the decanter."

"Allow me, my dear," said Mrs. Oakley. "You know you always break every glass that you interfere with."

"Oh, stuff!"

"But I say, Mr. Oakley, that you do."

"Easy does it," said Ben, in his deepest bass voice. "Easy does it, I say — Easy!"

"How cold I am," said Tobias.

"Cold, Tobias!" said Ingestrie. "My good fellow, we will have a fire if you are cold."

"Oh, no — no. Not on my account, Mr. Ingestrie, I shall be better soon; but I feel as if something were going to happen. My heart beats so fearfully, and at the same time, I shake as if — as if — I know not what."

"Give him a glass of wine," said Ingestrie to Johanna.

Tobias took the glass of wine, and it evidently did him some good; but yet he looked ill and uneasy. Orders were given that the shipwrecked man should be shown up to the drawing-room, for they were all curious to know to what ship he had belonged, and how many had fallen victims to the frightful gale that had made the vessel such a complete wreck.

"He is coming, poor fellow," said the colonel. "I hear his footsteps on the stairs. He comes slowly. No doubt he is weak yet."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Johanna. "Have the wine ready to give him at once, mother. It will put some heart into him. What must be his feelings towards you, Mark?"

"Come now," said Ingestrie; "don't plague him, any of you, about his being saved by me, and all that sort of thing. Just say nothing about it. Sailors are no great orators, at the best of times, and if he begins to make a speech about his gratitude, you may depend he will never get to the end of it."

"Yes; but he ought to know," said Mrs. Oakley, "who he owes his life to, under providence."

"Hem!" said Ben. He never liked to hear Mrs. Oakley begin to use religious phrases, as they had a tendency to remind him of the late Mr. Lupin.

The door of the drawing-room opened, and all eyes were eagerly bent in that direction. A servant came in, and said —

"The poor man is here, if you please. Is he to come in, now? He seems rather timid."

"Oh, yes," said Ingestrie, "let him come in, by all manner of means, poor fellow. He and I made acquaintance in the sea, and we ought to be good friends, now."

A tall, gigantic figure marched three paces into the room.

"Todd!" shouted Tobias. "It is Todd!"

It was Sweeney Todd! With one glance round the room, he recognised an enemy in every face. With a perfect yell of fear and rage, he turned, and dashed down the staircase. The servant who had conducted him up to the drawing-room, and whom he met in his way, he knocked down with one blow, and in another moment he was in the street. The colonel's horse was close to the door. Todd felled the man who held it by a blow on the top of the head, that took him so suddenly, he could not guard against it, and then springing upon the horse, the

murderer raised another wild unearthly kind of shout, and set off at a gallop.

So sudden — so totally unexpected, and so appalling had been the presence of Todd in the drawing-room, that if a spectre had appeared among the people there assembled, and they had had no possible means of escaping from the belief that it was a spectre, they could not have been more confounded than they were upon this occasion.

Poor Tobias, after uttering the exclamation that we have recorded, fell flat upon the floor. Ben swung backwards in his chair, and went with a tremendous crash right away into a corner. Ingestrie and the colonel rose together, and impeded each other in their efforts to follow Todd. Johanna, shrieking, clung to Ingestrie, and Arabella made a vain attempt to delay the colonel.

"By Heaven he is off!" cried the colonel, as he heard the clatter of the horse's feet.

"No!" shouted Ingestrie; "it cannot be!"

"Easy does it," said Ben, from the corner into which he had fallen. "Easy — Easy!"

"Johanna, unhand me, I implore you," cried Mark Ingestrie. "Do you wish the murderer to be lost sight of? Come on, colonel — you and I must engage in this pursuit. God of Heaven! the idea of me saving Todd from the waves!"

The colonel and Ingestrie seized their hats, and rushed down the stairs, tumbling over the servant in the hall. The next object they came across was the groom who had had charge of the horse. They found him sitting on the pavement, looking as confused as possible.

"Which way has he gone?" cried the colonel.

"The — the man. Round that corner, and Hector has gone after him, like mad, sir. Oh, dear!"

"Hector? Then he will be taken, for I will back Hector to hang upon him like grim death. Come with me to the nearest stable, Ingestrie, and let us get horses! Come — come!"

CHAPTER CLXXII.

THE PURSUIT OF TODD ON THE LONDON ROAD.

THE WHOLE OF THESE PROCEEDINGS had really come with such a rush upon the senses of Mark Ingestrie, that he might well have been excused had he not been able to act with the energy that he did; but the strong desire to capture

TODD SEIZES THE COLONEL'S HORSE, MOUNTS, AND MAKES ANOTHER ESCAPE.

Sweeney Todd, and so to put an end to all the doubts and fears that were felt concerning him, upon the parts of those to whom he was fondly attached, roused the young man to action.

Colonel Jeffrey was cooler than Ingestrie in the affair; but he was not a whit the less determined upon that account.

In the course of seven or eight minutes at the outside, they were both mounted, and as there were plenty of people who could tell them in which

direction Todd had gone, they were soon upon his track.

Todd had taken the London Road, and had really got a considerable distance onward, and if he had been, which he was far from being, a good horseman, there is very little doubt but that he would either have led his pursuers a long distance, or possibly escaped them altogether, for the animal that he rode was one that in skillful hands would have done wonders.

It was no small aggravation to Colonel Jeffrey to be pursuing his own horse, while he himself was mounted upon a hack that was by no means equal to it.

Skill, however, will get more work out of an indifferent steed than absolute ignorance will achieve from a first-rate one, so that after getting to the top of a rising ground about three miles out of Brighton, our friends saw Todd not three quarters of a mile in advance, coasting a little water-course to find a safe place to cross at. Notwithstanding the distance was great, the colonel knew his own horse in a moment.

"Come on, Ingestrie," he said. "There he is!"

"Are you sure?"

"Quite. That's the rascal. Ah, there he goes through the water! The horse will carry him well across it, but he did not know that, so it is a bold step. On — on!"

They had let their horses come rather easy up the ascent, for the colonel was too good a horseman to break down his steed, merely with an useless burst, when there might be a chase before it of some twenty or thirty miles yet, for all he knew to the contrary; and so, as the country, from the hill-top, sloped very gently right away to the north, they got on wonderfully, and without giving the cattle too much to do.

To keep Todd in sight was everything now, for in that case they felt certain that they must eventually have him. From his actions, it did not seem that he was at all aware of his being so closely pursued, but suddenly they saw him pull up on an eminence and turn his horse's head in the direction of Brighton. They saw him shade his eyes with his hands, and take a long look, and then by the sudden start that he gave, and which caused the horse to plunge in alarm, they knew that he had seen them, and that from that moment he would strain every nerve to escape.

The slight pause that Todd had made in order to look back and see if he were pursued or not, had given his foes the advantage of about one hundred yards, for they had pushed on during that pause with renewed vigour; but now bending low in the saddle, it was evident that he was doing his best to urge the colonel's horse onwards, and it went like the wind.

"There he goes, colonel!" cried Ingestrie. "That pace will do for us pretty quickly. He is leaving us behind fast enough."

"He is, by Heaven, and if he gets to a turn of the road, there is no knowing

TODD PURSUED BY THE COLONEL AND MARK.

what fox-like trick he may play us. On — on, Ingestrie! There is no help for it, but to do our very best."

For another minute and a half, now, not a word was exchanged between the friends. The road did take a turn, and for some time they were out of all sight of Todd, but the moment they themselves got round the elbow of the road, the colonel raised a shout of gratification, and then cried —

"There he is! He has had a fall. On — on!"

Todd was in the middle of the road-way trying to mount the horse, from which it would appear as though he had been thrown, for the creature was rearing in evident alarm, and swerving every time that Todd put his foot in the stirrup. Maddened, then, at the idea that each moment his foes were gaining upon him, Todd made such a vigorous effort to mount, that he succeeded in doing so, although both his feet were out of the stirrups. He clung to the horse with desperation, and kicked it violently with his heels, striking it at the same time on the head violently with his clenched fist.

The animal was driven half crazy by such unusual treatment, and after plunging and rearing for a few seconds, set off at such a gallop as no one could have believed any mortal horse could have achieved.

"Off again!" cried the colonel. "I could have shot him, I think, Ingestrie, just now."

"Then, why, in the name of all that's tantalising, did you not do so?"

"Why, to tell the truth, I was afraid of hitting the horse. If it had kept still for a moment, it would have been all right; but I could not be certain of my aim as it was. Now, mind, we must have him, and I think he begins to find that fact out."

Certainly, if any judgment could be come to, by the desperate manner in which Todd rode, it would appear as though he considered his career as all but at an end. Oh, how at that time he roared and raved that he had no fire-arms, by the aid of which he might turn and cope with his foes! If he had only had but a pair of pistols, he thought that not only would he have escaped, but escaped likewise with the intense gratification of destroying two of his enemies; but, then, he was totally unarmed, and if they should succeed in coming up with him, he had not even the means of self-destruction about him.

Indifferent horseman, however, as Todd was, even he could not help seeing that he was far better mounted than those who were pursuing him and so, from that circumstance, he gathered just a faint hope that he might distance them by knocking up their steeds. From what he had already experienced of the mettle of the horse he had got hold of so providentially for him, he felt certain that if his pursuers were obliged to come to a pause only for a quarter of an hour, he should be able to place such a distance between him and them, that he might consider himself to be in comparative, if not absolute safety.

To accomplish such a result, then, he felt that his plan was to keep right on within their sight, and let them sooner be tired out by the unwonted exertions that they would compel their inefficient cattle to make, with the vain hope of overtaking him.

But Todd had to do with a man, in Colonel Jeffrey, who was quite equal to such an emergency.

A stern chase is a long chase, but an escape even at considerable speed is a weary affair, with a foe directly behind; and the colonel calculated that allowing

THE DEATH OF SWEENEY TODD.

Todd all the difference in speed between the horses, it would be yet a long distance before he could throw them back so far that they would not be in a position to take advantage of any accident that might occur to him.

"Cool and easy, Ingestrie," he said; "it's a question of time, now. The longer we can keep our horses on their legs, the better for us. Don't urge your horse too much."

Todd had now reached a very wild and romantic part of the road. It wound through a cutting in a mass of chalk, which, as it would be impossible to surmount, and a tedious thing to go round, had been very roughly levelled to the width of a road, and the sides were covered with rank vegetation, for successive rains had washed down upon the face of the chalk a facing of loam, from which had sprung up gigantic weeds, and innumerable wild flowers.

Todd had got about half way through this place, when, from the other end of it, there came a party of five horsemen.

One man rode at the head of the party upon a black horse, which had evidently gone far that day. Todd and this man met face to face, and they simultaneously pronounced each other's names.

"Sir Richard Blunt!" shrieked Todd.

"Sweeney Todd!" said the magistrate.

"Stop him!" shouted Ingestrie, as he and the colonel just got a sight of the horsemen beyond Todd. "Stop him!"

With a yell, like that which might be supposed to come from a fiend, Todd swerved from the grasp of Sir Richard Blunt, who made a dart at his throat, and then, drawing up his knees, he gave his horse the rein, and darting past Sir Richard, he dashed right into the midst of the party of officers, who were behind, and fairly broke his way through them.

"Not yet — not yet!" he shouted. "Ha! — ha! not yet!"

"Fire!" cried Sir Richard Blunt.

The sharp report of four holster-pistols sounded in the narrow road-way. Todd fell from his horse, and, terrified by the shots, the steed went off without him at a mad gallop.

Twice Todd rolled over, and grasped handfuls of chalk and dust from the road; and then he lay upon his back profoundly still. In an instant, Sir Richard Blunt dismounted; and then Colonel Jeffrey and Mark Ingestrie rode up to the spot.

"You have — have —" cried Ingestrie.

"Yes, at last, Mr. Ingestrie," said Sir Richard. "I had some information that he was hovering about the coast, and came here to see you all. I am sorry to defraud the gallows of its due: but there lies Todd!"

A couple of the officers now dismounted, while the others held their horses, and they dragged the wretched man to the side of the road.

"Is he dead?" said Ingestrie.

"No," said Todd, opening his eyes. "He still lives to curse you all! I —"

It was evident that he wished to say more; but he was bleeding internally, and he began to struggle with the volumes of blood that rose to his throat. With a horrible shriek, he rolled over on to his face, and then, after one sharp convulsion of his limbs, he lay perfectly still.

One of the officers turned him round again. One glance at the face was

sufficient. The guilty spirit of Sweeney Todd had fled at last to its account!

"Dead," said Sir Richard Blunt. "Let the body lie here, and we will all ride on to Brighton, and from there send some conveyance for it. Mr. Ingestrie and you, Colonel Jeffrey, are witnesses of his end, and I can only say that I feel now as if a heavy weight were lifted off my breast. The good, and the kind, and true, need no longer live in fear of the wild vengeance of this man. Let us hope that Heaven will have more mercy upon his guilty soul than ever he had consideration for the sufferings of others."

CHAPTER CLXXIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

WE HAVE LITTLE TO SAY IN CONCLUSION, now that the chief actor in the fearful Domestic Drama it has been our fate to record, is no more. Todd was buried in the old church-yard at Brighton, but no record of the spot where the murderer's bones decayed was preserved.

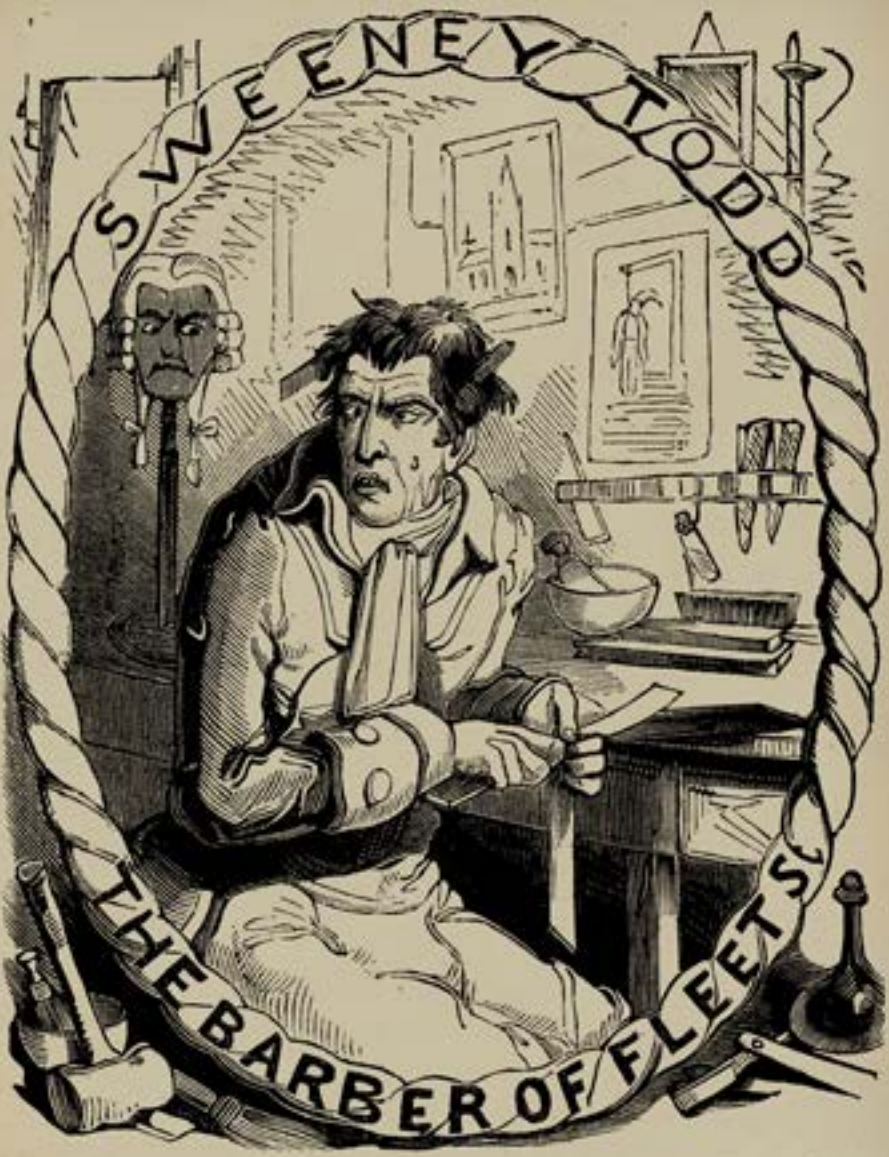
Sir Richard Blunt lived long to enjoy the respect and the admiration of all who knew him, and died full of years and honours.

The sunshine of the existence of Johanna and Mark was perfectly unclouded, and the colonel and Arabella, likewise, presented a true picture of connubial felicity. In due time Tobias was married to her whom he loved so well; and as he got older and more used to the world, that timidity of disposition that Todd by his cruelties had induced, entirely left him.

Ben did not marry after all, and he never ceased to congratulate himself upon his escape. Mr. and Mrs. Oakley were happy in the happiness of Johanna.

The mad-house at Peckham was completely pulled down, and in the well at the back of it was found the skeleton of the wretched victim of Fogg's villany. It was by his own hand that Fogg really died.

Often as Johanna would sit on a winter's evening, with her children climbing upon her knee, she would, with a faltering voice, tell them what their dear father had suffered to procure for her and for them The String of Pearls.



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