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Text enclosed by underscores is in italics (*\_italics\_*).

THE STRING OF PEARLS;

Or,  
The Barber of Fleet Street.

A Domestic Romance.

London:  
Published by E. Lloyd, Salisbury Square, Fleet Street.

MDCCCL

[Illustration: From A Rare Old Painting By Reading, In The British Museum.]

## PREFACE.

THE ROMANCE OF THE STRING OF PEARLS having excited in the Literary world an almost unprecedented interest, it behoves the author to say a few words to his readers upon the completion of his labours.

In answer to the many inquiries that have been, from time to time, made regarding the fact of whether there ever was such a person as Sweeney

Todd in existence, we can unhesitatingly say, that there certainly was such a man; and the record of his crimes is still to be found in the chronicles of criminality of this country.

The house in Fleet Street, which was the scene of Todd's crimes, is no more. A fire, which destroyed some half-dozen buildings on that side of the way, involved Todd's in destruction; but the secret passage, although, no doubt, partially blocked up with the re-building of St. Dunstan's Church, connecting the vaults of that edifice with the cellars of what was Todd's house in Fleet Street, still remains.

From the great patronage which this work has received from the reading public, the author has to express his deep and earnest thanks; and he begs to state, that if anything more than another could stimulate him to renewed exertion to please his numerous patrons, it is their kind and liberal appreciation of his past labours.

\_London\_, 1850.

The String of Pearls;

or, The Sailor's Gift.

A Romance of Peculiar Interest.

"And now, Tobias, listen to me, and treasure up every word I say." "Yes, sir." "I'll cut your throat from ear to ear, if you repeat one word of what passes in this shop, or dare to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you may see, or hear, or fancy you see or hear."

[Illustration: The Barber's lesson To His Apprentice.]

## CHAPTER I. THE STRANGE CUSTOMER AT SWEENEY TODD'S.

Before Fleet-street had reached its present importance, and when George the Third was young, and the two figures who used to strike the chimes at old St. Dunstan's church were in all their glory--being a great impediment to errand-boys on their progress, and a matter of gaping curiosity to country people--there stood close to the sacred edifice a small barber's shop, which was kept by a man of the name of Sweeney Todd.

How it was that he came by the name of Sweeney, as a Christian appellation, we are at a loss to conceive, but such was his name, as

might be seen in extremely corpulent yellow letters over his shop window, by any who chose there to look for it.

Barbers by that time in Fleet-street had not become fashionable, and no more dreamt of calling themselves artists than of taking the tower by storm; moreover they were not, as they are now, constantly slaughtering fine fat bears, and yet, somehow people had hair on their heads just the same as they have at present, without the aid of that unctuous auxiliary. Moreover, Sweeney Todd, in common with those really primitive sort of times, did not think it at all necessary to have any waxen effigies of humanity in his window. There was no languishing young lady looking over the left shoulder in order that a profusion of auburn tresses might repose upon her lily neck, and great conquerors and great statesmen were not then, as they are now, held up to public ridicule with dabs of rouge upon their cheeks, a quantity of gunpowder scattered in for beard, and some bristles sticking on end for eyebrows.

No. Sweeney Todd was a barber of the old school, and he never thought of glorifying himself on account of any extraneous circumstance. If he had lived in Henry the Eighth's palace, it would be all the same as Henry the Eighth's dog-kennel, and he would scarcely have believed human nature to be so green as to pay an extra sixpence to be shaven and shorn in any particular locality.

A long pole painted white, with a red stripe curling spirally round it, projected into the street from his doorway, and on one of the pains of glass in his window, was presented the following couplet:--

"Easy shaving for a penny,  
As good as you will find any."

We do not put these lines forth as a specimen of the poetry of the age; they may have been the production of some young Templar; but if they were a little wanting in poetic fire, that was amply made up by the clear and precise manner in which they set forth what they intended.

The barber himself, was a long, low-jointed, ill-put-together sort of fellow, with an immense mouth, and such huge hands and feet, that he was, in his way, quite a natural curiosity; and, what was more wonderful, considering his trade, there never was seen such a head of hair as Sweeney Todd's. We know not what to compare it to; probably it came nearest to what one might suppose to be the appearance of a thick-set hedge, in which a quantity of small wire had got entangled. In truth, it was a most terrific head of hair; and as Sweeney Todd kept all his combs in it--some people said his scissors likewise--when he put his head out of the shop-door to see what sort of weather it was, he might have been mistaken for an Indian warrior with a very remarkable head-dress.

He had a short disagreeable kind of unmirthful laugh, which came in at all sorts of odd times when nobody else saw anything to laugh at at all, and which sometimes made people start again, especially when they were being shaved, and Sweeney Todd would stop short in that operation to indulge in one of those cachinatory effusions. It was evident that the

remembrance of some very strange and out-of-the-way joke must occasionally flit across him, and then he gave his hyena-like laugh, but it was so short, so sudden, striking upon the ear for a moment, and then gone, that people have been known to look up to the ceiling, and on the floor, and all round them, to know from whence it had come, scarcely supposing it possible that it proceeded from mortal lips.

Mr. Todd squinted a little, to add to his charms; and so we think that by this time the reader may, in his mind's eye, see the individual whom we wish to present to him. Some thought him a careless enough, harmless fellow, with not much sense in him, and at times they almost considered he was a little cracked; but there were others who shook their heads when they spoke of him; and while they could say nothing to his prejudice, except that they certainly considered he was odd, yet, when they came to consider what a great crime and misdemeanour it really is in this world, to be odd, we shall not be surprised at the ill-odour in which Sweeney Todd was held.

But for all that he did a most thriving business, and considered by his neighbours to be a very well-to-do sort of man, and decidedly, in city phraseology, warm.

It was so handy for the young students in the Temple to pop over to Sweeney Todd's to get their chins new rasped; so that from morning to night he drove a good business, and was evidently a thriving man.

There was only one thing that seemed in any way to detract from the great prudence of Sweeney Todd's character, and that was that he rented a large house, of which he occupied nothing but the shop and parlour, leaving the upper part entirely useless, and obstinately refusing to let it on any terms whatever.

Such was the state of things, A.D. 1785, as regarded Sweeney Todd.

The day is drawing to a close, and a small drizzling kind of rain is falling, so that there are not many passengers in the streets, and Sweeney Todd is sitting in his shop looking keenly in the face of a boy, who stands in an attitude of trembling subjection before him.

"You will remember," said Sweeney Todd, and he gave his countenance a most horrible twist as he spoke, "you will remember Tobias Ragg, that you are now my apprentice, that you have of me had board, washing, and lodging, with the exception that you don't sleep here, that you take your meals at home, and that your mother, Mrs. Ragg, does your washing, which she may very well do, being a laundress in the Temple, and making no end of money; as for lodging, you lodge here, you know, very comfortably in the shop all day. Now, are you not a happy dog?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy timidly.

"You will acquire a first-rate profession, quite as good as the law, which your mother tells me she would have put you to, only that a little weakness of the head-piece unqualified you. And now, Tobias, listen to me, and treasure up every word I say."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll cut your throat from ear to ear, if you repeat one word of what passes in this shop, or dare to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you may see, or hear, or fancy you see or hear. Now you understand me,--I'll cut your throat from ear to ear,--do you understand me?"

"Yes, sir, I won't say nothing. I wish, sir, as I may be made into veal pies at Lovett's in Bell-yard if I as much as says a word."

Sweeney Todd rose from his seat; and opening his huge mouth, he looked at the boy for a minute or two in silence, as if he fully intended swallowing him, but had not quite made up his mind where to begin.

"Very good," at length he said, "I am satisfied, I am quite satisfied; and mark me--the shop, and the shop only, is your place."

"Yes, sir."

"And if any customer gives you a penny, you can keep it, so that if you get enough of them you will become a rich man; only I will take care of them for you, and when I think you want them I will let you have them. Run out and see what's o'clock by St Dunstan's."

There was a small crowd collected opposite the church, for the figures were about to strike three-quarters past six; and among that crowd was one man who gazed with as much curiosity as anybody at the exhibition.

"Now for it!" he said, "they are going to begin; well, that is ingenious. Look at the fellow lifting up his club, and down it comes bang upon the old bell."

The three-quarters were struck by the figures; and then the people who had loitered to see it done, many of whom had day by day looked at the same exhibition for years past, walked away, with the exception of the man who seemed so deeply interested.

He remained, and crouching at his feet was a noble-looking dog, who looked likewise up at the figures; and who, observing his master's attention to be closely fixed upon them, endeavoured to show as great an appearance of interest as he possibly could.

"What do you think of that, Hector?" said the man.

The dog gave a short low whine, and then his master proceeded,--

"There is a barber's shop opposite, so before I go any farther, as I have got to see the ladies, although it's on a very melancholy errand, for I have got to tell them that poor Mark Ingestrie is no more, and Heaven knows what poor Johanna will say--I think I should know her by his description of her, poor fellow! It grieves me to think how he used to talk about her in the long night-watches, when all was still, and not

a breath of air touched a curl upon his cheek. I could almost think I saw her sometimes, as he used to tell me of her soft beaming eyes, her little gentle pouting lips, and the dimples that played about her mouth. Well, well, it's of no use grieving; he is dead and gone, poor fellow, and the salt water washes over as brave a heart as ever beat. His sweetheart, Johanna, though, shall have the string of pearls for all that; and if she cannot be Mark Ingestrie's wife in this world, she shall be rich and happy, poor young thing, while she stays in it, that is to say as happy as she can be; and she must just look forward to meeting him aloft, where there are no squalls or tempests.--And so I'll go and get shaved at once."

He crossed the road towards Sweeney Todd's shop, and, stepping down the low doorway, he stood face to face with the odd-looking barber.

The dog gave a low growl and sniffed the air.

"Why Hector," said his master, "what's the matter? Down, sir, down!"

"I have a mortal fear of dogs," said Sweeney Todd. "Would you mind him, sir, sitting outside the door and waiting for you, if it's all the same? Only look at him, he is going to fly at me!"

"Then you are the first person he ever touched without provocation," said the man; "but I suppose he don't like your looks, and I must confess I aint much surprised at that. I have seen a few rum-looking guys in my time, but hang me if ever I saw such a figure-head as yours. What the devil noise was that?"

"It was only me," said Sweeney Todd; "I laughed."

"Laughed! do you call that a laugh? I suppose you caught it of somebody who died of it. If that's your way of laughing, I beg you won't do it any more."

"Stop the dog! stop the dog! I can't have dogs running into my back parlour."

"Here, Hector, here!" cried his master; "get out!"

Most unwillingly the dog left the shop, and crouched down close to the outer door, which the barber took care to close, muttering something about a draught of air coming in, and then, turning to the apprentice boy, who was screwed up in a corner, he said,--

"Tobias, my lad, go to Leadenhall-street, and bring a small bag of the thick biscuits from Mr. Peterson's; say they are for me. Now, sir, I suppose you want to be shaved, and it is well you have come here, for there aint a shaving-shop, although I say it, in the city of London that ever thinks of polishing anybody off as I do."

"I tell you what it is, master barber: if you come that laugh again, I will get up and go. I don't like it, and there is an end of it."

"Very good," said Sweeney Todd, as he mixed up a lather. "Who are you? where did you come from? and where are you going?"

"That's cool, at all events. Damn it! what do you mean by putting the brush in my mouth? Now, don't laugh; and since you are so fond of asking questions, just answer me one."

"Oh, yes, of course: what is it, sir?"

"Do you know a Mr. Oakley, who lives somewhere in London, and is a spectacle-maker?"

"Yes, to be sure I do--John Oakley, the spectacle-maker, in Fore-street, and he has got a daughter named Johanna, that the young bloods call the Flower of Fore-street."

"Ah, poor thing! do they? Now, confound you! what are you laughing at now? What do you mean by it?"

"Didn't you say, 'Ah, poor thing?' Just turn your head a little a one side; that will do. You have been to sea, sir?"

"Yes, I have, and have only now lately come up the river from an Indian voyage."

"Indeed! where can my strop be? I had it this minute; I must have laid it down somewhere. What an odd thing that I can't see it! It's very extraordinary; what can have become of it? Oh, I recollect, I took it into the parlour. Sit still, sir, I shall not be gone a moment; sit still, sir, if you please. By the by, you can amuse yourself with the \_Courier\_, sir, for a moment."

Sweeney Todd walked into the back parlour and closed the door.

There was a strange sound suddenly, compounded of a rushing noise and then a heavy blow, immediately after which Sweeney Todd emerged from his parlour, and folding his arms, he looked upon \_the vacant chair\_ where his customer had been seated, but the customer was \_gone\_, leaving not the slightest trace of his presence behind except his hat, and that Sweeney Todd immediately seized and thrust into a cupboard that was at one corner of the shop.

"What's that?" he said, "what's that? I thought I heard a noise."

"If you please, sir, I have forgot the money, and have run all the way back from St. Paul's churchyard."

In two strides Todd reached him, and clutching him by the arm he dragged him into the farther corner of the shop, and then he stood opposite to him, glaring him full in the face with such a demoniac expression that the boy was frightfully terrified.

"Speak!" cried Todd, "speak! and speak the truth, or your last hour has come. How long were you peeping through the door before you came in?"

"Peeping, sir?"

"Yes, peeping; don't repeat my words, but answer me at once, you will find it better for you in the end."

"I wasn't peeping, sir, at all."

Sweeney Todd drew a long breath as he then said, in a strange, shrieking sort of manner, which he intended, no doubt, should be jocose,--

"Well, well, very well; if you did peep, what then? it's no matter; I only wanted to know, that's all; it was quite a joke, wasn't it--quite funny, though rather odd, eh? Why don't you laugh, you dog? Come, now, there is no harm done. Tell me what you thought about it at once, and we will be merry over it--very merry."

"I don't know what you mean, sir," said the boy, who was quite as much alarmed at Mr. Todd's mirth as he was at his anger. "I don't know what you mean, sir; I only just come back because I hadn't any money to pay for the biscuits at Peterson's."

"I mean nothing at all," said Todd, suddenly turning upon his heel; "what's that scratching at the door?"

Tobias opened the shop-door, and there stood the dog, who looked wistfully round the place, and then gave a howl which seriously alarmed the barber.

"It's the gentleman's dog, sir," said Tobias, "it's the gentleman's dog, sir, that was looking at old St. Dunstan's clock, and came in here to be shaved. It's funny, aint it, sir, that the dog didn't go away with his master?"

"Why don't you laugh if it's funny? Turn out the dog, Tobias; we'll have no dogs here; I hate the sight of them; turn him out--turn him out."

"I would, sir, in a minute; but I'm afraid he wouldn't let me, somehow. Only look, sir--look; see what he is at now! did you ever see such a violent fellow, sir? why he will have down the cupboard door."

"Stop him--stop him! the devil is in the animal! stop him I say!"

The dog was certainly getting the door open, when Sweeney Todd rushed forward to stop him! but that he was soon admonished of the danger of doing, for the dog gave him a grip of the leg, which made him give such a howl, that he precipitately retreated, and left the animal to do its pleasure. This consisted in forcing open the cupboard door, and seizing upon the hat which Sweeney Todd had thrust therein, and dashing out of the shop with it in triumph.

"The devil's in the beast," muttered Todd, "he's off! Tobias, you said you saw the man who owned that fiend of a cur looking at St. Dunstan's church."

"Yes, sir, I did see him there. If you recollect, you sent me to see the time, and the figures were just going to strike three quarters past six; and before I came away, I heard him say that Mark Ingestrie was dead, and Johanna should have the string of pearls. Then I came in, and then, if you recollect, sir, he came in, and the odd thing, you know, to me, sir, is that he didn't take his dog with him, because you know, sir--"

"Because what?" shouted Todd.

"Because people generally do take their dogs with them, you know, sir; and may I be made into one of Lovett's pies, if I don't--"

"Hush, some one comes; it's old Mr. Grant, from the Temple. How do you do, Mr. Grant? glad to see you looking so well, sir. It does one's heart good to see a gentlemen of your years looking so fresh and hearty. Sit down, sir; a little this way, if you please. Shaved, I suppose?"

"Yes, Todd, yes. Any news?"

"No, sir, nothing stirring. Everything very quiet, sir, except the high wind. They say it blew the king's hat off yesterday, sir, and he borrowed Lord North's. Trade is dull too, sir. I suppose people won't come out to be cleaned and dressed in a mizling rain. We haven't had anybody in the shop for an hour and a half."

"Lor' sir," said Tobias, "you forget the sea-faring gentleman with the dog, you know, sir."

"Ah! so I do," said Todd. "He went away, and I saw him get into some disturbance, I think, just at the corner of the market."

"I wonder I didn't meet him, sir," said Tobias, "for I came that way; and then it's so very odd leaving his dog behind him."

"Yes, very," said Todd. "Will you excuse me a moment, Mr. Grant? Tobias, my lad, I just want you to lend me a hand in the parlour."

Tobias followed Todd very unsuspectingly into the parlour; but when they got there and the door was closed, the barber sprang upon him like an enraged tiger, and, grappling him by the throat, he gave his head such a succession of knocks against the wainscot, that Mr. Grant must have thought that some carpenter was at work. Then he tore a handful of his hair out, after which he twisted him round, and dealt him such a kick, that he was flung sprawling into a corner of the room, and then, without a word, the barber walked out again to his customer, and bolted his parlour door on the outside, leaving Tobias to digest the usage he had received at his leisure, and in the best way he could.

When he came back to Mr. Grant, he apologised for keeping him waiting, by saying,--

"It became necessary, sir, to teach my new apprentice a little bit of his business. I have left him studying it now. There is nothing like

teaching young folks at once."

"Ah!" said Mr. Grant, with a sigh, "I know what it is to let young folks grow wild; for although I have neither chick nor child of my own, I had a sister's son to look to--a handsome, wild, harum-scarum sort of fellow, as like me as one pea is like another. I tried to make a lawyer of him, but it wouldn't do, and it's now more than two years ago he left me altogether; and yet there were some good traits about Mark."

"Mark, sir! Did you say Mark?"

"Yes, that was his name, Mark Ingestrie. God knows what's become of him."

"Oh!" said Sweeney Todd; he went on lathering the chin of Mr. Grant.

## CHAPTER II THE SPECTACLE-MAKER'S DAUGHTER.

"Johanna, Johanna, my dear, do you know what time it is? Johanna, I say, my dear, are you going to get up? Here's your mother has trotted out to Parson Lupin's, and you know I have got to go to Alderman Judd's house, in Cripplegate, the first thing, and I haven't had a morsel of breakfast yet. Johanna, my dear, do you hear me?"

These observations were made by Mr. Oakley, the spectacle-maker, at the door of his daughter Johanna's chamber, on the morning after the events we have just recorded at Sweeney Todd's; and presently, a soft sweet voice answered him, saying,--

"I am coming, father, I am coming: in a moment, father, I shall be down."

"Don't hurry yourself, my darling, I can wait."

The little old spectacle-maker descended the staircase again, and sat down in the parlour at the back of the shop, where, in a few moments, he was joined by Johanna, his only and his much-loved child.

She was indeed a creature of the rarest grace and beauty. Her age was eighteen, but she looked rather younger, and upon her face she had that sweetness and intelligence of expression which almost bids defiance to the march of time. Her hair was of a glossy blackness, and what was rare in conjunction with such a feature, her eyes were of a deep and heavenly blue. There was nothing of the commanding or of the severe style of beauty about her, but the expression of her face was all grace and sweetness. It was one of those countenances which one could look at for a long summer's day, as upon the pages of some deeply interesting volume, which furnished the most abundant food for pleasant and delightful reflection.

There was a touch of sadness about her voice, which, perhaps, only tended to make it the more musical, although mournfully so, and which seemed to indicate that at the bottom of her heart there lay some grief which had not yet been spoken--some cherished aspiration of her pure soul, which looked hopeless as regards completion--some remembrance of a former joy, which had been turned to bitterness and grief; it was the cloud in the sunny sky--the shadow through which there still gleamed bright and beautiful sunshine, but which still proclaimed its presence.

"I have kept you waiting, father," she said, as she flung her arms about the old man's neck, "I have kept you waiting."

"Never mind, my dear, never mind. Your mother is so taken up with Mr. Lupin, that you know, this being Wednesday morning, she is off to his prayer meeting, and so I have had no breakfast; and really I think I must discharge Sam."

"Indeed, father! what has he done?"

"Nothing at all, and that's the very reason. I had to take down the shutters myself this morning, and what do you think for? He had the coolness to tell me he couldn't take down the shutters this morning, or sweep out the shop, because his aunt had the toothache."

"A poor excuse, father," said Johanna, as she bustled about and got the breakfast ready; "a very poor excuse."

"Poor indeed! but his month is up to-day, and I must get rid of him. But I suppose I shall have no end of bother with your mother, because his aunt belongs to Mr. Lupin's congregation; but as sure as this is the 20th day of August--"

"It is the 20th day of August," said Johanna, as she sunk into a chair and burst into tears. "It is, it is! I thought I could have controlled this, but I cannot, father, I cannot. It was that which made me late. I knew mother was out; I knew that I ought to be down attending upon you, and I was praying to Heaven for strength to do so because this was the 20th of August."

Johanna spoke these words incoherently, and amidst sobs, and when she had finished them, she leant her sweet face upon her small hands, and wept like a child.

The astonishment, not unmingled with positive dismay, of the old spectacle-maker, was vividly depicted on his countenance, and for some minutes he sat perfectly aghast, with his hands resting on his knees, and looking in the face of his beautiful child--that is to say, as much as he could see of it between those little taper fingers that were spread upon it--as if he were newly awakened from some dream.

"Good God, Johanna!" he said at length, "what is this? My dear child, what has happened? Tell me, my dear, unless you wish to kill me with grief."

"You shall know, father," she said. "I did not think to say a word about it, but considered I had strength enough of mind to keep my sorrows in my own breast, but the effort has been too much for me, and I have been compelled to yield. If you had not looked so kindly on me--if I did not know that you loved me as you do, I should easily have kept my secret, but, knowing that much, I cannot."

"My darling," said the old man, "you are right, there; I do love you. What would the world be to me without you? There was a time, twenty years ago, when your mother made up much of my happiness, but of late, what with Mr. Lupin, and psalm-singing, and tea-drinking, I see very little of her, and what little I do see is not very satisfactory. Tell me, my darling, what it is that vexes you, and I'll soon put it to rights. I don't belong to the city trainbands for nothing."

"Father, I know that your affection would do all for me that it is possible to do, but you cannot recall the dead to life; and if this day passes over and I see him not, nor hear from him, I know that, instead of finding a home for me whom he loved, he has in the effort to do so found a grave for himself. He said he would, he said he would."

Here she wrung her hands, and wept again, and with such a bitterness of anguish that the old spectacle-maker was at his wit's end, and knew not what on earth to do or say.

"My dear, my dear," he cried, "who is he? I hope you don't mean--"

"Hush, father, hush! I know the name that is hovering on your lips, but something seems even now to whisper to me he is no more, and, being so, speak nothing of him, father, but that which is good."

"You mean Mark Ingestrie."

"I do, and if he had a thousand faults, he at least loved me; he loved me truly and most sincerely."

"My dear," said the old spectacle-maker, "you know that I wouldn't for all the world say anything to vex you, nor will I; but tell me what it is that makes this day more than any other so gloomy to you."

"I will, father; you shall hear. It was on this day two years ago that we last met; it was in the Temple-garden, and he had just had a stormy interview with his uncle, Mr. Grant, and you will understand, father, that Mark Ingestrie was not to blame, because--"

"Well, well, my dear, you needn't say anything more upon that point. Girls very seldom admit their lovers are to blame, but there are two ways, you know, Johanna, of telling a story."

"Yes; but, father, why should Mr. Grant seek to force him to the study of a profession he so much disliked?"

"My dear, one would have thought that if Mark Ingestrie really loved

you, and found that he might make you his wife, and acquire an honourable subsistence for you and himself--it seems a very wonderful thing to me that he did not do so. You see, my dear, he should have liked you well enough to do something else that he did not like."

"Yes, but father, you know it is hard, when disagreements once arise, for a young ardent spirit to give in entirely; and so from one word, poor Mark, in his disputes with his uncle, got to another, when perhaps one touch of kindness or conciliation from Mr. Grant would have made him quite pliant in his hands."

"Yes, that's the way," said Mr. Oakley; "there is no end of excuses: but go on, my dear, go on, and tell me exactly how this affair now stands."

"I will, father. It was this day two years ago then that we met, and he told me that he and his uncle had at last quarrelled irreconcilably, and that nothing could possibly now patch up the difference between them. We had a long talk."

"Ah! no doubt of that."

"And at length he told me that he must go and seek his fortune--that fortune which he hoped to share with me. He said that he had an opportunity of undertaking a voyage to India, and that if he were successful he should have sufficient to return with, and commence some pursuit in London more congenial to his thoughts and habits than the law."

"Ah, well! what next?"

"He told me that he loved me."

"And you believed him."

"Father, you would have believed him had you heard him speak. His tones were those of such deep sincerity that no actor who ever charmed an audience with an unreal existence could have reached them. There are times and seasons when we know that we are listening to the majestic voice of truth, and there are tones which sink at once into the heart, carrying with them a conviction of their sincerity, which neither time nor circumstance can alter; and such were the tones in which Mark Ingestrie spoke to me."

"And so you suppose, Johanna, that it is easy for a young man who has not patience or energy enough to be respectable at home, to go abroad and make his fortune. Is idleness so much in request in other countries, that it receives such a rich reward, my dear?"

"You judge him harshly, father; you do not know him."

"Heaven forbid that I should judge any one harshly! and I will freely admit that you may know more of his real character than I can, who of course have only seen its surface; but go on, my dear, and tell me all."

"We made an agreement, father, that on that day two years he was to come to me or send me some news of his whereabouts; if I heard nothing of him I was to conclude he was no more, and I cannot help so concluding now."

"But the day has not yet passed."

"I know it has not, and yet I rest upon but a slender hope, father. Do you believe that dreams ever really shadow forth coming events?"

"I cannot say, my child; I am not disposed to yield credence to any supposed fact because I have dreamt it, but I must confess to having heard some strange instances where these visions of the night have come strictly true."

"Heaven knows but this may be one of them! I had a dream last night. I thought that I was sitting upon the sea-shore, and that all before me was nothing but a fathomless waste of waters. I heard the roar and the dash of the waves distinctly, and each moment the wind grew more furious and fierce, and I saw in the distance a ship--it was battling with the waves, which at one moment lifted it mountains high, and at another plunged it far down into such an abyss, that not a vestige of it could be seen but the topmost spars of the tall mast. And still the storm increased each moment in its fury, and ever and anon there came a strange sullen sound across the waters, and I saw a flash of fire, and knew that those in the ill-fated vessel were thus endeavouring to attract attention and some friendly aid. Father, from the first to the last I knew that Mark Ingestrie was there--my heart told me so: I was certain he was there, and I was helpless--utterly helpless, utterly and entirely unable to lend the slightest aid. I could only gaze upon what was going forward as a silent and terrified spectator of the scene. And at last I heard a cry come over the deep--a strange, loud, wailing cry--which proclaimed to me the fate of the vessel. I saw its mass shiver for a moment in the blackened air, and then all was still for a few seconds, until there arose a strange, wild shriek, that I knew was the despairing cry of those who sank, never to rise again, in that vessel. Oh! that was a frightful sound--it was a sound to linger on the ears, and haunt the memory of sleep--it was a sound never to be forgotten when once heard, but such as might again and again be remembered with horror and affright."

"And all this was in your dream?"

"It was, father, it was."

"And you were helpless?"

"I was--utterly and entirely helpless."

"It was very sad."

"It was, as you shall hear. The ship went down, and that cry that I had heard was the last despairing one given by those who clung to the wreck with scarce a hope, and yet because it was their only refuge, for where else had they to look for the smallest ray of consolation? where else,

save in the surging waters, were they to turn for safety? Nowhere! all was lost! all was despair! I tried to scream--I tried to cry aloud to Heaven to have mercy upon those brave and gallant souls who had trusted their dearest possession--life itself--to the mercy of the deep; and while I so tried to render so inefficient succour, I saw a small speck in the sea, and my straining eyes perceived that it was a man floating and clinging to a piece of the wreck, and I knew it was Mark Ingestrie."

"But, my dear, surely you are not annoyed at a dream?"

"It saddened me. I stretched out my arms to save him--I heard him pronounce my name, and call upon me for help. 'Twas all in vain; he battled with the waves as long as human nature could battle with them. He could do no more, and I saw him disappear before my anxious eyes."

"Don't say you saw him, my dear, say you fancy you saw him."

"It was such a fancy as I shall not lose the remembrance of for many a day."

"Well, well, after all, my dear, it's only a dream; and it seems to me, without at all adverting to anything that should give you pain as regards Mark Ingestrie, that you made a very foolish bargain; for only consider how many difficulties might arise in the way of his keeping faith with you. You know I have your happiness so much at heart that, if Mark had been a worthy man and an industrious one, I should not have opposed myself to your union; but, believe me, my dear Johanna, that a young man with great facilities for spending money, and none whatever for earning any, is just about the worst husband you could choose, and such a man was Mark Ingestrie. But come, we will say nothing of this to your mother; let the secret, if we may call it such, rest with me; and if you can inform me in what capacity and in what vessel he left England, I will not carry my prejudice so far against him as to hesitate about making what inquiry I can concerning his fate."

"I know nothing more, father; we parted, and never met again."

"Well, well! dry your eyes, Johanna, and, as I go to Alderman Judd's, I'll think over the matter, which, after all, may not be so bad as you think. The lad is a good-enough looking lad, and has, I believe, a good ability, if he would put it to some useful purpose; but if he goes scampering about the world in an unsettled manner, you are well rid of him, and as for his being dead, you must not conclude that by any means for somehow or another, like a bad penny, these fellows always come back."

There was more consolation in the kindly tone of the spectacle-maker than in the words he used; but, upon the whole, Johanna was well enough pleased that she had communicated the secret to her father, for now, at all events, she had some one to whom she could mention the name of Mark Ingestrie, without the necessity of concealing the sentiment with which she did so; and when her father had gone, she felt that, by the mere relation of it to him, some of the terrors of her dream had vanished.

She sat for some time in a pleasing reverie, till she was interrupted by Sam, the shop-boy, who came into the parlour and said,--

"Please, Miss Johanna, suppose I was to go down to the docks and try and find out for you Mr. Mark Ingestrie. I say, suppose I was to do that. I heard it all, and if I do find him I'll soon settle him."

"What do you mean?"

"I means that I won't stand it; didn't I tell you, more than three weeks ago, as you was the object of my infections? Didn't I tell you that when aunt died, I should come in for the soap and candle business, and make you my missus?"

The only reply which Johanna gave to this was to rise and leave the room, for her heart was too full of grief and sad speculation to enable her to do now as she had often been in the habit of doing--viz., laugh at Sam's protestations of affection, so he was left to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy by himself.

"A thousand d---s!" said he, when he entered the shop: "I always suspected there was some other fellow, and now I know it I am ready to gnaw my head off that ever I consented to come here. Confound him! I hope he is at the bottom of the sea, and eat up by this time. Oh! I should like to smash everybody. If I had my way now I'd just walk into society at large, as they calls it, and let it know what one, two, three, slap in the eye, is--and down it would go."

Mr. Sam, in his rage, did upset a case of spectacles, which went down with a tremendous crash, and which, however good imitation of the manner in which society at large was to be knocked down, was not likely to be at all pleasing to Mr. Oakley.

"I have done it now," he said; "but never mind; I'll try the old dodge whenever I break anything; that is, I'll place it in old Oakley's way, and swear he did it. I never knew such an old goose; you may persuade him into anything; the idea, now, of his pulling down all the shutters this morning because I told him my aunt had the tooth-ache; that was a go, to be sure. But I'll be revenged of that fellow who has took away, I consider, Johanna from me; I'll let him know what a blighted heart is capable of. He won't live long enough to want a pair spectacles, I'll be bound, or else my name ain't Sam Bolt."

### CHAPTER III. A MAN IS LOST.

The earliest dawn of morning was glistening upon the masts, the cordage, and the sails of a fleet of vessels lying below Sheerness.

The crews were rousing themselves from their night's repose, and to make

their appearance on the decks of the vessels, from which the night-watch had just been relieved.

A man-of-war, which had been the convoy of the fleet of merchantmen through the channel, fired a gun as the first glimpse of the morning sun fell upon her tapering masts. Then from a battery in the neighbourhood came another booming report, and that was answered by another farther off, and then another, until the whole chain of batteries that girded the coast, for it was a time of war, had proclaimed the dawn of another day.

The effect was very fine, in the stillness of the early morn, of this succession of reports; and as they died away in the distance like mimic thunder, some order was given on board the man-of-war, and, in a moment, the masts and cordage seemed perfectly alive with human beings clinging to them in various directions. Then, as if by magic, or as if the ship had been a living thing itself, and had possessed wings, which at the mere instigation of a wish, could be spread far and wide, there fluttered out such sheets of canvas as was wonderful to see; and, as they caught the morning light, and the ship moved from the slight breeze that sprang up from the shore, she looked, indeed, as if she

"Walked the waters like a thing of life".

The various crews of the merchantmen stood upon the decks of their respective vessels, gazing after the ship-of-war, as she proceeded upon another mission similar to the one she had just performed in protecting the commerce of the country.

As she passed one vessel, which had been, in point of fact, actually rescued from the enemy, the crew, who had been saved from a foreign prison, cheered lustily.

There wanted but such an impulse as this, and then every merchant-vessel that the man-of-war passed took up the gladsome shout, and the crew of the huge vessel were not slow in their answer, for three deafening cheers--such as had frequently struck terror into the hearts of England's enemies--awakened many an echo from the shore.

It was a proud and a delightful sight--such a sight as none but an Englishman can thoroughly enjoy--to see that vessel so proudly stemming the waste of waters. We say none but an Englishman can enjoy it, because no other nation has ever attempted to achieve a great maritime existence without being most signally defeated, and leaving us still, as we shall ever be, masters of the seas.

These proceedings were amply sufficient to arouse the crews of all the vessels, and over the taffrail of one in particular, a large-sized merchantman, which had been trading in the Indian seas, two men were leaning. One of them was the captain of the vessel, and the other a passenger, who intended leaving that morning. They were engaged in earnest conversation, and the captain, as he shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked along the surface of the river, said, in reply to some observation from his companion,--

"I'll order my boat the moment Lieutenant Thornhill comes on board; I call him Lieutenant, although I have no right to do so, because he has held that rank in the king's service, but when quite a young man was cashiered for fighting a duel with his superior officer."

"The service has lost a good officer," said the other.

"It has, indeed, a braver man never stepped, nor a better officer; but you see they have certain rules in the service, and everything is sacrificed to maintain them. I can't think what keeps him; he went last night and said he would pull up to the Temple stairs, because he wanted to call upon somebody by the water-side, and after that he was going to the city to transact some business of his own, and that would have brought him nearer here, you see; and there are plenty of things coming down the river."

"He's coming," cried the other; "don't be impatient; you will see him in a few minutes."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because I see his dog--there, don't you see, swimming in the water, and coming towards the ship."

"I cannot imagine--I can see the dog, certainly; but I can't see Thornhill, nor is there any boat at hand. I know not what to make of it. Do you know my mind misgives me that something has happened amiss? The dog seem exhausted. Lend a hand there to Mr. Thornhill's dog, some of you. Why, it's a hat he has in his mouth."

The dog made towards the vessel; but without the assistance of the seamen--with the whole of whom he was an immense favourite--he certainly could not have boarded the vessel; and when he reached the deck, he sank down upon it in a state of complete exhaustion, with the hat still in his grasp.

As the animal lay, panting, upon the deck, the sailors looked at each other in amazement, and there was but one opinion among them all now, and that was that something very serious had unquestionably happened to Mr. Thornhill.

"I dread," said the captain, "an explanation of this occurrence. What on earth can it mean? That's Thornhill's hat, and here is Hector. Give the dog some meat and drink directly--he seems thoroughly exhausted."

The dog ate sparingly of some food that was put before him; and then, seizing the hat again in his mouth, he stood by the side of the ship and howled piteously; then he put down the hat for a moment, and, walking up to the captain, he pulled him by the skirt of the coat.

"You understand him," said the captain to the passenger; "something has happened to Thornhill, I'll be bound; and you see the object of the dog is to get me to follow him to see what it's about."

"Think you so? It is a warning, if it be such at all, that I should not be inclined to neglect; and if you will follow the dog, I will accompany you; there may be more in it than we think of, and we ought not to allow Mr. Thornhill to be in want of any assistance that we can render him, when we consider what great assistance he has been to us. Look how anxious the poor beast is."

The captain ordered a boat to be launched at once, and manned by four stout rowers. He then sprang into it, followed by the passenger, who was a Colonel Jeffery, of the Indian army, and the dog immediately followed them, testifying by his manner great pleasure at the expedition they were undertaking, and carrying the hat with him, which he evidently showed an immense disinclination to part with.

The captain had ordered the boat to proceed up the river towards the Temple stairs, where Hector's master had expressed his intention of proceeding, and, when the faithful animal saw the direction in which they were going, he lay down in the bottom of the boat perfectly satisfied, and gave himself up to that repose, of which he was evidently so much in need.

It cannot be said that Colonel Jeffery suspected that anything of a very serious nature had happened; indeed, their principal anticipation, when they came to talk it over, consisted in the probability that Thornhill had, with an impetuosity of character they knew very well he possessed, interfered to redress what he considered some street grievance, and had got himself into the custody of the civil power in consequence.

"Of course," said the captain, "Master Hector would view that as a very serious affair, and finding himself denied access to his master, you see he has come off to us, which was certainly the most prudent thing he could do, and I should not be at all surprised if he takes us to the door of some watch-house, where we shall find our friend snug enough."

The tide was running up; and that Thornhill had not saved the turn of it, by dropping down earlier to the vessel, was one of the things that surprised the captain. However, they got up quickly, and as at that hour there was not much on the river to impede their progress, and as at that time the Thames was not a thoroughfare for little stinking steam-boats, they soon reached the ancient Temple stairs.

The dog, who had until then seemed to be asleep, suddenly sprung up, and seizing the hat again in his mouth, rushed again on shore, and was closely followed by the captain and colonel.

He led them through the temple with great rapidity, pursuing with admirable tact the precise path that his master had taken towards the entrance to the Temple, in Fleet-street, opposite Chancery-lane. Darting across the road then, he stopped with a low growl at the shop of Sweeney Todd--a proceeding which very much surprised those who followed him, and caused them to pause to hold a consultation ere they proceeded further. While this was proceeding, Todd suddenly opened the door, and aimed a blow at the dog with an iron bar, but the latter dexterously avoided it,

and, but that the door was suddenly closed again, he would have made Sweeney Todd regret such an interference.

"We must inquire into this," said the captain; "there seems to be mutual ill-will between that man and the dog."

They both tried to enter the barber's shop, but it was fast on the inside; and, after repeated knockings, Todd called from within, saying,--

"I won't open the door while that dog is there. He is mad, or has a spite against me--I don't know nor care which--it's a fact, that's all I am aware of."

"I will undertake," said the captain, "that the dog shall do you no harm; but open the door, for in we must come, and will."

"I will take your promise," said Sweeney Todd; "but mind you keep it, or I shall protect myself, and take the creature's life; so if you value it, you had better hold it fast."

The captain pacified Hector as well as he could, and likewise tied one end of a silk handkerchief round his neck, and held the other firmly in his grasp, after which Todd, who seemed to have some means from within of seeing what was going on, opened the door, and admitted his visitors.

"Well, gentlemen, shaved, or cut, or dressed, I am at your service; which shall I begin with?"

[Illustration: The captain, the colonel, and Sweeney.]

The dog never took his eyes off Todd, but kept up a low growl from the first moment of his entrance.

"It's rather a remarkable circumstance," said the captain, "but this is a very sagacious dog, you see, and he belongs to a friend of ours, who has most unaccountably disappeared."

"Has he really?" said Todd. "Tobias! Tobias!"

"Yes, sir."

"Run to Mr. Phillips's, in Cateaton-street, and get me six-pennyworth of figs, and don't say that I don't give you the money this time when you go a message. I think I did before, but you swallowed it; and when you come back, just please to remember the insight into business I gave you yesterday."

"Yes," said the boy, with a shudder, for he had a great horror of Sweeney Todd, as well he might, after the severe discipline he had received at his hands, and away he went.

"Well, gentlemen," said Todd, "what is it you require of me?"

"We want to know if any one having the appearance of an officer in the navy came to your house?"

"Yes--a rather good-looking man, weather-beaten, with a bright blue eye, and rather fair hair."

"Yes, yes! the same."

"Oh! to be sure, he came here, and I shaved him and polished him off."

"What do you mean by polishing him off?"

"Brushing him up a bit, and making him tidy; he said he had got somewhere to go in the city, and asked me the address of a Mr. Oakley, a spectacle-maker. I gave it him, and then he went away; but as I was standing at my door about five minutes afterwards, it seemed to me, as well as I could see the distance, that he got into some row near the market."

"Did this dog come with him?"

"A dog came with him, but whether it was that dog or not I don't know."

"And that's all you know of him?"

"You never spoke a truer word in your life," said Sweeney Todd, as he diligently stropped a razor upon his great horny hand.

This seemed something like a complete fix; and the captain looked at Colonel Jeffery, and the colonel at the captain, for some moments, in complete silence. At length the latter said,--

"It's a very extraordinary thing that the dog should come here if he missed his master somewhere else. I never heard of such a thing."

"Nor I either," said Ford. "It is extraordinary; so extraordinary that if I had not seen it, I would not have believed. I dare say you will find him in the next watch-house."

The dog had watched the countenance of all parties during this brief dialogue, and twice or thrice he had interrupted it by a strange howling cry.

"I'll tell you what it is," said the barber; "if that beast stays here, I'll be the death of him. I hate dogs--detest them; and I tell you, as I told you before, if you value him at all, keep him away from me."

"You say you directed the person you describe to us where to find a spectacle maker named Oakley. We happen to know that he was going in search of such a person, and as he had property of value about him, we will go there and ascertain if he reached his destination."

"It is in Fore-street--a little shop with two windows; you cannot miss it."

The dog when he saw they were about to leave, grew furious; and it was with the greatest difficulty they succeeded, by main force, in getting him out of the shop, and dragging him some short distance with them, but then he contrived to get free of the handkerchief that held him, and darting back, he sat down at Sweeney Todd's door, howling most piteously.

They had no resource but to leave him, intending fully to call as they came back from Mr. Oakley's; and, as they looked behind them, they saw that Hector was collecting a crowd round the barber's door, and it was a singular thing to see a number of persons surrounding the dog, while he to all appearance, appeared to be making efforts to explain something to the assemblage. They walked on until they reached the spectacle-maker's, there they paused; for they all of a sudden recollected that the mission that Mr. Thornhill had to execute there was of a very delicate nature, and one by no means to be lightly executed, or even so much as mentioned, probably, in the hearing of Mr. Oakley himself.

"We must not be so hasty," said the colonel.

"But what am I to do? I sail to-night; at least I have to go round to Liverpool with my vessel."

"Do not then call at Mr. Oakley's at all at present; but leave me to ascertain the fact quietly and secretly."

"My anxiety for Thornhill will scarcely permit me to do so; but I suppose I must, and if you write me a letter to the Royal Oak Hotel, at Liverpool, it will be sure to reach me, that is to say, unless you find Mr. Thornhill himself, in which case I need not by any means give you so much trouble."

"You may depend upon me. My friendship for Mr. Thornhill, and gratitude, as you know, for the great service he has rendered to us all, will induce me to do my utmost to discover him; and, but that I know he set his heart upon performing the message he had to deliver accurately and well, I should recommend that we at once go into this house of Mr. Oakley's, only that the fear of compromising the young lady--who is in the case, and who will have quite enough to bear, poor thing, of her own grief--restrains me."

After some more conversation of a similar nature, they decided that this should be the plan adopted. They made an unavailing call at the watch-house of the district, being informed there that no such person, nor any one answering the description of Mr. Thornhill had been engaged in any disturbance, or apprehended by any of the constables; and this only involved the thing in greater mystery than ever, so they went back to try and recover the dog, but that was a matter easier to be desired and determined upon than executed, for threats and persuasions were alike ineffectual.

Hector would not stir an inch from the barber's door. There he sat with the hat by his side, a most melancholy and strange-looking spectacle,

and a most efficient guard was he for that hat, and it was evident, that while he chose to exhibit the formidable row of teeth he did occasionally, when anybody showed a disposition to touch it, it would remain sacred. Some people, too, had thrown a few copper coins into the hat, so that Hector, if his mind had been that way inclined, was making a very good thing of it; but who shall describe the anger of Sweeney Todd, when he found that he was so likely to be so beleaguered?

He doubted, if, upon the arrival of the first customer to his shop, the dog might dart in and take him by storm; but that apprehension went off at last, when a young gallant came from the Temple to have his hair dressed, and the dog allowed him to pass in and out unmolested, without making any attempt to follow him. This was something, at all events; but whether or not it insured Sweeney Todd's personal safety, when he himself should come out, was quite another matter.

It was an experiment, however, which he must try. It was quite out of the question that he should remain a prisoner much longer in his own place, so, after a time, he thought he might try the experiment, and that it would be best done when there were plenty of people there, because if the dog assaulted him, he would have an excuse for any amount of violence he might think proper to use upon the occasion.

It took some time, however, to screw his courage to the sticking-place; but at length, muttering deep curses between his clenched teeth, he made his way to the door, and carried in his hand a long knife, which he thought a more efficient weapon against the dog's teeth than the iron bludgeon he had formerly used.

"I hope he will attack me," said Todd, to himself as he thought; but Tobias, who had come back from the place where they sold the preserved figs, heard him, and after devoutly in his own mind wishing that the dog would actually devour Sweeney, said aloud--

"Oh dear, sir; you don't wish that, I'm sure!"

"Who told you what I wished, or what I did not? Remember, Tobias, and keep your own counsel, or it will be the worse for you, and your mother too--remember that."

The boy shrunk back. How had Sweeney Todd terrified the boy about his mother! He must have done so, or Tobias would never have shrunk as he did.

Then that rascally barber, who we begin to suspect of more crimes than fall ordinarily to the share of man, went cautiously out of his shop door: we cannot pretend to account for why it was so, but, as faithful recorders of facts, we have to state that Hector did not fly at him, but with a melancholy and subdued expression of countenance he looked up in the face of Sweeney Todd; then he whined piteously, as if he would have said, "Give me my master, and I will forgive you all that you have done; give me back my beloved master, and you shall see that I am neither revengeful nor ferocious."

This kind of expression was as legibly written in the poor creature's countenance as if he had actually been endowed with speech, and uttered the words themselves.

This was what Sweeney Todd certainly did not expect, and, to tell the truth, it staggered and astonished him a little. He would have been glad of an excuse to commit some act of violence, but he had now none, and as he looked in the faces of the people who were around, he felt quite convinced that it would not be the most prudent thing in the world to interfere with the dog in any way that savoured of violence.

"Where's the dog's master?" said one.

"Ah, where indeed?" said Todd; "I should not wonder if he had come to some foul end!"

"But I say, old soap-suds," cried a boy; "the dog says you did it."

There was a general laugh, but the barber was by no means disconcerted, and he shortly replied.

"Does he? he is wrong then."

Sweeney Todd had no desire to enter into anything like a controversy with the people, so he turned again and entered his own shop, in a distant corner of which he sat down, and folding his great gaunt-looking arms over his chest, he gave himself up to thought, and if we may judge from the expression of his countenance, those thoughts were of a pleasant anticipatory character, for now and then he gave such a grim sort of smile as might well have sat upon the features of some ogre.

And now we will turn to another scene, of a widely different character.

#### CHAPTER IV. THE PIE-SHOP, BELL-YARD.

Hark! twelve o'clock at mid-day is cheerily proclaimed by St. Dunstan's church, and scarcely have the sounds done echoing throughout the neighbourhood, and scarce has the clock of Lincoln's-inn done chiming in with its announcement of the same hour, when Bell-yard, Temple-bar, becomes a scene of commotion.

What a scampering of feet is there, what a laughing and talking, what a jostling to be first; and what an immense number of manoeuvres are resorted to by some of the throng to distance others!

And mostly from Lincoln's-inn do these persons, young and old, but most certainly a majority of the former, come bustling and striving, although from the neighbouring legal establishments likewise there came not a few; the Temple contributes its numbers, and from the more distant

Gray's-inn there came a goodly lot.

Now Bell-yard is almost choked up, and a stranger would wonder what could be the matter, and most probably stand in some doorway until the commotion was over.

Is it a fire? is it a fight? or anything else sufficiently alarming and extraordinary to excite the junior members of the legal profession to such a species of madness? No, it is none of these, nor is there a fat cause to be run for, which, in the hands of some clever practitioner, might become quite a vested interest. No, the enjoyment is purely one of a physical character, and all the pacing and racing--all this turmoil and trouble--all this pushing, jostling, laughing, and shouting, is to see who will get first to Lovett's pie-shop.

Yes, on the left-hand side of Bell-yard, going down from Carey-street, was at the time we write of, one of the most celebrated shops for the sale of veal and pork pies that ever London produced. High and low, rich and poor, resorted to it; its fame had spread far and wide; it was because the first batch of these pies came up at twelve o'clock that there was such a rush of the legal profession to obtain them.

Their fame had spread even to great distances, and many persons carried them to the suburbs of the city as quite a treat to friends and relations there residing. And well did they deserve their reputation, those delicious pies! there was about them a flavour never surpassed, and rarely equalled; the paste was of the most delicate construction, and impregnated with the aroma of a delicious gravy that defies description. Then the small portions of meat which they contained were so tender, and the fat and the lean so artistically mixed up, that to eat one of Lovett's pies was such a provocative to eat another, that many persons who came to lunch stayed to dine, wasting more than an hour, perhaps, of precious time, and endangering--who knows to the contrary?--the success of some law-suit thereby.

The counter in Lovett's shop was in the shape of a horseshoe, and it was the custom of the young bloods from the Temple and Lincoln's-inn to set in a row upon its edge while they partook of the delicious pies, and chatted gaily about one concern and another.

Many an appointment for the evening was made at Lovett's pie shop, and many a piece of gossiping scandal was there first circulated. The din of tongues was prodigious. The ringing laugh of the boy who looked upon the quarter of an hour he spent at Lovett's as the brightest of the whole twenty-four, mingled gaily with the more boisterous mirth of his seniors; and, oh! with what rapidity the pies disappeared.

They were brought up on large trays, each of which contained about a hundred, and from these trays they were so speedily transferred to the mouths of Mrs. Lovett's customers that it looked quite like a work of magic.

And now we have let out some portion of the secret. There was a Mistress Lovett; but possibly our reader guessed as much, for what but a female

hand, and that female buxom, young, and good-looking, could have ventured upon the production of those pies. Yes, Mrs. Lovett was all that; and every enamoured young scion of the law, as he devoured his pie, pleased himself with the idea that the charming Mrs. Lovett had made that pie especially for him, and that fate or predestination had placed it in his hands.

And it was astonishing to see with what impartiality and with what tact the fair pastry-cook bestowed her smiles upon her admirers, so that none could say he was neglected, while it was extremely difficult for any one to say he was preferred.

This was pleasant, but at the same time it was provoking to all except Mrs. Lovett, in whose favour it got up a kind of excitement that paid extraordinarily well, because some of the young fellows thought, that he who consumed the most pies, would be in the most likely way to receive the greatest number of smiles from the lady.

Acting upon this supposition, some of her more enthusiastic admirers went on consuming the pies until they were almost ready to burst. But there were others, again, of a more philosophic turn of mind, who went for the pies only, and did not care one jot for Mrs. Lovett.

These declared that her smile was cold and uncomfortable--that it was upon her lips, but had no place in her heart--that it was the set smile of a ballet-dancer, which is about one of the most unmirthful things in existence.

Then there were some who went even beyond this, and, while they admitted the excellence of the pies, and went every day to partake of them, swore that Mrs. Lovett had quite a sinister aspect, and that they could see what a merely superficial affair her blandishments were, and that there was

"A lurking devil in her eye,"

that, if once roused, would be capable of achieving some serious things, and might not be so easily quelled again.

By five minutes past twelve Mrs. Lovett's counter was full, and the savoury steam of the hot pies went out in fragrant clouds into Bell-yard, being sniffed up by many a poor wretch passing by who lacked the means of making one in the throng that were devouring the dainty morsels within.

"Why, Tobias Ragg," said a young man, with his mouth full of pie, "where have you been since you left Mr. Snow's in Paper-buildings? I have not seen you for some days."

"No," said Tobias, "I have gone into another line; instead of being a lawyer, and helping to shave the clients, I am going to shave the lawyers now. A twopenny pork, if you please, Mrs. Lovett. Ah! who would be an emperor, if he couldn't get pies like these?--eh, Master Cliff?"

"Well, they are good; of course we know that, Tobias; but do you mean to say you are going to be a barber?"

"Yes, I am with Sweeney Todd, the barber of Fleet-street, close to St. Dunstan's."

"The deuce you are! well, I am going to a party to-night, and I'll drop in and get dressed and shaved, and patronise your master."

Tobias put his mouth close to the ear of the young lawyer, and in a fearful sort of whisper said the one word--"Don't."

"Don't! what for?"

Tobias made no answer; and, throwing down his twopence, scampered out of the shop as fast as he could. He had only sent a message by Sweeney Todd in the neighbourhood; but, as he heard the clock strike twelve, and two penny pieces were lying at the bottom of his pocket, it was not in human nature to resist running into Lovett's and converting them into a pork pie.

"What an odd thing!" thought the young lawyer. "I'll just drop in at Sweeney Todd's now on purpose, and ask Tobias what he means. I quite forgot, too, while he was here, to ask him what all that riot was about a dog at Todd's door."

"A veal!" said a young man, rushing in; "a twopenny veal, Mrs. Lovett." When he got it he consumed it with voracity, and then noticing an acquaintance in the shop, he whispered to him,--

"I can't stand it any more. I have cut the spectacle-maker--Johanna is faithless, and I know not what to do."

"Have another pie."

"But what's a pie to Johanna Oakley? You know, Dilki, that I only went there to be near the charmer. Damn the shutters and curse the spectacles! She loves another, and I'm a desperate individual! I should like to do some horrible and desperate act. Oh, Johanna, Johanna! you have driven me to the verge of what do you call it--I'll take another veal, if you please, Mrs. Lovett."

"Well, I was wondering how you got on," said his friend Dilki, "and thinking of calling upon you."

"Oh! it was all right--it was all right at first; she smiled upon me."

"You are quite sure she didn't laugh at you?"

"Sir! Mr. Dilki!"

"I say, are you sure that instead of smiling upon you she was not laughing at you!"

"Am I sure? Do you wish to insult me, Mr. Dilki? I look upon you as a puppy, sir--a horrid puppy."

"Very good; now I am convinced that the girl has been having a bit of fun at your expense.--Are you not aware, Sam, that your nose turns up so much that it's enough to pitch you head over heels. How do you suppose that any girl under forty-five would waste a word upon you? Mind, I don't say this to offend you in any way, but just quietly, by way of asking a question."

Sam looked daggers, and probably he might have attempted some desperate act in the pie-shop, if at the moment he had not caught the eye of Mrs. Lovett, and he saw by the expression of that lady's face, that anything in the shape of a riot would be speedily suppressed, so he darted out of the place at once to carry his sorrows and his bitterness elsewhere.

It was only between twelve and one o'clock that such a tremendous rush and influx of visitors came to the pie-shop, for although there was a good custom the whole day, and the concern was a money-making one from morning till night, it was at that hour principally that the great consumption of pies took place.

Tobias knew from experience that Sweeney Todd was a skilful calculator of the time it ought to take to go to different places, and accordingly since he had occupied some portion of that most valuable of all commodities at Mrs. Lovett's, he arrived quite breathless at his master's shop.

There sat the mysterious dog with the hat, and Tobias lingered for a moment to speak to the animal. Dogs are great physiognomists; and as the creature looked into Tobias's face he seemed to draw a favourable conclusion regarding him, for he submitted to a caress.

"Poor fellow!" said Tobias. "I wish I knew what had become of your master, but it made me shake like a leaf to wake up last night and ask myself the question. You shan't starve, though, if I can help it. I haven't much for myself, but you shall have some of it."

As he spoke, Tobias took from his pocket some not very tempting cold meat, which was intended for his own dinner, and which he had wrapped up in not the cleanest of cloths. He gave a piece to the dog, who took it with a dejected air, and then crouched down at Sweeney Todd's door again.

Just then, as Tobias was about to enter the shop, he thought he heard from within, a strange shrieking sort of sound. On the impulse of the moment he recoiled a step or two, and then, from some other impulse, he dashed forward at once, and entered the shop.

The first object that presented itself to his attention, lying upon a side table, was a hat with a handsome gold-headed walking cane lying across it.

The arm-chair in which customers usually sat to be shaved was vacant,

and Sweeney Todd's face was just projected into the shop from the back parlour, and wearing a most singular and hideous expression.

"Well, Tobias," he said, as he advanced, rubbing his great hands together, "well, Tobias! so you could not resist the pie-shop?"

"How does he know?" thought Tobias. "Yes, sir, I have been to the pie-shop, but I didn't stay a minute."

"Hark ye, Tobias! the only thing I can excuse in the way of delay upon an errand is, for you to get one of Mrs. Lovett's pies; that I can look over, so think no more about it. Are they not delicious, Tobias?"

"Yes, sir, they are; but some gentleman seems to have left his hat and stick."

"Yes," said Sweeney Todd, "he has;" and lifting the stick he struck Tobias a blow with it that felled him to the ground. "Lesson the second to Tobias Ragg, which teaches him to make no remarks about what does not concern him. You may think what you like, Tobias Ragg, but you shall say only what I like."

"I won't endure it," cried the boy; "I won't be knocked about in this way, I tell you, Sweeney Todd, I won't."

"You won't! have you forgotten your mother?"

"You say you have a power over my mother; but I don't know what it is, and I cannot and will not believe it; I'll leave you, and, come of it what may, I'll go to sea or anywhere rather than stay in such a place as this."

"Oh, you will, will you? Then, Tobias, you and I must come to some explanation. I'll tell you what power I have over your mother, and then perhaps you will be satisfied. Last winter, when the frost had continued eighteen weeks, and you and your mother were starving, she was employed to clean out the chambers of a Mr. King, in the Temple, a cold-hearted, severe man, who never forgave anything in all his life, and never will."

"I remember," said Tobias; "we were starving and owed a whole guinea for rent; but mother borrowed it and paid it, and after that got a situation where she now is."

"Ah, you think so. The rent was paid; but, Tobias, my boy, a word in your ear--she took a silver candlestick from Mr. King's chambers to pay it. I know it. I can prove it. Think of that, Tobias, and be discreet."

"Have mercy upon us," said the boy; "they would take her life!"

"Her life!" screamed Sweeney Todd; "ay, to be sure they would; they would hang her--hang her, I say; and now mind, if you force me by any conduct of your own, to mention this thing, you are your mother's executioner. I had better go and be deputy hangman at once, and turn her off."

"Horrible, horrible!"

"Oh, you don't like that? Indeed, that don't suit you, Master Tobias? Be discreet then, and you have nothing to fear. Do not force me to show a power which will be as complete as it is terrific."

"I will say nothing--I will think nothing."

"'Tis well; now go and put that hat and stick in yonder cupboard. I shall be absent for a short time; and if any one comes, tell them I am called out, and shall not return for an hour or perhaps longer, and mind you take good care of the shop."

Sweeney Todd took off his apron, and put on an immense coat with huge lapels, and then, clapping a three-cornered hat on his head, and casting a strange withering kind of look at Tobias, he sallied forth into the street.

## CHAPTER V THE MEETING IN THE TEMPLE.

Alas! poor Johanna Oakley--thy day has passed away and brought with it no tidings of him you love; and oh! what a weary day, full of fearful doubts and anxieties, has it been!

Tortured by doubts, hopes, and fears, that day was one of the most wretched that poor Johanna had ever passed. Not even two years before, when she had parted with her lover, had she felt such an exquisite pang of anguish as now filled her heart, when she saw the day gliding away and the evening creeping on apace, without word or token from Mark Ingestrie.

She did not herself know, until all the agony of disappointment had come across her, how much she had counted upon hearing something from him on that occasion; and when the evening deepened into night, and hope grew so slender that she could no longer rely upon it for the least support, she was compelled to proceed to her own chamber, and, feigning indisposition to avoid her mother's questions--for Mrs. Oakley was at home, and making herself and everybody else as uncomfortable as possible--she flung herself on her humble couch and gave way to a perfect passion of tears.

"Oh, Mark, Mark!" she said, "why do you thus desert me, when I have relied so abundantly upon your true affection? Oh, why have you not sent me some token of your existence, and of your continued love? the merest slightest word would have been sufficient, and I should have been happy."

She wept then such bitter tears as only such a heart as her's can know,

when it feels the deep and bitter anguish of desertion, and when the rock, upon which it supposed it had built its fondest hopes, resolves itself to a mere quicksand, in which becomes engulfed all of good that this world can afford to the just and the beautiful.

Oh, it is heartrending to think that such a one as she, Johanna Oakley, a being so full of all those holy and gentle emotions which should constitute the truest felicity, should thus feel that life to her had lost its greatest charms, and that nothing but despair remained.

"I will wait until midnight," she said; "and even then it will be a mockery to seek repose, and to-morrow I must myself make some exertion to discover some tidings of him."

Then she began to ask herself what that exertion could be, and in what manner a young and inexperienced girl, such as she was, could hope to succeed in her inquiries. And the midnight hour came at last, telling her that, giving the utmost latitude to the word day, it had gone at last, and she was left despairing.

She lay the whole of that night sobbing, and only at times dropping into an unquiet slumber, during which painful images were presented to her, all, however, having the same tendency, and pointing towards the presumed fact that Mark Ingestrie was no more.

But the weariest night to the weariest waker will pass away, and at length the soft and beautiful dawn stole into the chamber of Johanna Oakley, chasing away some of the more horrible visions of the night, but having little effect in subduing the sadness that had taken possession of her.

She felt that it would be better for her to make her appearance below, than to hazard the remarks and conjectures that her not doing so would give rise to, so all unfitted as she was to engage in the most ordinary intercourse, she crept down to the breakfast-parlour, looking more like the ghost of her former self than the bright and beautiful being we have represented her to the reader.

Her father understood what it was that robbed her cheeks of their bloom; and although he saw it with much distress, yet he fortified himself with what he considered were some substantial reasons for future hopefulness.

It had become part of his philosophy--it generally is a part of the philosophy of the old--to consider that those sensations of the mind that arise from disappointed affection are of the most evanescent character; and that, although for a time they exhibit themselves with violence, they, like grief for the dead, soon pass away, scarcely leaving a trace behind of their former existence.

And perhaps he was right as regards the greater number of those passions; but he was certainly wrong when he applied that sort of worldly-wise knowledge to his daughter Johanna. She was one of those rare beings whose hearts are not won by every gaudy flutterer who may buz the accents of admiration in their ears. No; she was qualified,

eminently qualified, to love once, but only once; and, like the passion-flower, that blooms into abundant beauty once, and never afterwards puts forth a blossom, she allowed her heart to expand to the soft influence of affection, which, when crushed by adversity, was gone for ever.

"Really, Johanna," said Mrs. Oakley, in the true conventicle twang, "you look so pale and ill that I must positively speak to Mr. Lupin about you."

"Mr. Lupin, my dear," said the spectacle-maker, "may be all very well in his way, as a parson; but I don't see what he can have to do with Johanna looking pale."

"A pious man, Mr. Oakley, has to do with everything and everybody."

"Then he must be the most intolerable bore in existence; and I don't wonder at his being kicked out of some people's houses, as I have heard Mr. Lupin has been."

"And if he has, Mr. Oakley, I can tell you he glories in it. Mr. Lupin likes to suffer for the faith; and if he were to be made a martyr of to-morrow, I am quite certain it would give him a deal of pleasure."

"My dear, I am quite sure it would not give him half the pleasure it would me."

"I understand your insinuation, Mr. Oakley: you would like to have him murdered on account of his holiness; but, though you can say these kind of things at your own breakfast-table, you won't say as much to him when he comes to tea this afternoon."

"To tea, Mrs. Oakley! haven't I told you over and over again, that I will not have that man in my house?"

"And haven't I told you, Mr. Oakley, twice that number of times that he shall come to tea? and I have asked him now, and it can't be altered."

"But, Mrs. Oakley--"

"It's of no use, Mr. Oakley, your talking. Mr. Lupin is coming to tea, and come he shall; and if you don't like it, you can go out. There now, I am sure you can't complain, now you have actually the liberty of going out; but you are like the dog in the manger, Mr. Oakley, I know that well enough, and nothing will please you."

"A fine liberty, indeed, the liberty of going out of my own house to let somebody else into it that I don't like!"

"Johanna, my dear," said Mrs. Oakley, "I think my old complaint is coming on, of the beating of the heart, and the hysterics. I know what produces it--it's your father's brutality; and, just because Dr. Fungus said over and over again that I was to be perfectly quiet, your father seizes upon the opportunity like a wild beast, or a raving maniac, to

try and make me ill."

Mr. Oakley jumped up, stamped his feet upon the floor and uttering something about the probability of his becoming a maniac in a very short time, rushed into his shop, and set to polishing the spectacles as if he were doing it for a wager.

This little affair between her father and mother, certainly had had the effect, for a time, of diverting attention from Johanna, and she was able to assume a cheerfulness she did not feel; but she had something of her father's spirit in her as regarded Mr. Lupin, and most decidedly objected to sitting down to any meal whatever with that individual, so that Mrs. Oakley was left in a minority of one upon the occasion, which perhaps, as she fully expected it, was no great matter after all.

Johanna went up stairs to her own room, which commanded a view of the street. It was an old-fashioned house, with a balcony in front, and as she looked listlessly out into Fore-street, which was far then from being the thoroughfare it is now, she saw standing in a doorway on the opposite side of the way a stranger, who was looking intently at the house, and who, when he caught her eye, walked instantly across to it, and cast something into the balcony of the first floor. Then he touched his cap, and walked rapidly from the street.

The thought immediately occurred to Johanna that this might possibly be some messenger from him concerning whose existence and welfare she was so deeply anxious. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that with the name of Mark Ingestrie upon her lips she should rush down to the balcony in intense anxiety to hear, and see if such was really the case.

When she reached the balcony she found lying in it a scrap of paper, in which a stone was wrapped up, in order to give it weight, so that it might be cast with a certainty into the balcony. With trembling eagerness she opened the paper, and read upon it the following words:--

"For news of Mark Ingestrie, come to the Temple-gardens one hour before sunset, and do not fear addressing a man who will be holding a white rose in his hand."

"He lives! he lives!" she cried. "He lives, and joy again becomes the inhabitant of my bosom! Oh, it is daylight now and sunshine compared to the black midnight of despair. Mark Ingestrie lives, and I shall be happy yet."

She placed the little scrap of paper carefully in her bosom, and then, with clasped hands and a delighted expression of countenance, she repeated the brief and expressive words it contained, adding,--

"Yes, yes, I will be there; the white rose is an emblem of his purity and affection, his spotless love, and that is why his messenger carries it. I will be there. One hour ay, two hours before sunset, I will be there. Joy, joy! he lives, he lives! Mark Ingestrie lives! Perchance, too, successful in his object, he returns to tell me that he can make me his, and that no obstacle can now interfere to frustrate our union.

Time, time, float onwards on your fleetest pinions!"

She went to her own apartment, but it was not, as she had last gone to it, to weep; on the contrary, it was to smile at her former fears, and to admit the philosophy of the assertion that we suffer much more from a dread of those things that never happen than we do for actual calamities which occur in their full force to us.

"Oh, that this messenger," she said, "had come but yesterday! What hours of anguish I should have been spared! But I will not complain; it shall not be said that I repine at present joy because it did not come before. I will be happy when I can; and, in the consciousness that I shall soon hear blissful tidings of Mark Ingestrie, I will banish every fear."

The impatience which she now felt brought its pains and its penalties with it, and yet it was quite a different description of feeling to any she had formerly endured, and certainly far more desirable than the absolute anguish that had taken possession of her upon hearing nothing of Mark Ingestrie.

It was strange, very strange, that the thought never crossed her that the tidings she had to hear in the Temple Gardens from the stranger might be evil ones, but certainly such a thought did not occur to her, and she looked forward with joy and satisfaction to a meeting which she certainly had no evidence to know, might not be of the most disastrous character.

She asked herself over and over again if she should tell her father what had occurred, but as often as she thought of doing so she shrank from carrying out the mental suggestion, and all the natural disposition again to keep to herself the secret of her happiness returned to her in full force.

But yet she was not so unjust as not to feel that it was treating her father but slightly to throw all her sorrows into his lap, as it were, and then to keep from him everything of joy appertaining to the same circumstances.

This was a thing that she was not likely to continue doing, and so she made up her mind to relieve her conscience from the pang it would otherwise have had, by determining to tell him, after the interview in the Temple Gardens, what was its result; but she could not make up her mind to do so beforehand; it was so pleasant and so delicious to keep the secret all to herself, and to feel that she alone knew that her lover had so closely kept faith with her as to be only one day behind his time in sending to her, and that day, perhaps, far from being his fault.

And so she reasoned to herself and tried to wile away the anxious hours, sometimes succeeding in forgetting how long it was still to sunset, and at others feeling as if each minute was perversely swelling itself out into ten times its usual proportion of time in order to become wearisome to her.

She had said that she would be at the Temple Gardens two hours before sunset instead of one, and she kept her word, for, looking happier than she had done for weeks, she tripped down the stairs of her father's house, and was about to leave it by the private staircase, when a strange gaunt-looking figure attracted her attention.

This was no other than the Rev. Mr. Lupin: he was a long strange-looking man, and upon this occasion he came upon what he called horseback, that is to say, he was mounted upon a very small pony, which seemed quite unequal to support his weight, and was so short that, if the reverend gentleman had not poked his legs out at an angle, they must inevitably have touched the ground.

"Praise the Lord!" he said: "I have intercepted the evil one. Maiden, I have come here at thy mother's bidding, and thou shalt remain and partake of the mixture called tea."

Johanna scarcely condescended to glance at him, but drawing her mantle close around her, which he actually had the impertinence to endeavour to lay hold of, she walked on, so that the reverend gentleman was left to make the best he could of the matter.

"Stop," he cried, "stop! I can well perceive that the devil has a strong hold of you: I can well perceive--the lord have mercy upon me! this animal hath some design against me as sure as fate."

This last ejaculation arose from the fact that the pony had flung up his heels behind in a most mysterious manner.

"I am afraid, sir," said a lad who was no more than our old acquaintance, Sam--"I am afraid, sir, that there is something the matter with the pony."

Up went the pony's heels again in the same unaccountable manner.

"God bless me!" said the reverend gentleman; "he never did such a thing before. I--there he goes again--murder! Young man, I pray you to help me to get down; I think I know you; you are the nephew of the goodly Mrs. Pump--truly this animal wishes to be the death of me."

At this moment the pony gave such a vigorous kick up behind, that Mr. Lupin was fairly pitched upon his head, and made a complete summerset, alighting with his heels in the spectacle-maker's passage; and it unfortunately happened that Mrs. Oakley at that moment, hearing the altercation, came rushing out, and the first thing she did was to fall sprawling over Mr. Lupin's feet.

Sam now felt it time to go; and as we dislike useless mysteries, we may as well explain that these extraordinary circumstances arose from the fact that Sam had brought from the haberdasher's opposite a halfpenny-worth of pins, and had amused himself by making a pincushion of the hind quarters of the Reverend Mr. Lupin's pony, which, not being accustomed to that sort of thing, had kicked out vigorously in opposition to the same, and produced the results we have recorded.

Johanna Oakley was some distance upon her road before the reverend gentleman was pitched into her father's house in the manner we have described, so that she knew nothing of it, nor would she have cared if she had, for her mind was wholly bent upon the expedition she was proceeding on.

As she walked upon that side of the way of Fleet-street where Sweeney Todd's house and shop were situated, a feeling of curiosity prompted her to stop for a moment and look at the melancholy-looking dog that stood watching a hat at his door.

The appearance of grief upon the creature's face could not be mistaken, and, as she gazed, she saw the shop-door gently opened and a piece of meat thrown out.

"These are kind people," she said, "be they whom they may;" but when she saw the dog turn away with loathing, and herself observed that there was a white powder upon it, the idea that it was poisoned, and only intended for the poor creature's destruction, came instantly across her mind.

And when she saw the horrible-looking face of Sweeney Todd glaring at her from the partially-opened door, she could not doubt any further the fact, for that face was quite enough to give a warrant for any amount of villany whatever.

She passed on with a shudder, little suspecting, however, that that dog had anything to do with her fate, or the circumstances which made up the sum of her destiny.

It wanted a full hour to the appointed time of meeting when she reached the Temple-gardens, and partly blaming herself that she was so soon, while at the same time she would not for worlds have been away, she sat down on one of the garden-seats to think over the past, and to recall to her memory with all the vivid freshness of young Love's devotion, the many gentle words which from time to time had been spoken to her two summers since by him whose faith she had never doubted, and whose image was enshrined at the bottom of her heart.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CONFERENCE, AND THE FEARFUL NARRATION IN THE GARDEN.

The Temple clock struck the hour of meeting, and Johanna looked anxiously around her for any one who should seem to her to bear the appearance of being such a person as she might suppose Mark Ingestrie would choose for his messenger.

She turned her eyes towards the gate, for she thought she heard it close, and then she saw a gentlemanly-looking man, attired in a cloak, and who was looking around him, apparently in search of some one.

When his eye fell upon her he immediately produced from beneath his cloak a white rose, and in another minute they met.

"I have the honour," he said, "of speaking to Miss Johanna Oakley?"

"Yes, sir; and you are Mark Ingestrie's messenger?"

"I am; that is to say, I am he who comes to bring you news of Mark Ingestrie, although I grieve to say I am not the messenger that was expressly deputed by him so to do."

"Oh! sir, your looks are sad and serious; you seem as if you would announce that some misfortune had occurred. Tell me that it is not so; speak to me at once, or my heart will break!"

"Compose yourself, lady, I pray you."

"I cannot--dare not do so, unless you tell me he lives. Tell me that Mark Ingestrie lives, and then I shall be all patience: tell me that, and you shall not hear a murmur from me. Speak the word at once--at once! It is cruel, believe me, it is cruel to keep me in this suspense."

"This is one of the saddest errands I ever came upon," said the stranger, as he led Johanna to a seat. "Recollect, lady, what creatures of accident and chance we are--recollect how the slightest circumstances will affect us, in driving us to the confines of despair, and remember by how frail a tenure the best of us hold existence."

"No more--no more!" shrieked Johanna, as she clasped her hands--"I know all now, and am desolate."

She let her face drop upon her hands, and shook as with a convulsion of grief.

"Mark, Mark!" she cried, "you have gone from me! I thought not this--I thought not this. Oh, Heaven! why have I lived so long as to have the capacity to listen to such fearful tidings? Lost--lost--all lost! God of Heaven! what a wilderness the world is now to me!"

"Let me pray you, lady, to subdue this passion of grief, and listen truly to what I shall unfold to you. There is much to hear and much to speculate upon; and if, from all that I have learnt, I cannot, dare not tell you that Mark Ingestrie lives, I likewise shrink from telling you he is no more."

"Speak again--say those words again! There is hope, then--oh, there is a hope!"

"There is a hope; and better is it that your mind should receive the first shock of the probability of the death of him whom you have so anxiously expected, and then afterwards, from what I shall relate to you, gather hope that it may not be so, than that from the first you should expect too much, and then have those expectations rudely

destroyed."

"It is so--it is so; this is kind of you, and if I cannot thank you as I ought, you will know that it is because I am in a state of too great affliction so to do, and not from want of will; you will understand that--I am sure you will understand that."

"Make no excuses to me. Believe me, I can fully appreciate all that you would say, and all that you must feel. I ought to tell you who I am, that you may have confidence in what I have to relate to you. My name is Jeffery, and I am a colonel in the Indian army."

"I am much beholden to you, sir; but you bring with you a passport to my confidence, in the name of Mark Ingestrie, which is at once sufficient. I live again in the hope that you have given me of his continued existence, and in that hope I will maintain a cheerful resignation that shall enable me to bear up against all you have to tell me, be it what it may, and with a feeling that through much suffering there may come joy at last. You shall find me very patient, ay, extremely patient--so patient that you shall scarcely see the havoc that grief has already made here."

She pressed her hands upon her breast as she spoke, and looked in his face with such an expression of tearful melancholy that it was quite heartrending to witness it; and he, although not used to the melting mood, was compelled to pause for a few moments ere he could proceed in the task he had set himself.

"I will be as brief," he said, "as possible, consistent with stating all that is requisite for me to state, and I must commence by asking you if you are aware under what circumstances it was that Mark Ingestrie was abroad?"

"I am aware of so much, that a quarrel with his uncle, Mr. Grant, was the great cause, and that his main endeavour was to better his fortunes, so that we might be happy, and independent of those who looked not with an eye of favour upon our projected union."

"Yes, but, what I meant was, were you aware of the sort of adventure he embarked in to the Indian seas?"

"No, I know nothing further; we met here on this spot, we parted at yonder gate, and we have never met again."

"Then I have something to tell you, in order to make the narrative clear and explicit."

They both sat upon the garden seat; and while Johanna fixed her eyes upon her companion's face, expressive as it was of the most generous emotions and noble feelings, he commenced relating to her the incidents which never left her memory, and in which she took so deep an interest.

"You must know," he said, "that what it was which so much inflamed the imagination of Mark Ingestrie, consisted in this. There came to London a

man with a well-authenticated and extremely well put together report, that there had been discovered, in one of the small islands near the Indian seas, a river which deposited an enormous quantity of gold-dust in its progress to the ocean. He told his story so well, and seemed to be such a perfect master of all the circumstances connected with it, that there was scarcely room for a doubt upon the subject. The thing was kept quiet and secret; and a meeting was held of some influential men--influential on account of the money they possessed, among whom was one who had towards Mark Ingestrie most friendly feelings; so Mark attended the meeting with this friend of his, although he felt his utter incapacity, from want of resources, to take any part in the affair. But he was not aware of what his friend's generous intentions were in the matter until they were explained to him, and they consisted in this:--He, the friend, was to provide the necessary means for embarking in the adventure, so far as regarded taking a share in it, and he told Mark Ingestrie that, if he would go personally on the expedition, he should share in the proceeds with him, be they what they might. Now, to a young man like Ingestrie, totally destitute of personal resources, but of ardent and enthusiastic temperament, you can imagine how extremely tempting such an offer was likely to be. He embraced it at once with the greatest pleasure, and from that moment he took an interest in the affair of the closest and most powerful description. It seized completely hold of his imagination, presenting itself to him in the most tempting colours; and from the description that has been given me of his enthusiastic disposition, I can well imagine with what kindness and impetuosity he would enter into such an affair."

"You know him well?" said Johanna, gently.

"No, I never saw him. All that I say concerning him is from the description of another who did know him well, and who sailed with him in the vessel that ultimately left the port of London on the vague and wild adventure I have mentioned."

"That one, be he who he may, must have known Mark Ingestrie well, and have enjoyed much of his confidence to be able to describe him so accurately."

"I believe that such was the case; and it is from the lips of that one, instead of from mine, that you ought to have heard what I am now relating. That gentleman, whose name was Thornhill, ought to have made to you this communication; but by some strange accident it seems he has been prevented, or you would not be here listening to me upon a subject which would have come better from his lips."

"And was he to have come yesterday to me?"

"He was."

"Then Mark Ingestrie kept his word; and but for the adverse circumstances which delayed his messenger, I should yesterday have heard what you are now relating to me. I pray you go on, sir, and pardon this interruption."

"I need not trouble you with all the negotiations, the trouble, and the difficulty that arose before the expedition could be started fairly--suffice it to say, that at length, after much annoyance and trouble, it was started, and a vessel was duly chartered and manned for the purpose of proceeding to the Indian seas in search of the treasure, which was reported to be there for the first adventurer who had the boldness to seek it."

"It was a gallant vessel. I saw it many a mile from England ere it sunk beneath the waves, never to rise again."

"Sunk!"

"Yes; it was an ill-fated ship, and it did sink; but I must not anticipated--let me proceed in my narrative with regularity. The ship was called the Star; and if those who went with it looked upon it as the star of their destiny, they were correct enough, and it might be considered an evil star for them, inasmuch as nothing but disappointment and bitterness became their ultimate portion. And Mark Ingestrie, I am told, was the most hopeful man on board. Already in imagination he could fancy himself homeward-bound with the vessel, ballasted and crammed with the rich produce of that shining river. Already he fancied what he could do with his abundant wealth, and I have not a doubt but that, in common with many who went on that adventure, he enjoyed to the full the spending of the wealth he should obtain in imagination--perhaps, indeed, more than if he had obtained it in reality. Among the adventurers was one Thornhill, who had been a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and between him and young Ingestrie there arose a remarkable friendship--a friendship so strong and powerful, that there can be no doubt that they communicated to each other all their hopes and fears; and if anything could materially tend to beguile the tedium of such a weary voyage as those adventurers had undertaken, it certainly would be the free communication and confidential intercourse between two such kindred spirits as Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie. You will bear in mind, Miss Oakley, that in making this communication to you, I am putting together what I myself heard at different times, so as to make it for you a distinct narrative, which you can have no difficulty in comprehending, because, as I before stated, I never saw Mark Ingestrie, and it was only once, for about five minutes, that I saw the vessel in which he went upon his perilous adventure--for perilous it turned out to be--to the Indian seas. It was from Thornhill I got my information during the many weary and monotonous hours consumed in a home-bound voyage from India. It appears that without accident or cross of any description the Star reached the Indian ocean, and the supposed immediate locality of the spot where the treasure was to be found, and there she was spoken with by a vessel homeward-bound from India, called the Neptune. It was evening, and the sun had sunk in the horizon with some appearances that betokened a storm. I was on board that Indian vessel; we did not expect anything serious, although we made every preparation for rough weather, and as it turned out, it was well indeed we did, for never within the memory of the oldest seamen, had such a storm ravished the coast. A furious gale, which it was impossible to withstand, drove us southward; and but for the utmost precautions, aided by courage and temerity on the part of the seamen, such as I had never before witnessed in the

merchant-service, we escaped with trifling damage, but we were driven at least 200 miles out of our course; and instead of getting, as we ought to have done, to the Cape by a certain time, we were an immense distance eastward of it. It was just as the storm, which lasted three nights and two days, began to abate, that towards the horizon we saw a dull red light; and as it was not in a quarter of the sky where any such appearance might be imagined, nor were we in a latitude where electro-phenomena might be expected, we steered toward it, surmising what turned out afterwards to be fully correct."

"It was a ship on fire!" said Johanna.

"It was."

"Alas! alas! I guessed it. A frightful suspicion from the first crossed my mind. It was a ship on fire, and that ship was--"

The Star was bound upon its adventurous course, although driven far out of it by adverse winds and waves. After about half an hour's sailing we came within sight distinctly of a blazing vessel. We could hear the roar of the flames, and through our glasses we could see them curling up the cordage, and dancing from mast to mast, like fiery serpents, exulting in the destruction they were making. We made all sail, and strained every inch of canvas to reach the ill-fated vessel, for distances at sea that look small are in reality very great, and an hour's hard sailing in a fair wind, with every stitch of canvas set, would not do more than enable us to reach that ill-fated bark; but fancy in an hour what ravages the flames might make! The vessel was doomed. The fiat had gone forth that it was to be among the things that had been; and long before we could reach the spot upon which it floated idly on the now comparatively calm waters, we saw a bright shower of sparks rush up into the air. Then came a loud roaring sound over the surface of the deep, and all was still--the ship had disappeared, and the water closed over it for ever."

"But how knew you," said Johanna, as she clasped her hands, and the pallid expression of her countenance betrayed the deep interest she took in the narration, "how knew you that the ship was the Star? might it not have been some other ill-fated vessel that met with so dreadful a fate?"

"I will tell you: although we had seen the ship go down, we kept on our course, straining every effort to reach the spot, with the hope of picking up some of the crew, who surely had made an effort by the boats to leave the burning vessel. The captain of the Indiaman kept his glass at his eye, and presently he said to me,--'There is a floating piece of wreck, and something clinging to it; I know not if there be a man, but what I can perceive seems to me to be the head of a dog.' I looked through the glass myself, and saw the same object; but as we neared it, we found it was a large piece of the wreck, with a dog and a man supported by it, who were clinging with all the energy of desperation. In ten minutes more we had them on board the vessel--the man was the Lieutenant Thornhill I have before mentioned, and the dog belonged to him. He related to us that the ship, we had seen burning was the Star; and that it had never reached its destination, and that he believed all

had perished but himself and the dog; for, although one of the boats had been launched, so desperate a rush was made into it by the crew that it had swamped, and all perished. Such was his own state of exhaustion, that, after he had made this short statement, it was some days before he left his hammock; but when he did, and began to mingle with us, we found an intelligent, cheerful companion--such a one, indeed, as we were glad to have on board, and in confidence he related to the captain and myself the object of the voyage of the Star, and the previous particulars with which I have made you acquainted. And then, during a night-watch, when the soft and beautiful moonlight was more than usually inviting, and he and I were on the deck, enjoying the coolness of the night, after the intense heat of the day in the tropics, he said to me,--'I have a very sad mission to perform when I get to London. On board our vessel was a young man named Mark Ingestrie; and some short time before the vessel in which we were went down, he begged of me to call upon a young lady named Johanna Oakley, the daughter of a spectacle-maker in London, providing I should be saved and he perish; and of the latter event, he felt so strong a presentiment that he gave me a string of pearls, which I was to present to her in his name; but where he got them I have not the least idea, for they are of immense value.' Mr. Thornhill showed me the pearls, which were of different sizes, roughly strung together, but of great value; and when we reached the river Thames, which was only three days since, he left us with his dog, carrying his string of pearls with him, to find out where you reside."

"Alas! he never came."

"No; from all the inquiries we can make, and all the information we can learn, it seems he disappeared somewhere about Fleet-street."

"Disappeared!"

"Yes; we can trace him to the Temple-stairs, and from thence to the barber' shop, kept by a man named Sweeny Todd; but beyond there no information of him can be obtained."

"Sweeny Todd!"

"Yes; and what makes the affair more extraordinary, is, that neither force nor persuasion will induce Thornhill's dog to leave the place."

"I saw it--I saw the creature, and it looked imploringly, although kindly, in my face; but little did I think, when I paused a moment to look upon that melancholy but faithful animal, that it held a part in my destiny. Oh! Mark Ingestrie, Mark Ingestrie, dare I hope that you live when all else have perished?"

"I have told you all that I can tell you, and, according as your own judgment may dictate to you, you can encourage hope, or extinguish it for ever. I have kept back nothing from you which can make the affair worse or better--I have added nothing; but you have it simply as it was told to me."

"He is lost--he is lost."

"I am one, lady, who always thinks certainty of any sort preferable to suspense; and although, while there is no positive news of death, the continuance of life ought fairly to be assumed, yet you must perceive, from a review of all the circumstances, upon how very slender a foundation all our hopes must rest."

"I have no hope--I have no hope--he is lost to me for ever! It were madness to think he lived. Oh, Mark, Mark! and is this the end of all our fond affection? did I indeed look my last upon that face, when on this spot we parted?"

"The uncertainty," said Colonel Jeffery, wishing to withdraw as much as possible from a consideration of her own sorrows, "the uncertainty, too, that prevails with regard to the fate of poor Mr. Thornhill, is a sad thing. I much fear that those precious pearls he had, have been seen by some one who has not scrupled to obtain possession of them by his death."

"Yes, it would seem so indeed; but what are pearls to me? Oh! would that they had sunk to the bottom of that Indian sea, from whence they had been plucked. Alas, alas! it has been their thirst for gain that has produced all these evils. We might have been poor here, but we should have been happy. Rich we ought to have been, in contentment; but now all is lost, and the world to me can present nothing that is to be desired, but one small spot large enough to be my grave."

She leant upon the arm of the garden-seat, and gave herself up to such a passion of tears that Colonel Jeffery felt he dared not interrupt her. There is something exceeding sacred about real grief which awes the beholder, and it was with an involuntary feeling of respect that Colonel Jeffery stepped a few paces off, and waited until that burst of agony had passed away. It was during those brief moments that he overheard some words uttered by one who seemed likewise to be suffering from that prolific source of all affliction, disappointed affection. Seated at some short distance was a maiden, and one not young enough to be called a youth, but still not far enough advanced in existence to have had all his better feelings crushed by an admixture with the cold world, and he was listening while the maiden spoke.

"It is the neglect," she said, "which touched me to the heart. But one word spoken or written, one message of affection, to tell me that the memory of a love I thought would be eternal, still lingered in your heart, would have been a world of consolation; but it came not, and all was despair."

"Listen to me," said her companion, "and if ever in this world you can believe that one who truly loves can be cruel to be kind, believe that I am that one. I yielded for a time to the fascination of a passion which should never have found a home within my heart; but yet it was far more of a sentiment than a passion, inasmuch as never for one moment did an evil thought mingle with its pure aspirations.

"It was a dream of joy, which for a time obliterated a remembrance that

ought never to have been forgotten; but when I was rudely awakened to the fact that those whose opinions were of importance to your welfare and your happiness knew nothing of love, but in its grossest aspect, it became necessary at once to crush a feeling, which, in its continuance, could shadow forth nothing but evil."

"You may not imagine, and you may never know--for I cannot tell the heart-pangs that it has cost me to persevere in a line of conduct which I felt was due to you--whatever heart-pangs it might cost me. I have been content to imagine that your affection would turn to indifference, perchance to hatred; that a consciousness of being slighted would arouse in your defence all a woman's pride, and that thus you would be lifted above regret. Farewell for ever! I dare not love you honestly and truly; and better is it thus to part than to persevere in a delusive dream that can but terminate in degradation and sadness."

"Do you hear those words?" whispered Colonel Jeffery to Johanna. "You perceive that others suffer, and from the same cause, the perils of affection."

"I do. I will go home, and pray for strength to maintain my heart against this sad affliction."

"The course of true love never yet ran smooth; wonder not, therefore, Johanna Oakley, that yours has suffered such a blight. It is the great curse of the highest and noblest feelings of which humanity is capable, that while, under felicitous circumstances, they produce to us an extraordinary amount of happiness; when anything adverse occurs, they are most prolific sources of misery. Shall I accompany you?"

Johanna felt grateful for the support of the colonel's arm towards her own home, and as they passed the barber's shop they were surprised to see that the dog and the hat were gone.

## CHAPTER VII. THE BARBER AND THE LAPIDARY.

It is night; and a man, one of the most celebrated lapidaries in London, but yet a man frugal withal, although rich, is putting up the shutters of his shop.

This lapidary is an old man; his scanty hair is white, and his hands shake as he secures the fastenings, and then, over and over again, feels and shakes each shutter, to be assured that his shop is well secured.

This shop of his is in Moorfields, then a place very much frequented by dealers in bullion and precious stones. He was about entering his door, just having cast a satisfied look upon the fastening of his shop, when a tall, ungainly-looking man stepped up to him. This man had a three-cornered hat, much too small for him, perched upon the top of his

great hideous-looking head, while the coat he wore had ample skirts enough to have made another of ordinary dimensions.

Our readers will have no difficulty in recognising Sweeney Todd, and well might the little old lapidary start as such a very unprepossessing-looking personage addressed him.

"You deal," he said, "in precious stones."

"Yes, I do," was the reply; "but it's rather late. Do you want to buy or sell?"

"To sell."

"Humph! Ah, I dare say it's something not in my line; the only order I get is for pearls, and they are not in the market."

"And I have nothing but pearls to sell," said Sweeney Todd; "I mean to keep all my diamonds, my garnets, topazes, brilliants, emeralds, and rubies."

"The deuce you do! Why, you don't mean to say you have any of them? Be off with you! I am too old to joke with, and am waiting for my supper."

"Will you look at the pearls I have?"

"Little seed pearls, I suppose; they are of no value, and I don't want them, we have plenty of those. It's real, genuine, large pearls we want. Pearls worth thousands."

"Will you look at mine?"

"No; good night!"

"Very good; then I will take them to Mr. Coventry up the street. He will, perhaps, deal with me for them if you cannot."

The lapidary hesitated. "Stop," he said; "what's the use of going to Mr. Coventry? he has not the means of purchasing what I can pay present cash for. Come in, come in; I will, at all events, look at what you have for sale."

Thus encouraged, Sweeney Todd entered the little, low, dusky shop, and the lapidary having procured a light, and taken care to keep his customer outside the counter, put on his spectacles, and said--

"Now, sir, where are your pearls?"

"There," said Sweeney Todd, as he laid a string of twenty-four pearls before the lapidary.

The old man's eyes opened to an enormous width, and he pushed his spectacles right upon his forehead as he glared in the face of Sweeney Todd with undisguised astonishment. Then down came his spectacles again,

and taking up the string of pearls he rapidly examined every one of them, after which, he exclaimed,--

"Real, real, by Heaven! All real!"

Then he pushed his spectacles up again to the top of his head, and took another long stare at Sweeney Todd.

"I know they are real," said the latter. "Will you deal with me or will you not?"

"Will I deal with you? Yes; I am not quite sure they are real. Let me look again. Oh, I see, counterfeits; but so well done, that really for the curiosity of the thing, I will give fifty pounds for them."

"I am fond of curiosities," said Sweeney Todd, "and as they are not real, I will keep them; they will do for a present to some child or another."

"What give those to a child? you must be mad--that is to say, not mad, but certainly indiscreet. Come, now, at a word, I'll give you one hundred pounds for them."

"Hark ye," said Sweeney Todd, "it neither suits my inclination nor my time to stand here chaffing with you. I know the value of the pearls, and, as a matter of ordinary and every-day business, I will sell them to you so that you may get a handsome profit."

"What do you call a handsome profit?"

"The pearls are worth twelve thousand pounds, and I will let you have them for ten. What do you think of that for an offer?"

"What odd noise was that?"

"Oh, it was only I who laughed. Come, what do you say, at once; are we to do business or are we not?"

"Hark ye, my friend; since you do know the value of your pearls, and this is to be a downright business transaction, I think I can find a customer who will give eleven thousand pounds for them, and if so, I have no objection to give you eight thousand pounds."

"Give me the eight thousand pounds," said Sweeney Todd, "and let me go. I hate bargaining."

"Stop a bit; there are some rather important things to consider. You must know, my friend, that a string of pearls of this value are not be bought like a few ounces of old silver of anybody who might come with it. Such a string of pearls as these are like a house, or an estate, and when they change hands, the vendor must give every satisfaction as to how he came by them, and prove how he can give to the purchaser a good right and title to them."

"Pshaw!" said Sweeney Todd, "who will question you, you are well known to be in the trade, and to be continually dealing in such things?"

"That's all very fine; but I don't see why I should give you the full value of an article without evidence as to how you came by it."

"In other words you mean, you don't care how I came by them, provided I sell them to you at a thief's price, but if I want their value you mean to be particular."

"My good sir, you may conclude what you like. Show me that you have a right to dispose of the pearls, and you need go no further than my shop for a customer."

"I am no disposed to take that trouble, so I shall bid you good night, and if you want any pearls again, I would certainly advise you not to be so wonderfully particular where you get them."

Sweeney Todd strode towards the door, but the lapidary was not going to part with him so easy, so springing over his counter with an agility one would not have expected from so old a man, he was at the door in a moment, and shouted at the top of his lungs--

"Stop thief! Stop thief! Stop him! There he goes! The big fellow with the three-cornered hat! Stop thief! Stop thief!"

These cries, uttered with great vehemence as they were, could not be totally ineffectual, but they roused the whole neighbourhood, and before Sweeney Todd had proceeded many yards a man made an attempt to collar him, but was repulsed by such a terrific blow in the face, that another person, who had run half-way across the road with a similar object, turned and went back again, thinking it scarcely prudent to risk his own safety in apprehending a criminal for the good of the public. Having got rid thus of one of his foes, Sweeney Todd, with an inward determination to come back some day and be the death of the old lapidary, looked anxiously about for some court down which he could plunge, and so get out of sight of the many pursuers who were sure to attack him in the public streets. His ignorance of the locality, however, was a great bar to such a proceeding, for the great dread he had was, that he might get down some blind alley, and so be completely caged, and at the mercy of those who followed him. He pelted on at a tremendous speed, but it was quite astonishing to see how the little old lapidary ran after him, falling down every now and then, and never stopping to pick himself up, as people say, but rolling on and getting on his feet in some miraculous manner, that was quite wonderful to behold, particularly in one so aged and so apparently unable to undertake any active exertion. There was one thing, however, he could not continue doing, and that was to cry "stop thief!" for he had lost his wind, and was quite incapable of uttering a word. How long he would have continued the chase is doubtful, but his career was suddenly put an end to, as regards that, by tripping his foot over a projecting stone in the pavement, and shooting headlong down a cellar which was open. But abler persons than the little old lapidary had taken up the chase, and Sweeney Todd was hard pressed; and, although he ran very fast, the provoking thing was, that in consequence of the

cries and shouts of his pursuers, new people took up the chase, who were fresh and vigorous and close to him. There is something awful in seeing a human being thus hunted by his fellows; and although we can have no sympathy with such a man as Sweeney Todd, because, from all that has happened, we begin to have some very horrible suspicion concerning him, still, as a general principle, it does not decrease the fact, that it is a dreadful thing to see a human being hunted through the streets. On he flew at the top of his speed, striking down whoever opposed him, until at last many who could have outrun him gave up the chase, not liking to encounter the knock-down blow which such a hand as his seemed capable of inflicting. His teeth were set, and his breathing became short and laborious, just as a man sprung out at a shop-door and succeeded in laying hold of him.

"I have got you, have I?" he said.

Sweeney Todd uttered not a word, but, putting forth an amount of strength that was perfectly prodigious, he seized the man by a great handful of his hair, and by his clothes behind, and flung him through a shop-window, smashing glass, framework, and everything in its progress. The man gave a shriek, for it was his own shop, and he was a dealer in fancy goods of the most flimsy texture, so that the smash with which he came down among his stock-in-trade, produced at once what the haberdashers are so delighted with in the present day, namely, a ruinous sacrifice. This occurrence had a great effect upon Sweeney Todd's pursuers; it taught them the practical wisdom of not interfering with a man possessed evidently of such tremendous powers of mischief, and consequently, as just about this period the defeat of the little lapidary took place, he got considerably the start of his pursuers. He was by no means safe. The cry of "stop thief!" still sounded in his ears, and on he flew, panting with the exertion he made, till he heard a man behind him, say,--

"Turn into the second court on your right, and you will be safe--I'll follow you. They shan't nab you, if I can help it."

Sweeney Todd had not much confidence in human nature--it was not likely he would; but, panting and exhausted as he was, the voice of any one speaking in friendly accents was welcome, and, rather impulsively than from reflection, he darted down the second court to his right.

## CHAPTER VIII. THE THIEVES' HOME.

In a very few minutes Sweeney Todd found that this court had no thoroughfare, and therefore there was no outlet or escape, but he immediately concluded that something more was to be found than was at first sight to be seen, and casting a furtive glance beside him in the direction in which he had come, rested his hand upon a door which stood close by. The door gave way, and Sweeney Todd, hearing, as he imagined,

a noise in the street, dashed in, and closed the door, and then he, heedless of all consequences, walked to the end of a long dirty passage, and, pushing open a door, descended a short flight of steps, to the bottom of which he had scarcely got, when the door which faced him at the bottom of the steps opened by some hand, and he suddenly found himself in the presence of a number of men seated round a large table. In an instant all eyes were turned towards Sweeney Todd, who was quite unprepared for such a scene, and for a minute he knew not what to say; but, as indecision was not Sweeney Todd's characteristic, he at once advanced to the table and sat down. There was some surprise evinced by the persons who were seated in that room, of whom there were many more than a score, and much talking was going on among them, which did not appear to cease on his entrance. Those who were near him looked hard at him, but nothing was said for some minutes, and Sweeney Todd looked about to understand, if he could, how he was placed, though it could not be much a matter of doubt as to the character of the individuals present.

Their looks were often an index to their vocations, for all grades of the worst of characters were there, and some of them were by no means complimentary to human nature, for there were some of the most desperate characters that were to be found in London. Sweeney Todd gave a glance around him, and at once satisfied himself of the desperate nature of the assembly into which he had thrust himself. They were dressed in various fashions, some after the manner of the city--some more gay, and some half military, while not a few wore the garb of countrymen; but there was in all that an air of scampish, off-hand behaviour, not unmixed with brutality.

"Friend," said one, who sat near him, "how came you here; are you known here?"

"I came here, because I found the door open, and I was told by some one to come here, as I was pursued."

"Pursued?"

"Ay, some one running after me, you know."

"I know what being pursued is," replied the man, "and yet I know nothing of you."

"That is not at all astonishing," said Sweeney, "seeing that I never saw you before, nor you me; but that makes no difference. I'm in difficulties, and I suppose a man may do his best to escape the consequences?"

"Yes, he may, yet that is no reason why he should come here; this is the place for free friends, who know and aid one another."

"And such I am willing to be; but at the same time I must have a beginning. I cannot be initiated without some one introducing me. I have sought protection, and I have found it; if there be any objection to my remaining here any longer, I will leave."

"No, no," said a tall man on the other side of the table, "I have heard what you have said, and we do not usually allow any such things; you have come here unasked, and now we must have a little explanation--our own safety may demand it; at all events we have our customs, and they must be complied with."

"And what are your customs?" demanded Todd.

"This: you must answer the question which we shall propound unto you; now answer truly what we shall ask of you."

"Speak," said Todd, "and I will answer all that you propose to me, if possible."

"We will not tax you too hardly, depend upon it: who are you?"

"Candidly, then," said Todd, "that's a question I do not like to answer, nor do I think it is one that you ought to ask. It is an inconvenient thing to name oneself--you must pass by that inquiry."

"Shall we do so?" inquired the interrogator of those around him, and gathering his cue from their looks, he, after a brief space, continued--

"Well, we will pass over that, seeing it is not necessary, but you must tell us what you are--cutpurse, footpad, or what not?"

"I am neither."

"Then tell us in your own words," said the man, "and be candid with us. What are you?"

"I am an artificial pearl-maker--or sham pearl-maker, whichever way you please to call it."

"A sham pearl-maker! that may be an honest trade for all we know, and that will hardly be your passport to our house, friend sham pearl-maker!"

"That may be as you say," replied Todd, "but I will challenge any man to equal me in my calling. I have made pearls that would pass with almost a lapidary, and which would pass with nearly all the nobility."

"I begin to understand you, friend; but I would wish to have some proof of what you say; we may hear a very good tale, and yet none of it shall be true; we are not men to be made dupes of, besides, there are enough to take vengeance, if we desire it."

"Ay, to be sure there is," said a gruff voice from the other end of the table, which was echoed from one to the other, till it came to the top of the table.

"Proof! proof! proof!" now resounded from one end of the room to the other.

"My friends," said Sweeney Todd, rising up, and advancing to the table, and thrusting his hand into his bosom and drawing out the string of twenty-four pearls, "I challenge you, or any one, to make a set of artificial pearls equal to these; they are my make, and I'll stand to it in any reasonable sum, that you cannot bring a man who shall beat me in my calling."

"Just hand them to me," said the man who had made himself interrogator.

Sweeney Todd threw the pearls on the table carelessly, and then said--

"There, look at them well, they'll bear it, and I reckon, though there may be some good judges amongst you, that you cannot any of you tell them from real pearls, if you had not been told so."

"Oh, yes, we know pretty well," said the man, "what these things are, we have now and then a good string in our possession, and that helps us to judge of them. Well, this is certainly a good imitation."

"Let me see it," said a fat man: "I was bred a jeweller, and I might say born, only I couldn't stick to it; nobody likes working for years upon little pay, and no fun with the gals. I say, hand it here!"

"Well," said Todd, "if you or anybody ever produced as good an imitation, I'll swallow the whole string; and knowing there's poison in the composition, it would not be a comfortable thing to think of."

"Certainly not," said the big man, "certainly not, but hand them over, and I'll tell you all about it."

The pearls were given into his hands; and Sweeney Todd felt some misgivings about his precious charge, and yet he showed it not, for he turned to the man who sat beside him, saying--

"If he can tell true pearls from them, he knows more than I think he does, for I am a maker, and have often had the true pearl in my hand."

"And I suppose," said the man, "you have tried your hand at putting the one for the other, and so doing your confiding customers."

"Yes, yes, that is the dodge, I can see very well," said another man, winking at the first; "and a good one too, I have known them do so with diamonds."

"Yes, but never with pearls; however, there are some trades that it is desirable to know."

"You're right."

The fat man now carefully examined the pearls, set them down on the table, and looked hard at them.

"There now, I told you I could bother you. You are not so good a judge

that you would not have known, if you had not been told they were sham pearls, but what they were real."

"I must say, you have produced the best imitations I have ever seen. Why you ought to make your fortune in a few years--a handsome fortune!"

"So I should, but for one thing."

"And what is that?"

"The difficulty," said Todd, "of getting rid of them; if you ask anything below their value, you are suspected, and you run the chance of being stopped and losing them at the least, and perhaps entail a prosecution."

"Very true; but there is risk in everything; we all run risks; but then the harvest!"

"That may be," said Todd, "but this is peculiarly dangerous. I have not the means of getting introduction to the nobility themselves, and if I had I should be doubted, for they would say a working man cannot come honestly by such valuable things, and then I must concoct a tale to escape the Mayor of London."

"Ha!--ha!--ha!"

"Well, then, you can take them to a goldsmith."

"There are not many of them who would do so: they would not deal in them; and, moreover, I have been to one or two of them; as for a lapidary, why, he is not so easily cheated."

"Have you tried?"

"I did, and had to make the best of my way out, pursued as quickly as they could run, and I thought at one time I must have been stopped, but a few lucky turns brought me clear, when I was told to turn up this court; and I came in here."

"Well," said one man, who had been examining the pearls, "and did the lapidary find out they were not real?"

"Yes, he did; and he wanted to stop me and the string together, for trying to impose upon him; however, I made a rush at the door, which he tried to shut, but I was the stronger man, and here I am."

"It has been a close chance for you," said one.

"Yes, it just has," replied Sweeney, taking up the string of pearls, which he replaced in his clothes, and continued to converse with some of those around him.

Things now subsided into their general course; and little notice was taken of Sweeney. There was some drink on the board, of which all

partook. Sweeney had some, too, and took the precaution of emptying his pockets before them all, and gave them a share of his money to pay his footing. This was policy, and they all drank to his success, and were very good companions. Sweeney, however, was desirous of getting out as soon as he could, and more than once cast his eyes towards the door; but he saw there were eyes upon him, and dared not excite suspicion, for he might undo all that he had done. To lose the precious treasure he possessed would be maddening; he had succeeded to admiration in inducing the belief that what he showed them was merely a counterfeit; but he knew so well that they were real, and that a latent feeling that they were humbugged might be hanging about; and that the first suspicious movement he would be watched, and some desperate attempt made to make him give them up. It was with no small violence to his own feelings that he listened to their conversation, and appeared to take an interest in their proceedings.

"Well," said one, who sat next him, "I'm just off for the north-road."

"Any fortune there?"

"Not much; and yet I mustn't complain: these last three weeks, the best I have had has been two sixties."

"Well, that would do very well."

"Yes, the last man I stopped was a regular looby Londoner; he appeared like a don, complete tip-top man of fashion; but, Lord! when I came to look over him, he hadn't as much as would carry me twenty-four miles on the road."

"Indeed! don't you think he had any hidden about him?--they do do so now."

"Ah, ah!" returned another, "well said, old fellow; 'tis a true remark, that we can't always judge a man from appearances. Lor! bless me, now, who'd 'a thought your swell cove proved to be out o' luck? Well, I'm sorry for you; but you know 'tis a long lane that has no turning, as Mr. Somebody says--so, perhaps, you'll be more fortunate another time. But come, cheer up, whilst I relate an adventure that occurred a little time ago; 'twas a slice of good luck, I assure you, for I had no difficulty in bouncing my victim, out of a good swag of tin; for you know farmers returning from market are not always too wary and careful, especially as the lots of wine they take at the market dinners make the cosy old boys ripe and mellow for sleep. Well, I met one of these jolly gentlemen, mounted on horseback, who declared he had nothing but a few paltry guineas about him; however, that would not do--I searched him, and found a hundred and four pounds secreted about his person."

"Where did you find it?"

"About him. I tore his clothes to ribands. A pretty figure he looked upon horseback, I assure you. By Jove, I could hardly help laughing; in fact, I did laugh at him, which so enraged him, that he immediately threatened to horse-whip me, and yet he dared not defend his money; but

I threatened to shoot him, and that soon brought him to his senses."

"I should imagine so. Did you ever have a fight for it?" inquired Sweeney Todd.

"Yes, several times. Ah! it's by no means an easy life, you may depend. It is free, but dangerous. I have been fired at six or seven times."

"So many?"

"Yes. I was near York once, when I stopped a gentleman; I thought him an easy conquest, but not as he turned out, for he was a regular devil."

"Resisted you?"

"Yes, he did. I was coming along when I met him, and I demanded his money. 'I can keep it myself,' he said, 'and do not want any assistance to take care of it.'"

"But I want it," said I; "your money or your life."

"You must have both, for we are not to be parted," he said, presenting his pistol at me; "and then I had only time to escape from the effect of the shot. I struck the pistol up with my riding-whip, and the bullet passed by my temples, and almost stunned me. I cocked and fired; he did the same, but I hit him, and he fell. He fired, however, but missed me. I was down upon him; he begged hard for life."

"Did you give it him?"

"Yes; I dragged him to the side of the road, and then left him. Having done so much, I mounted my horse and came away as fast as I could, and then I made for London, and spent a merry day or two there."

"I can imagine you must enjoy your trips into the country, and then you must have still greater relish for the change when you come to London--the change is so great and so entire."

"So it is; but have you never any run of luck in your line? I should think you must at times succeed in tricking the public."

"Yes, yes," said Todd, "now and then we do--but I tell you it is only now and then; and I have been afraid of doing too much. In small sums I have been a gainer; but I want to do something grand. I tried it on, but at the same time I have failed."

"That is bad; but you may have more opportunities by and by. Luck is all chance."

"Yes," said Todd, "that is true, but the sooner the better, for I am growing impatient."

Conversation now went on; each man speaking of his exploits, which were always some species of rascality and robbery, accompanied by violence

generally; some were midnight robbers and breakers into people's houses; in fact, all the crimes that could be imagined. This place was, in fact, a complete house of rendezvous for thieves, cutpurses, highwaymen, footpads, and burglars of every grade and description--a formidable set of men of the most determined and desperate appearance. Sweeney Todd hardly knew how to rise and leave the place, though it was now growing very late, and he was most anxious to get safe out of the den he was in; but how to do that, was a problem yet to be solved.

"What is the time?" he muttered to the man next to him.

"Past midnight," was the reply.

"Then I must leave here," he answered, "for I have work that I must be at in a very short time, and I shall not have too much time."

So saying he watched his opportunity, and rising, walked up to the door, which he opened and went out; after that he walked up the five steps that led to the passage, and this latter had hardly been gained when the street-door opened, and another man came in at the same moment, and met him face to face.

"What do you do here?"

"I am going out," said Sweeney Todd.

"You are going back; come back with me."

"I will not," said Todd. "You must be a better man than I am, if you make me; I'll do my best to resist your attack, if you intend one."

"That I do," replied the man; and he made a determined rush upon Sweeney, who was scarcely prepared for such a sudden onslaught, and was pushed back till he came to the head of the stairs, where a struggle took place, and both rolled down the steps. The door was thrown open, and every one rushed out to see what was the matter, but it was some moments before they could make it out.

"What does he do here?" said the first, as soon as he could speak, and pointing to Sweeney Todd.

"It's all right."

"All wrong, I say."

"He's a sham-pearl maker, and has shown us a string of sham pearls that are beautiful."

"Psha!"

"I will insist upon seeing them; give them to me," he said, "or you do not leave this place."

"I will not," said Sweeney.

"You must. Here, help me--but I don't want help, I can do it by myself."

As he spoke, he made a desperate attempt to collar Sweeney and pull him to the earth, but he had miscalculated his strength when he imagined that he was superior to Todd, who was by far the more powerful man of the two, and resisted the attack with success. Suddenly, by an Herculean effort, he caught his adversary below the waist, and lifting him up, he threw him upon the floor with great force; and then, not wishing to see how the gang would take this--whether they would take the part of their companion or of himself he knew not--he thought he had an advantage in the distance, and he rushed up stairs as fast as he could, and reached the door before they could overtake him to prevent him. Indeed, for more than a minute they were irresolute what to do; but they were somehow prejudicial in favour of their companion, and they rushed up after Sweeney just as he had got to the door. He would have had time to escape them, but, by some means, the door became fast, and he could not open it, exert himself how he would. There was no time to lose; they were coming to the head of the stairs, and Sweeney had hardly time to reach the stairs, to fly upwards, when he felt himself grasped by the throat. This he soon released himself from; for he struck the man who seized him a heavy blow, and he fell backwards, and Todd found his way up to the first floor, but he was closely pursued. Here was another struggle; and again Sweeney Todd was the victor, but he was hard pressed by those who followed him--fortunately for him there was a mop left in a pail of water, this he seized hold of, and, swinging it over his head, he brought it full on the head of the first man who came near him. Dab it came, soft and wet, and splashed over some others who were close at hand. It is astonishing what an effect a new weapon will sometimes have. There was not a man among them, who would not have faced danger in more ways than one, that would not have rushed headlong upon deadly and destructive weapons, but who were quite awed when a heavy wet mop was dashed into their faces. They were completely paralysed for a moment; indeed, they began to look upon it as something between a joke and a serious matter and either would have been taken just as they might be termed.

"Get the pearls!" shouted the man who had first stopped him; "seize the spy! seize him--secure him--rush at him! You are men enough to hold one man!"

Sweeney Todd saw matters were growing serious, and he plied his mop most vigorously upon those who were ascending, but they had become somewhat used to the mop, and it had lost much of its novelty, and was by no means a dangerous weapon. They rushed on, despite the heavy blows showered by Sweeney, and he was compelled to give way stair after stair. The head of the mop came off, and then there remained but the handle, which formed an efficient weapon, and which made fearful havoc on the heads of the assailants; and despite all that their slouched hats could do in the way of protecting them, yet the staff came with a crushing effect. The best fight in the world cannot last for ever; and Sweeney again found numbers were not to be resisted for long; indeed, he could not have physical energy enough to sustain his own efforts, supposing he had received no blows in return. He turned and fled as he was forced

back to the landing, and then came to the next stair-head, and again he made a desperate stand. This went on for stair after stair, and continued for more than two or three hours. There were moments of cessation when they all stood still and looked at each other.

"Fire upon him!" said one.

"No, no; we shall have the authorities down upon us, and then all will go wrong."

"I think we had much better have let it alone in the first place, as he was in, for you may be sure this won't make him keep a secret; we shall all be split upon as sure as fate."

"Well, then, rush upon him, and down with him. Never let him out! On to him! Hurrah!"

Away they went, but they were resolutely met by the staff of Sweeney Todd, who had gained new strength by the short rest he had had.

"Down with the spy!"

This was shouted out by the men, but as each of them approached, they were struck down, and at length, finding himself on the second floor landing, and being fearful that some one was descending from above, he rushed into one of the inner rooms. In an instant he had locked the doors, which were strong and powerful.

"Now," he muttered, "for means to escape."

He waited a moment to wipe the sweat from his brow, and then he crossed the floor to the windows, which were open. They were the old-fashioned bay-windows, with the heavy ornamental work which some houses possessed, and overhung the low door-ways, and protected them from the weather.

"This will do," he said, as he looked down to the pavement--"this will do. I will try this descent, if I fall."

The people on the other side of the door were exerting all their force to break it open, and it had already given one or two ominous creaks, and a few minutes more would probably let them into the room. The streets were clear--no human being was moving about, and there were faint signs of the approach of morning. He paused a moment to inhale the fresh air, and then he got outside of the window. By means of the sound oaken ornaments, he contrived to get down to the drawing-room balcony, and then he soon got down into the street. As he walked slowly away, he could hear the crash of the door, and a slight cheer, as they entered the room; and he could imagine to himself the appearance of the faces of those who entered, when they found the bird had flown, and the room was empty. Sweeney Todd had not far to go; he soon turned into Fleet-street, and made for his own house. He looked about him, but there were none near him; he was tired and exhausted, and right glad was he when he found himself at his own door. Then stealthily he put the key into the door, and slowly entered the house.

CHAPTER IX.  
JOHANNA AT HOME, AND THE RESOLUTION.

Johanna Oakley would not allow Colonel Jeffery to accompany her all the way home, and he, appreciating the scruples of the young girl, did not press his attention upon her, but left her at the corner of Fore-street, after getting from her a half promise that she would meet him again on that day week, at the same hour, in the Temple-gardens.

"I ask this of you, Johanna Oakley," he said, "because I have resolved to make all the exertion in my power to discover what has become of Mr. Thornhill, in whose fate I am sure I have succeeded in interesting you, although you care so little for the string of pearls which he has in trust for you."

"I do, indeed, care little for them," said Johanna, "so little, that it may be said to amount to nothing."

"But still they are yours, and you ought to have the option of disposing of them as you please. It is not well to despise such gifts of fortune; for if you can yourself do nothing with them, there are surely some others whom you may know, upon whom they would bestow great happiness."

"A string of pearls, great happiness?" said Johanna, inquiringly.

"Your mind is so occupied by your grief that you quite forget such strings are of great value. I have seen those pearls, Johanna, and can assure you that they are in themselves a fortune."

"I suppose," she said sadly, "it is too much for human nature to expect two blessings at once. I had the fond, warm heart that loved me without the fortune, that would have enabled us to live in comfort and affluence; and now, when that is perchance within my grasp, the heart, that was by far the more costly possession, and the richest jewel of them all, lies beneath the wave with its bright influences, and its glorious and romantic aspirations, quenched for ever."

"You will meet me then, as I request of you, to hear if I have any news for you?"

"I will endeavour so to do. I have all the will; but Heaven knows if I may have the power."

"What mean you, Johanna?"

"I cannot tell what a week's anxiety may do; I know not but a sick bed may be my resting-place, until I exchange it for the tomb. I feel even now my strength fail me, and that I am scarcely able to totter to my home. Farewell, sir! I owe you my best thanks, as well for the trouble

you have taken, as for the kindly manner in which you have detailed to me what has passed."

"Remember," said Colonel Jeffery, "that I bid you adieu, with the hope of meeting you again."

It was thus they parted, and Johanna proceeded to her father's house. Who now that had met her and had chanced not to see that sweet face, which could never be forgotten, would have supposed her to be the once gay and sprightly Johanna Oakley? Her steps were sad and solemn, and all the juvenile elasticity of her frame seemed like one prepared for death; and she hoped that she would be able to glide, silently and unobserved, to her own little bed-chamber--that chamber where she had slept since she was a child, and on the little couch, on which she had so often laid down to sleep that holy and calm slumber which such hearts as hers can only know. But she was doomed to be disappointed, for the Rev. Mr. Lupin was still there, and as Mrs. Oakley had placed before that pious individual a great assortment of creature comforts, and among the rest some mulled wine, which seemed particularly to agree with him, he showed no disposition to depart. It unfortunately happened that this wine, of which the reverend gentleman partook with such a holy relish, was kept in a cellar, and Mrs. Oakley had had occasion twice to go down to procure a fresh supply, and it was on a third journey for the same purpose that she encountered poor Johanna, who had just let herself in at the private door.

"Oh! you have come home, have you?" said Mrs. Oakley; "I wonder where you have been to, gallivanting; but I suppose I may wonder long enough before you will tell me. Go into the parlour, I want to speak to you."

Now poor Johanna had quite forgotten the very existence of Mr. Lupin--so, rather than explain to her mother, which she knew would beget more questions, she wished to go to bed at once, notwithstanding it was an hour before the usual time for so doing. She walked unsuspectingly into the parlour, and as Mr. Lupin was sitting, the slightest movement of his chair closed the door, so she could not escape. Under any other circumstances probably Johanna would have insisted upon leaving the apartment; but a glance at the countenance of the pious individual was quite sufficient to convince her that he had been sacrificing sufficiently to Bacchus to be capable of any amount of effrontery, so that she dreaded passing him, more especially as he swayed his arms about like the sails of a windmill. She thought at least that when her mother returned she would rescue her; but in that hope she was mistaken, and Johanna had no more idea of the extent to which religious fanaticism will carry its victim, than she had of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of the moon. When Mrs. Oakley did return, she had some difficulty in getting into the apartment, inasmuch as Mr. Lupin's chair occupied so large a portion of it; but when she did obtain admission, and Johanna said--

"Mother, I beg of you to protect me against this man, and allow me a free passage from the apartment!"

Mrs. Oakley affected to lift up her hands in amazement, as she said--

"How dare you speak so disrespectfully of a chosen vessel? How dare you, I say, do such a thing--it's enough to drive any one mad to see the young girls now-a-days!"

"Don't snub her--don't snub the virgin," said Mr. Lupin; "she don't know the honour yet that's intended her."

"She don't deserve it," said Mrs. Oakley, "she don't deserve it."

"Never mind, madam--never mind; we--we--we don't get all what we deserve in this world."

"Take a drop of something, Mr. Lupin; you have got the hiccups."

"Yes; I--I rather think I have a little. Isn't it a shame that anybody so intimate with the Lord should have the hiccups? What a lot of lights you have got burning, Mrs. Oakley!"

"A lot of lights, Mr. Lupin! Why, there is only one; but perhaps you allude to the lights of the gospel?"

"No; I--I don't, just at present; damn the lights of the gospel--that is to say, I mean damn all backsliders! But there is a lot of lights, and no mistake, Mrs. Oakley. Give me a drop of something, I'm as dry as dust."

"There is some more mulled wine, Mr. Lupin; but I am surprised that you think there is more than one light."

"It's a miracle madam, in consequence of my great faith. I have faith in s--s--s--six lights, and here they are."

"Do you see that, Johanna?" exclaimed Mrs. Oakley, "are you not convinced now of the holiness of Mr. Lupin?"

"I am convinced of his drunkenness, mother, and entreat of you to let me leave the room at once."

"Tell her of the honour," said Mr. Lupin--"tell her of the honour."

"I don't know, Mr. Lupin; but don't you think it would be better to take some other opportunity?"

"Very well, then, this is the opportunity."

"If it's your pleasure, Mr. Lupin, I will. You must know, then, Johanna, that Mr. Lupin has been kind enough to consent to save my soul, on condition that you marry him, and I am quite sure you can have no reasonable objection; indeed, I think it's the least you can do, whether you have any objection or not."

"Well put," said Mr. Lupin, "excellently well put."

"Mother," said Johanna, "if you are so far gone in superstition, as to believe this miserable drunkard ought to come between you and heaven, I am so lost as not to be able to reject the offer with more scorn and contempt than ever I thought I could have entertained for any human being; but hypocrisy never, to my mind, wears so disgusting a garb as when it attires itself in the outward show of religion."

"This conduct is unbearable," cried Mrs. Oakley; "am I to have one of the Lord's saints under my own roof?"

"If he were ten times a saint, mother, instead of being nothing but a miserable, drunken profligate, it would be better that he should be insulted ten times over, than that you should permit your own child to have passed through the indignity of having to reject such a proposition as that which has just been made. I must claim the protection of my father; he will not suffer one, towards whom he has ever shown an affection, the remembrance of which sinks deep into my heart, to meet with so cruel an insult beneath his roof."

"That's right, my dear," cried Mr. Oakley, at that moment pushing open the parlour-door. "That's right, my dear; you never spoke truer words in all your life."

A faint scream came from Mrs. Oakley, and the Rev. Mr. Lupin immediately seized upon the fresh jug of mulled wine, and finished it at a draught.

"Get behind me, Satan," he said. "Mr. Oakley, you will be damned if you say a word to me."

"It's all the same, then," said Mr. Oakley; "for I'll be damned if I don't. Then, Ben! Ben! come--come in, Ben."

"I'm a coming," said a deep voice, and a man about six feet four inches in height, and nearly two-thirds of that amount in width, entered the parlour. "I'm a coming, Oakley, my boy. Put on your blessed spectacles, and tell me which is the fellow."

"I could have sworn it," said Mrs. Oakley, as she gave the table a knock with her fist,--"I could have sworn when you came in, Oakley--I could have sworn, you little snivelling, shrivelled-up wretch, you'd no more have dared to come into this parlour as never was with those words in your mouth, than you'd have dared to have flown, if you hadn't had your cousin, Big Ben, the beef-eater, from the Tower, with you."

"Take it easy, ma'am," said Ben, as he sat down in a chair, which immediately broke all to pieces with his weight. "Take it easy, ma'am; the devil--what's this?"

"Never mind, Ben," said Mr. Oakley, "it's only a chair; get up."

"A cheer," said Ben; "do you call that a cheer? but never mind--take it easy."

"Why, you big, bullying, idle, swilling and guttling ruffian!"

"Go on, marm, go on."

"You good-for-nothing lump of carrion; a dog wears his own coat, but you wear your master's, you great stupid, overgrown, lurking hound. You parish-brought-up wild beast, go and mind your lions and elephants in the Tower, and don't come into honest people's houses, you cut-throat, bullying, pickpocketing wretch."

"Go on, marm, go on."

This was a kind of dialogue that could not last, and Mrs. Oakley sank down exhausted, and then Ben said--

"I tell you what, marm, I considers you--I looks upon you, marm, as a female wariety of that ere animal as is very useful and sagacious, marm."

There was no mistake in this allusion, and Mrs. Oakley was about to make some reply, when the Rev. Mr. Lupin rose from his chair, saying--

"Bless you all! I think I'll go home."

"Not yet, Mr. Tulip," said Ben; "you had better sit down again--we've got something to say to you."

"Young man, young man, let me pass. If you do not, you will endanger your soul."

"I aint got none," said Ben; "I'm only a beef-eater, and don't pretend to such luxuries."

"The heathen!" exclaimed Mrs. Oakley, "the horrid heathen! but there's one consolation, and that is, that he will be fried in his own fat for everlasting."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Ben; "I think I shall like it, especially if it's any pleasure to you. I suppose that's what you call a Christian consolation. Will you sit down, Mr. Tulip?"

"My name aint Tulip, but Lupin; but if you wish it, I don't mind sitting down, of course."

The beef-eater, with a movement of his foot, kicked away the reverend gentleman's chair, and down he sat with a dab upon the floor.

"My dear," said Mr. Oakley to Johanna, "you go to bed, and then your mother can't say you have anything to do with this affair. I intend to rid my house of this man. Good night, my dear, good night."

Johanna kissed her father on the cheek, and then left the room, not at all sorry that so vigorous a movement was about being made for the suppression of Mr. Lupin. When she was gone, Mrs. Oakley spoke, saying--

"Mr. Lupin, I bid you good night, and, of course, after the rough treatment of these wretches, I can hardly expect you to come again. Good night, Mr. Lupin, good night."

"That's all very well, marm," said Ben, "but before this ere wild beast of a parson goes away, I want to admonish him. He don't seem to be wide awake, and I must rouse him up."

Ben took hold of the reverend gentleman's nose, and gave it such an awful pinch, that when he took his finger and thumb away, it was perfectly blue.

"Murder! oh, murder! my nose! my nose!" shrieked Mr. Lupin, and at that moment Mrs. Oakley, who was afraid to attack Ben, gave her husband such an open-handed whack on the side of his head, that the little man reeled again, and saw a great many more lights than the Rev. Mr. Lupin had done under the influence of the mulled wine.

"Very good," said Ben; "now we are getting into, the thick of it."

[Illustration: Big Ben Compels Mr. Lupin To Do Penance.]

With this Ben took from his pocket a coil of rope, one end of which was a noose, and that he dexterously threw over Mrs. Oakley's head.

"Murder!" she shrieked. "Oakley, are you going to see me murdered before your eyes?"

"There is such a singing in my ears," said Mr. Oakley, "that I can't see anything."

"This is the way," said Ben, "we manages the wild beastesses when they shuts their ears to all sorts of argument. Now, marm, if you please, a little this way."

Ben looked about until he found a strong hook in the wall, over which, in consequence of his great height, he was enabled to draw the rope, and then the other end of it he tied securely to the leg of a heavy secretaire that was in the room, so that Mrs. Oakley was well secured.

"Murder!" she cried. "Oakley, are you a man, that you stand by and see me treated in this way by this big brute?"

"I can't see anything," said Mr. Oakley; "there is such a singing in my ears; I told you so before--I can't see anything."

"Now, ma'am, you may just say what you like," said Ben; "it won't matter a bit, any more than the grumbling of a bear with a sore head; and as for you, Mr. Tulip, you'll just get down on your knees, and beg Mr. Oakley's pardon for coming and drinking his tea without his leave, and having the infernal impudence to speak to his daughter."

"Don't do it, Mr. Lupin," cried Mrs. Oakley--"don't do it."

"You hear," said Ben, "what the lady advises. Now, I am quite different; I advise you to do it--for, if you don't, I shan't hurt you, but it strikes me I shall be obliged to fall on you and crush you."

"I think I will," said Mr. Lupin: "the saints were always forced to yield to the Philistines."

"If you call me any names," said Ben, "I'll just wring your neck,"

"Young man, young man, let me exhort you. Allow me to go, and I will put up prayers for your conversion."

"Confound your impudence! what do you suppose the beasts in the Tower would do, if I was converted? Why, that 'ere tiger, we have had lately, would eat his own tail, to think as I had turned out such an ass. Come, I can't waste any more of my precious time; and if you don't get down on your knees directly, we'll see what we can do."

"I must," said Mr. Lupin, "I must, I suppose;" and down he flopped on his knees.

"Very good; now repeat after me.--I am a wolf that stole sheeps' clothing."

"Yes; 'I am a wolf that stole sheeps' clothing'--the Lord forgive me."

"Perhaps he may, and perhaps he mayn't. Now go on--all that's wirtuous is my loathing."

"Oh dear, yes--'all that's wirtuous is my loathing.'"

"Mr. Oakley, I have offended."

"Yes; I am a miserable sinner, Mr. Oakley, I have offended."

"And asks his pardon, on my bended--"

"Oh dear, yes--I asks his pardon on my bended--The Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!"

"Knees--I won't do so no more."

"Yes,--knees, I won't do so no more."

"As sure as I lies on this floor."

"Yes,--as sure as I lies on this floor.--Death and the devil, you've killed me!"

Ben took hold of the reverend gentleman by the back of the neck, and pressed his head down upon the floor, until his nose, which had before been such a sufferer, was nearly completely flattened with his face.

"Now you may go;" said Ben.

Mr. Lupin scrambled to his feet; but Ben followed him into the passage, and did not yet let him go, until he had accelerated his movements by two hearty kicks. And then the victorious beef-eater returned to the parlour.

"Why, Ben," said Mr. Oakley, "you are quite a poet."

"I believe you, Oakley, my boy," said Ben, "and now let us be off, and have a pint round the corner."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Oakley, "and leave me here, you wretches?"

"Yes," said Ben, "unless you promises never to be a female variety of a useful animal again, and begs pardon of Mr. Oakley, for giving him all this trouble; as for me, I'll let you off cheap, you shall only give me a kiss, and say you loves me."

"If I do, may I be--"

"Damned, you mean."

"No, I don't; choked I was going to say."

"Then you may be choked, for you have nothing to do but to let your legs go from under you, and you will be hung as comfortable as possible--come along, Oakley."

"Mr. Oakley--stop, stop--don't leave me here. I am sorry."

"That's enough," said Mr. Oakley; "and now, my dear, bear in mind one thing from me--I intend from this time forward to be master in my own house. If you and I are to live together, we must do so on very different terms to what we have been living, and if you won't make yourself agreeable, Lawyer Hutchins tells me that I can turn you out and give you a maintenance; and, in that case, I'll have my sister Rachel home to mind house for me; so now you know my determination, and what you have to expect. If you wish to begin, well, do so at once, by getting something nice and tasty for Ben's supper."

Mrs. Oakley made the required promise, and being released, she set about preparations for the supper in real earnest, but whether was really subdued or not we shall, in due time, see.

## CHAPTER X. THE COLONEL AND HIS FRIEND.

Colonel Jeffery was not at all satisfied with the state of affairs, as regarded the disappointment of Mr. Thornhill, for whom he entertained a sincere regard, both on account of the private estimation in which he

held him, and on account of actual services rendered to Thornhill by him. Not to detain Johanna Oakley in the Temple-gardens, he had stopped his narrative, completely at the point when what concerned her had ceased, and had said nothing of much danger which the ship "Neptune" and its crew and passengers had gone through, after Mr. Thornhill had been taken on board with his dog. The fact is, the storm which he had mentioned was only the first of a series of gales of wind that buffeted the ship about for some weeks, doing it much damage, and enforcing almost the necessity of putting in somewhere for repairs. But a glance at the map will be sufficient to show that, situated as the "Neptune" was, the nearest port at which they could at all expect assistance, was the British Colony, at the Cape of Good Hope; but such was the contrary nature of the winds and waves, that just upon the evening of a tempestuous day, they found themselves bearing down close in shore, on the eastern coast of Madagascar. There was much apprehension that the vessel would strike on a rocky shore; but the water was deep, and the vessel rode well; there was a squall, and they let go both anchors to secure the vessel, as they were so close in shore, lest they should be driven in and stranded. It was fortunate they had so secured themselves, for the gale while it lasted blew half a hurricane, and the ship lost some of her mast, and some other trifling damage, which, however, entailed upon them the necessity of remaining there a few days, to cut timber to repair their masts, and to obtain a few supplies. There is but little to interest a general reader in the description of a gale. Order after order was given until the masts and spars went one by one, and then the orders for clearing the wreck were given. There was much work to be done, and but little pleasure in doing it, for it was wet and miserable while it lasted, and there was the danger of being driven upon a lee shore, and knocked to pieces upon the rocks. This danger was averted, and they anchored safe at a very short distance from the shore in comparative security.

"We are safe now," remarked the captain, as he gave his second in command charge of the deck, and approached Mr. Thornhill and Colonel Jeffery.

"I am happy it is so," replied Jeffery.

"Well, captain," said Mr. Thornhill, "I am glad we have done with being knocked about; we are anchored, and the water here appears smooth enough."

"It is so, and I dare say it will remain so; it is a beautiful basin of water--deep and good anchorage; but you see it is not large enough to make a fine harbour."

"True; but it is rocky."

"It is, and that may make it sometimes dangerous, though I don't know that it would be so in some gales. The sea may beat in at the opening, which is deep enough for anything to enter--even Noah's ark would enter easily enough."

"What will you do now?"

"Stay here a day or so, and send boats ashore to cut some pine trees, to refit the ship with masts."

"You have no staves, then?"

"Not enough for such a purpose; and we never do go out stored with such things."

"You obtain them wherever you may go to."

"Yes, any part of the world will furnish them in some shape or other."

"When you send ashore, will you permit me to accompany the boat's crew?" said Jeffery.

"Certainly; but the natives of this country are violent and intractable, and should you get into any row with them, there is every probability of your being captured, or some bodily injury done you."

"But I will take care to avoid all that."

"Very well, colonel, you shall be welcome to go."

"I must beg the same permission," said Mr. Thornhill, "for I should much like to see the country, as well as to have some acquaintance with the natives themselves."

"By no means trust yourself alone with them," said the captain, "for if you live you will have cause to repent it--depend upon what I say."

"I will," said Thornhill; "I will go nowhere but where the boat's company goes."

"You will be safe then."

"But do you apprehend any hostile attack from the natives?" inquired Colonel Jeffery.

"No, I do not expect it; but such things have happened before to-day, and I have seen them when least expected, though I have been on this coast before, and yet I never met with any ill-treatment; but there have been many who have touched on this coast, who have had a brush with the natives and come off second best, the natives generally retiring when the ship's company muster strong in number, and calling out the chiefs, who come down in great force, that we may not conquer them."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning the boats were ordered out to go ashore with crews, prepared for cutting timber, and obtaining such staves as the ship was in want of. With these boats old Thornhill and Colonel Jeffery went both of them on board, and after a short ride they reached the shore of Madagascar. It was a beautiful country, and one in which vegetables

appear luxuriant and abundant, and the party in search of timber for shipbuilding purposes soon came to some lordly monarchs of the forest, which would have made vessels of themselves. But this was not what was wanted; but where the trees grew thicker and taller, they began to cut some tall pine-trees down. This was the wood they most desired; in fact, it was exactly what they wanted; but they hardly got through a few such trees, when the natives came down upon them, apparently to reconnoitre. At first they were quiet and tractable enough, but anxious to see and inspect everything, being very inquisitive and curious. However, that was easily borne, but at length they became more numerous, and began to pilfer all they could lay their hands upon, which, of course brought resentment, and, after some time, a blow or two was exchanged. Colonel Jeffery was forward, and endeavouring to prevent some violence being offered to one of the wood-cutters; in fact, he was interposing himself between the two contending parties, and tried to restore order and peace, but several armed natives rushed suddenly upon him, secured him, and were hurrying him away to death before any one could stir in his behalf. His doom appeared certain, for, had they succeeded, they would have cruelly and brutally murdered him. However, just at that moment aid was at hand, and Mr. Thornhill, seeing how matters stood, seized a musket from one of the sailors, and rushed after the natives who had Colonel Jeffery. There were three of them, two others had gone on to apprise, it was presumed, the chiefs. When Mr. Thornhill arrived, they had thrown a blanket over the head of Jeffery; but Mr. Thornhill in an instant hurled one down with a blow from the butt-end of his musket, and the second met the same fate, as he turned to see what was the matter. The third, seeing the colonel free, and the musket levelled at his own head, immediately ran after the other two, to avoid any serious consequences to himself.

[Illustration: Thornhill Rescues Colonel Jeffery From The Savages.]

"Thornhill, you have saved my life," said Colonel Jeffery, excitedly.

"Come away, don't stop here--to the ship!--to the ship!" And as he spoke, they hurried after the crew and they succeeded in reaching the boats and the ship in safety; congratulating themselves not a little upon so lucky an escape from a people quite warlike enough to do mischief, but not civilized enough to distinguish when to do it.

When men are far away from home, and in foreign lands with the skies of other climes above them, their hearts become more closely knit together in those ties of brotherhood which certainly ought to actuate the whole universe, but which as certainly do not do so, except in very rare instances. One of these instances, however, would be found in the conduct of Colonel Jeffery and Mr. Thornhill, even under any circumstances, for they were most emphatically what might be termed kindred spirits; but when we come to unite to that fact the remarkable manner in which they had been thrown together, and the mutual services that they had it in their power to render to each other, we should not be surprised at the almost romantic friendship that arose between them. It was then that Thornhill made the colonel's breast the depository of all his thoughts and all his wishes, and a freedom of intercourse and a community of feeling ensued between them, which when it does take place

between persons of really congenial dispositions, produces the most delightful results of human companionship. No one who has not endured the tedium of a sea voyage, can at all be aware of what a pleasant thing it is to have some one on board, in the rich stores of whose intellect and fancy one can find a never-ending amusement. The winds might now whistle through the cordage, and the waves toss the great ship on their foaming crests, still Thornhill and Jeffery were together, finding in the midst of danger, solace in each other's society, and each animating the other to the performance of deeds of daring that astonished the crew. The whole voyage was one of the greatest peril, and some of the oldest seamen on board did not scruple, during the continuance of their night watches to intimate to their companions that the ship, in their opinion, would never reach England, and that she would founder somewhere along the long stretch of the African coast. The captain, of course, made every possible exertion to put a stop to such prophetic sayings, but when once they commenced, in a short time there is no such thing as completely eradicating them; and they, of course, produced the most injurious effect, paralysing the exertions of the crew in times of danger, and making them believe that they are in a doomed ship, and consequently all they can do is useless. Sailors are extremely superstitious on such matters, and there cannot be any reasonable doubt, but that some of the disasters that befel the Neptune on her homeward voyage from India, may be attributed to this feeling of fatality getting hold of the seamen, and inducing them to think that, let them try what they might, they could not save the ship. It happened that after they had rounded the Cape, a dense fog came on, such as had not been known on that coast for many a year; although the western shore of Africa at some seasons of the year is rather subject to such a species of vaporous exhalation. Every object was wrapped in the most profound gloom, and yet there was a strong eddy or current of the ocean, flowing parallel with the land, and as the captain hoped, rather off than on the shore. Still there was a suspicion that the ship was making lee-way, which must eventually bring it on shore, by some of the low promontories that were by the maps indicated to be upon the coast. In consequence of this fear, the greatest anxiety prevailed on board the vessel, and lights were left burning on all parts of the deck, while two men were continually engaged making soundings. It was about half-an-hour after midnight, as the chronometer indicated a storm, that suddenly the men, who were on watch on the deck, raised a loud cry of dismay. They had suddenly seen close on to the larboard bow, lights which must belong to some vessel that, like the Neptune, was encompassed in the fog, and a collision was quite inevitable, for neither ship had time to put about. The only doubt, which was a fearful and an agonising one to have solved, was whether the stronger vessel was of sufficient bulk and power to run them down, or they it; and that fearful question was one which a few moments must settle. In fact, almost before the echo of that cry of horror which had come from the men, had died away, the vessels met. There was a hideous crash--one shriek of dismay and horror, and then all was still. The Neptune, with considerable damage, and some of her bulwarks stove in, sailed on; but the other ship went, with a surging sound, to the bottom of the sea. Alas! nothing could be done. The fog was so dense, that coupled, too, as it was with the darkness of the night, there could be no hope of rescuing one of the ill-fated crew of the ship; and the officers and seamen of the Neptune, although they shouted for some time,

and then listened, to hear if any survivors of the ship that had been run down were swimming, no answer came to them; and when in about six hours more, they sailed out of the fog into a clear sunshine, where there was not so much as a cloud to be seen, they looked at each other like men newly awakened from some strange and fearful dream. They never discovered the name of the ship they had run down, and the whole affair remained a profound mystery. When the Neptune reached the port of London, the affair was repeated, and every exertion was made to obtain some information concerning the ill-fated ship that had met with so fearful a doom. Such were the circumstances which awakened all the liveliest feelings of gratitude on the part of Colonel Jeffery towards Mr. Thornhill; and hence was it that he considered it a sacred duty, now that he was in London, and had the necessary leisure to do so, to leave no stone unturned to discover what had become of him. After deep and anxious thought, and feeling convinced that there was some mystery which it was beyond his power to discover, he resolved upon asking the opinion of a friend, likewise in the army, a Captain Rathbone, concerning the whole of the facts. This gentleman, and a gentleman he was in the fullest acceptance of the term, was in London; in fact, he had retired from active service, and inhabited a small but pleasant house in the outskirts of the metropolis. It was one of those old-fashioned cottage residences, with all sorts of odd places and corners about it, and a thriving garden full of fine old wood, such as are rather rare near to London, and which are daily becoming more rare, in consequence of the value of land immediately contiguous to the metropolis not permitting large pieces to remain attached to small residences. Captain Rathbone had an amiable family about him, such as he was and might well be proud of, and was living in as great a state of domestic felicity as this world could very well afford him. It was to this gentleman, then, that Colonel Jeffery resolved upon going to lay all the circumstances before him concerning the probable fate of poor Thornhill. This distance was not so great but that he could walk it conveniently, and he did so, arriving, towards the dusk of the evening, on the following day to that which had witnessed his deeply interesting interview with Johanna Oakley in the Temple-gardens. There is nothing on earth so delightfully refreshing, after a dusty and rather a long country walk, as to suddenly enter a well-kept and extremely verdant garden; and this was the case especially to the feelings of Colonel Jeffery, when he arrived at Lime Tree Lodge, the residence of Captain Rathbone. He met him with a most cordial and frank welcome--a welcome which he expected, but which was none the less delightful on that account; and, after sitting awhile with the family in the house, he and the captain strolled into the garden, and then Colonel Jeffery commenced his revelation. The captain, with very few interruptions, heard him to an end; and, when he concluded by saying--

"And now I am come to ask your advice upon all these matters;" the captain immediately replied, in his warm, off-hand manner--

"I am afraid you won't find my advice of much importance; but I offer you my active co-operation in anything you think ought to be done or can be done in this affair, which, I assure you deeply interests me, and gives me the greatest possible impulse to exertion. You have but to command me in the matter, and I am completely at your disposal."

"I was quite certain you would say as much. But, notwithstanding the manner in which you shrink from giving an opinion, I am anxious to know what you really think with regard to what are, you will allow, most extraordinary circumstances."

"The most natural thing in the world," said Captain Rathbone, "at the first flush of the affair, seemed to be, that we ought to look for your friend Thornhill at the point where he disappeared."

"At the barber's in Fleet-street?"

"Precisely. Did he leave the barber, or did he not?"

"Sweeney Todd says that he left him, and proceeded down the street towards the city, in pursuance of a direction he had given him to Mr. Oakley, the spectacle-maker, and that he saw him get into some sort of disturbance at the end of the market; but to put against that, we have the fact of the dog remaining by the barber's door, and his refusing to leave it on any amount of solicitation. Now the very fact that a dog could act in such a way proclaims an amount of sagacity that seems to tell loudly against the presumption that such a creature could make any mistake."

"It does. What say you, now, to go into town to-morrow morning, and making a call at the barber's, without proclaiming we have any special errand, except to be shaved and dressed? Do you think he would know you again?"

"Scarcely, in plain clothes. I was in my undress uniform when I called with the captain of the Neptune, so that his impression of me must be of decidedly a military character; and the probability is, that he would not know me at all in the clothes of a civilian. I like the idea of giving a call at the barber's."

"Do you think your friend Thornhill was a man likely to talk about the valuable pearls he had in his possession?"

"Certainly not."

"I merely ask you, because they might have offered a great temptation; and if he has experienced any foul play at the hands of the barber, the idea of becoming possessed of such a valuable treasure might have been the inducement."

"I do not think it probable, but it has struck me that, if we obtain any information whatever of Thornhill, it will be in consequence of these very pearls. They are of great value, and not likely to be overlooked; and yet, unless a customer be found for them, they are of no value at all; and nobody buys jewels of that character but from the personal vanity of making, of course, some public display of them."

"That is true; and so, from hand to hand, we might trace those pearls until we come to the individual who must have had them from Thornhill

himself, and who might be forced to account most strictly for the manner in which they came into his possession."

After some more desultory conversation upon the subject, it was agreed that Colonel Jeffery should take a bed for the night at Lime Tree Lodge, and that, in the morning, they should both start for London, and, disguising themselves as respectable citizens, make some attempts, by talking about jewels and precious stones, to draw out the barber into a confession that he had something of the sort to dispose of; and, moreover, they fully intended to take away the dog, with the care of which Captain Rathbone charged himself. We may pass over the pleasant, social evening which the colonel passed with the amiable family of the Rathbones, and, skipping likewise a conversation of some strange and confused dreams which Jeffery had during the night concerning his friend Thornhill, we will presume that both the colonel and the captain have breakfasted, and that they have proceeded to London and are at the shop of a clothier in the neighbourhood of the Strand, in order to procure coats, wigs, and hats, that should disguise them for their visit to Sweeney Todd. Then, arm in arm, they walked towards Fleet-street, and soon arrived opposite the little shop within which there appears to be so much mystery.

"The dog, you perceive, is not here," said the colonel; "I had my suspicions, however, when I passed with Johanna Oakley that something was amiss with him, and I have no doubt but that the rascally barber has fairly compassed his destruction."

"If the barber be innocent," said Captain Rathbone, "you must admit that it would be one of the most confoundedly annoying things in the world to have a dog continually at his door assuming such an aspect of accusation, and in that case I can scarcely wonder at his putting the creature out of the way."

"No, presuming upon his innocence, certainly; but we will say nothing about all that, and remember we must come in as perfect strangers, knowing nothing of the affair of the dog, and presuming nothing about the disappearance of any one in this locality."

"Agreed, come on; if he should see us through the window, hanging about at all or hesitating, his suspicions will be at once awakened, and we shall do no good."

They both entered the shop and found Sweeney Todd wearing an extraordinary singular appearance, for there was a black patch over one of his eyes, which was kept in its place by a green riband that went round his head, so that he looked more fierce and diabolical than ever; and having shaved off a small whisker that he used to wear, his countenance, although to the full as hideous as ever, certainly had a different character of ugliness to that which had before characterised it, and attracted the attention of the colonel. That gentleman would hardly have known him again any where but in his own shop, and when we come to consider Sweeney Todd's adventures of the preceding evening, we shall feel not surprised that he saw the necessity of endeavouring to make as much change in his appearance as possible, for fear he should

come across any of the parties who had chased him, and who, for all he knew to the contrary, might, quite unsuspectingly, drop in to be shaved in the course of the morning, perhaps to retail at that acknowledged mart for all sorts of gossip--a barber's shop--some of the very incidents which he has so well qualified himself to relate.

"Shaved and dressed, gentlemen?" said Sweeney Todd, as his customers made their appearance.

"Shaved only." said Captain Rathbone, who had agreed to be principal spokesman, in case Sweeney Todd should have any remembrance of the colonel's voice, and so suspect him.

"Pray be seated," said Sweeney Todd to Colonel Jeffery. "I'll soon polish off your friend, sir, and then I'll begin upon you. Would you like to see the morning paper, sir? it's at your service. I was just looking myself, sir, at a most mysterious circumstance, if it's true, but you can't believe, you know sir, all that is put in newspapers."

"Thank you--thank you," said the colonel.

Captain Rathbone sat down to be shaved, for he had purposely omitted that operation at home, in order that it should not appear a mere excuse to get into Sweeney Todd's shop.

"Why, sir," continued Sweeney Todd, "as I was saying, it is a most remarkable circumstance."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir, an old gentleman of the name of Fidler had been to receive a sum of money at the west-end of the town, and has never been heard of since; that was yesterday, sir, and here is a description of him in the papers of to-day. 'A snuff-coloured coat, and velvet smalls--black velvet, I should have said--silk stockings, and silver shoe-buckles, and a gold-headed cane, with W. D. F. upon it, meaning "William Dumpedown Fidler"--a most mysterious affair, gentlemen."

A sort of groan came from the corner of the shop, and, on the impulse of the moment, Colonel Jeffery sprang to his feet, exclaiming--

"What's that--what's that?"

"Oh, it's only my apprentice, Tobias Ragg. He has got a pain in his stomach from eating too many of Lovett's pork pies. Aint that it, Tobias, my bud?"

"Yes, sir," said Tobias with another groan.

"Oh, indeed," said the colonel, "it ought to make him more careful for the future."

"It's to be hoped it will, sir; Tobias, do you hear what this gentleman says: it ought to make you more careful in future. I am too indulgent to

you, that's the fact. Now, sir, I believe you are as clean shaved as ever you were in your life."

"Why, yes," said Captain Rathbone, "I think that will do very well; and now, Mr. Green"--addressing the colonel by that assumed name--"and now, Mr. Green, be quick, or we shall be too late for the duke, and so lose the sale of some of our jewels."

"We shall indeed," said the colonel, "if we don't mind. We sat too long over our breakfast at the inn, and his grace is too rich and too good a customer to lose--he don't mind what price he gives for things that take his fancy, or the fancy of his duchess."

"Jewel merchants, gentlemen, I presume," said Sweeney Todd.

"Yes, we have been in that line for some time; and by one of us trading in one direction, and the other in another, we manage extremely well, because we exchange what suits our different customers, and keep up two distinct connexions."

"A very good plan," said Sweeney Todd. "I'll be as quick as I can with you, sir. Dealing in jewels is better than shaving."

"I dare say it is."

"Of course, it is, sir; here have I been slaving for some years in this shop, and not done much good--that is to say, when I talk of not having done much good, I admit I have made enough to retire upon quietly and comfortably, and I mean to do so very shortly. There you are, sir, shaved with celerity you seldom meet with, and as clean as possible, for the small charge of one penny. Thank you, gentlemen--there's your change; good morning."

They had no resource but to leave the shop; and when they had gone Sweeney Todd, as he stropped the razor he had been using upon his hand, gave a most diabolical grin, muttering--

"Clever--very ingenious--but it won't do. Oh dear, no, not at all! I am not so easily taken in--diamond merchants, ah! ah! and no objection, of course, to deal in pearls--a good jest that, truly, a capital jest. If I had been accustomed to be so easily defeated, I had not now been here a living man. Tobias, Tobias, I say."

"Yes, sir," said the lad, dejectedly.

"Have you forgotten your mother's danger in case you breathe a syllable of anything that has occurred here, or that you think has occurred here, or so much as dream of?"

"No," said the boy, "indeed I have not. I never can forget it, if I were to live a hundred years."

"That's well, prudent, excellent, Tobias. Go out now, and if those two persons who were here last, waylay you in the street, let them say what

they will, and do you reply to them as shortly as possible; but be sure you come back to me quickly and report what they do say. They turned to the left, towards the city--now be off with you."

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"It's of no use," said Colonel Jeffery to the captain; "the barber is either too cunning for me, or he is really innocent of all participation in the disappearance of Thornhill."

"And yet there are suspicious circumstances. I watched his countenance when the subject of jewels was mentioned, and I saw a sudden change come over it; it was but momentary, but still it gave me a suspicion that he knew something which caution alone kept within the recesses of his breast. The conduct of the boy, too, was strange; and then again, if he has the string of pearls, their value would give him all the power to do what he says he is about to do--viz., to retire from business with an independence."

"Hush! There, did you see that lad?"

"Yes; why it's the barber's boy."

"It is the same lad he called Tobias--shall we speak to him?"

"Let's make a bolder push, and offer him an ample reward for any information he may give us."

"Agreed, agreed."

They both walked up to Tobias, who was listlessly walking along the streets, and when they reached him, they were both struck with the appearance of care and sadness that was upon the boy's face. He looked perfectly haggard and careworn--an expression sad to see upon the face of one so young; and, when the colonel accosted him in a kindly tone, he seemed so unnerved that tears immediately darted to his eyes, although at the same time he shrank back as if alarmed.

"My lad," said the colonel, "you reside, I think, with Sweeney Todd, the barber. Is he not a kind master to you, that you seem so unhappy?"

"No, no--that is, I mean yes, I have nothing to tell. Let me pass on."

"What is the meaning of this confusion?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"I say, my lad, here is a guinea for you, if you will tell us what became of the man of a sea-faring appearance, who came with a dog to your master's house, some days since, to be shaved."

"I cannot tell you," said the boy, "I cannot tell you what I do not know."

"But, you have some idea, probably. Come, we will make it worth your while, and thereby protect you from Sweeney Todd. We have the power to do so, and all the inclination; but you must be quite explicit with us, and tell us frankly what you think, and what you know concerning the man in whose fate we are interested."

"I know nothing, I think nothing," said Tobias. "Let me go, I have nothing to say, except that he was shaved, and went away."

"But how came he to leave his dog behind him?"

"I cannot tell. I know nothing."

"It is evident that you do know something, but hesitate either from fear or some other motive to tell it; as you are inaccessible to fair means, we must resort to others, and you shall at once come before a magistrate, who will force you to speak out."

"Do with me what you will," said Tobias, "I cannot help it. I have nothing to say to you, nothing whatever. Oh, my poor mother, if it were not for you--"

"What then?"

"Nothing! nothing! nothing!"

It was but a threat of the colonel to take the boy before a magistrate, for he had really no grounds for so doing; and if the boy chose to keep a secret, if he had one, not all the magistrates in the world could force words from his lips that he felt not inclined to utter; and so, after one more effort, they felt that they must leave him.

"Boy," said the colonel, "you are young, and cannot well judge of the consequences of particular lines of conduct; you ought to weigh well what you are about, and hesitate long before you determine keeping dangerous secrets: we can convince you that we have the power of completely protecting you from all that Sweeney Todd could possibly attempt. Think again, for this is an opportunity of saving yourself perhaps from much future misery, that may never arise again."

"I have nothing to say," said the boy, "I have nothing to say."

He uttered these words with such an agonized expression of countenance, that they were both convinced he had something to say, and that, too, of the first importance--a something which would be valuable to them in the way of information, extremely valuable probably, and yet which they felt the utter impossibility of wringing from him. They were compelled to leave him, and likewise with the additional mortification, that, far from making any advance in the matter, they had placed themselves and their cause in a much worse position, in so far as they had awakened all Sweeney Todd's suspicions if he were guilty, and yet advanced not one step in the transaction. And then, to make the matter all the more perplexing, there was still the possibility that they might be altogether upon a wrong scent, and that the barber of Fleet-street had

no more to do with the disappearance of Mr. Thornhill than they had themselves.

## CHAPTER XI. THE STRANGER AT LOVETT'S.

Towards the dusk of the evening of that day, after the last batch of pies at Lovett's had been disposed of, there walked into the shop a man most miserably clad, and who stood for a few moments staring with weakness and hunger at the counter before he spoke. Mrs. Lovett was there, but she had no smile for him, and instead of its usual bland expression, her countenance wore an aspect of anger, as she forestalled what the man had to say, by exclaiming--

"Go away, we never give anything to beggars."

There came a flush of colour for the moment across the features of the stranger, and then he replied--

"Mistress Lovett, I do not come to ask alms of you, but to know if you can recommend me to any employment?"

"Recommend you! recommend a ragged wretch like you?"

"I am a ragged wretch, and, moreover, quite destitute. In better times I have sat at your counter, and paid cheerfully for what I wanted, and then one of your softest smiles has ever been at my disposal. I do not say this as a reproach to you, because the cause of your smile was well known to be a self-interested one, and when that cause had passed away, I can no longer expect it; but I am so situated, that I am willing to do anything for a mere subsistence."

"Oh, yes, and then when you get into a better case again, I have no doubt but you have quite sufficient insolence to make you unbearable; besides, what employment can we have but pie-making, and we have a man already who suits us very well with the exception that he, as you would do if we were to exchange him, has grown insolent, and fancies himself master of the place."

[Illustration: The Stranger At Mrs. Lovett's Pie Shop.]

"Well, well," said the stranger, "of course, there is always sufficient argument against the poor and destitute to keep them so. If you will assert that my conduct will be the nature you describe, it is quite impossible for me to prove the contrary."

He turned and was about to leave the shop, but Mrs. Lovett called after him saying--

"Come in again in two hours."

He paused a moment or two, and then, turning his emaciated countenance upon her, said--

"I will if my strength permit me--water from the pumps in the street is but a poor thing for a man to subsist upon for twenty-four hours."

"You may take one pie."

The half-famished, miserable-looking man seized upon a pie, and devoured it in an instant.

"My name," he said, "is Jarvis Williams; I'll be here, never fear, Mrs. Lovett, in two hours; and, notwithstanding all you have said, you shall find no change in my behaviour because I may be well kept and better clothed; but if I should feel dissatisfied with my situation, I will leave it, and no harm done."

So saying, he walked from the shop, and when he was gone, a strange expression came across the countenance of Mrs. Lovett, and she said in a low tone to herself--

"He might suit for a few months, like the rest, and it is clear that we must get rid of the one we have; I must think of it."

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There is a cellar of vast extent, and of dim and sepulchral aspect--some rough red tiles are laid upon the floor, and pieces of flint and large jagged stones have been hammered into the earthen walls to strengthen them; while here and there rough huge pillars made by beams of timber rise perpendicularly from the floor, and prop large flat pieces of wood against the ceiling, to support it. Here and there gleaming lights seem to be peeping out from furnaces, and there is a strange hissing, simmering sound going on, while the whole air is impregnated with a rich and savoury vapour. This is Lovett's pie manufactory beneath the pavement of Bell-yard and at this time a night-batch of some thousands is being made for the purpose of being sent by carts the first thing in the morning all over the suburbs of London. By the earliest dawn of day a crowd of itinerant hawkers of pies would make their appearance, carrying off a large quantity to regular customers who had them daily, and no more thought of being without them, than of forbidding the milkman or the baker to call at their residences. It will be seen and understood, therefore, that the retail part of Mrs. Lovett's business, which took place principally between the hours of twelve and one, was by no means the most important or profitable portion of a concern which was really of immense magnitude, and which brought in a large yearly income. To stand in the cellar when this immense manufacture of what, at first sight, would appear such a trivial article was carried on, and to look about as far as the eye could reach, was by no means to have a sufficient idea of the extent of the place; for there were as many doors in different directions and singular low-arched entrances to different vaults, which all appeared as black as midnight, that one might almost suppose the inhabitants of all the surrounding neighbourhood had, by

common consent given up their cellars to Lovett's pie factory. There is but one miserable light, except the occasional fitful glare that comes from the ovens where the pies are stewing, hissing, and spluttering in their own luscious gravy. There is but one man, too, throughout all the place, and he is sitting on a low three-legged stool in one corner, with his head resting upon his hands, and gently rocking to and fro, as he utters scarcely audible moans. He is but lightly clad; in fact, he seems to have but little on him except a shirt and a pair of loose canvas trousers. The sleeves of the former are turned up beyond his elbows, and on his head he has a white night-cap. It seems astonishing that such a man, even with the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, could make so many pies as are required in a day; but then, system does wonders, and in those cellars there are various mechanical contrivances for kneading the dough, chopping up the meat, &c., which greatly reduced the labour. But what a miserable object is that man--what a sad and soul-stricken wretch he looks! His face is pale and haggard, his eyes deeply sunken; and, as he removes his hands from before his visage, and looks about him, a more perfect picture of horror could not have been found.

"I must leave to-night," he said, in coarse accents--"I must leave to-night. I know too much--my brain is full of horrors. I have not slept now for five nights, nor dare I eat anything but the raw flour. I will leave to-night if they do not watch me too closely. Oh! if I could but get into the streets--if I could but once again breathe the fresh air! Hush! what's that? I thought I heard a noise."

He rose, and stood trembling and listening; but all was still, save the simmering and hissing of the pies, and then he resumed his seat with a deep sigh.

"All the doors fastened upon me," he said, "what can it mean? It's very horrible, and my heart dies within me. Six weeks only have I been here--only six weeks. I was starving before I came. Alas, alas! how much better to have starved! I should have been dead before now, and spared all this agony."

"Skinner!" cried a voice, and it was a female one--"Skinner, how long will the ovens be?"

"A quarter of an hour--a quarter of an hour, Mrs. Lovett. God help me!"

"What is that you say?"

"I said, God help me!--surely a man may say that without offence."

A door slammed shut, and the miserable man was alone again.

"How strangely," he said, "on this night my thoughts go back to early days, and to what I once was. The pleasant scenes of my youth recur to me. I see again the ivy-mantled porch, and the pleasant village green. I hear again the merry ringing laughter of my playmates, and there, in my mind's eye, appears to me the bubbling stream, and the ancient mill, the old mansion-house, with its tall turrets, and its air of silent grandeur. I hear the music of the birds, and the winds making rough

melody among the trees. 'Tis very strange that all those sights and sounds should come back to me at such a time as this, as if just to remind me what a wretch I am."

He was silent for a few moments, during which he trembled with emotion; then he spoke again, saying--

"Thus the forms of those whom I once knew, and many of whom have gone already to the silent tomb, appear to come thronging round me. They bend their eyes momentarily upon me, and, with settled expressions, show acutely the sympathy they feel for me. I see her, too, who first, in my bosom, lit up the flame of soft affection. I see her gliding past me like the dim vision of a dream, indistinct, but beautiful; no more than a shadow--and yet to me most palpable. What am I now--what am I now?"

He resumed his former position, with his head resting upon his hands; he rocked himself slowly to and fro, uttering those moans of a tortured spirit, which we have before noticed. But see, one of the small arch doors open, in the gloom of those vaults, and a man, in a stooping posture, creeps in--a half-mask is upon his face, and he wears a cloak; but both his hands are at liberty. In one of them he carries a double-headed hammer, with a powerful handle, of about ten inches in length. He has probably come out of a darker place than the one into which he now so cautiously creeps, for he shades the light from his eyes, as if it were suddenly rather too much for him, and then he looks cautiously round the vault, until he sees the crouched-up figure of the man whose duty it is to attend the ovens. From that moment he looks at nothing else; but advances towards him, steadily and cautiously. It is evident that great secrecy is his object, for he is walking on his stocking soles only; and it is impossible to hear the slightest sounds of his foot-steps. Nearer and nearer he comes, so slowly, and yet so surely, towards him, who still keeps up the low moaning sound, indicative of mental anguish. Now he is close to him, and he bends over him for a moment, with a look of fiendish malice. It is a look which, despite his mask, glances full from his eyes, and then grasping the hammer tightly, in both hands, he raises it slowly above his head, and gives it a swinging motion through the air. There is no knowing what induced the man that was crouching on the stool to rise at that moment; but he did so, and paced about with great quickness. A sudden shriek burst from his lips, as he beheld so terrific an apparition before him; but, before he could repeat the word, the hammer descended, crushing into his skull, and he fell lifeless, without a moan.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And so, Mr. Jarvis Williams, you have kept your word," said Mrs. Lovett to the emaciated, care-worn stranger, who had solicited employment of her, "and so, Jarvis Williams, you have kept your word, and come for employment?"

"I have, madam, and hope that you can give it to me: I frankly tell you that I would seek for something better, and more congenial to my disposition, if I could; but who would employ one presenting such a wretched appearance as I do? You see that I am all in rags, and I have

told you that I have been half starved, and therefore it is only some common and ordinary employment that I can hope to get, and that made me come to you."

"Well, I don't see why we should not make a trial of you, at all events, so if you like to go down into the bakehouse, I will follow you, and show you what you have to do. You remember that you have to live entirely upon the pies, unless you like to purchase for yourself anything else, which you may do if you can get the money. We give none, and you must likewise agree never to leave the bakehouse."

"Never to leave it?"

"Never, unless you leave it for good, and for all; if upon those conditions you choose to accept the situation, you may, and if not, you can go about your business at once, and leave it alone."

"Alas, madam, I have no resource; but you spoke of having a man already."

"Yes; but he has gone to his friends; he has gone to some of his very oldest friends, who will be quite glad to see him, so now say the word:--are you willing or are you not, to take the situation?"

"My poverty and my destitution consent, if my will be averse, Mrs. Lovett; but, of course, I quite understand that I leave when I please."

"Oh, of course, we never think of keeping anybody many hours after they begin to feel uncomfortable. If you be ready, follow me."

"I am quite ready, and thankful for a shelter. All the brightest visions of my early life have long since faded away, and it matters little or indeed nothing what now becomes of me; I will follow you, madam, freely, upon the conditions you have mentioned."

Mrs. Lovett lifted up a portion of the counter which permitted him to pass behind it, and then he followed her into a small room, which was at the back of the shop. She then took a key from her pocket, and opened an old door which was in the wainscoting, and immediately behind which was a flight of stairs. These she descended, and Jarvis Williams followed her, to a considerable depth, after which she took an iron bar from behind another door, and flung it open, showing her new assistant the interior of that vault which we have already very briefly described.

"These," she said, "are the ovens, and I will proceed to show you how you can manufacture the pies, feed the furnaces, and make yourself generally useful. Flour will be always let down through a trap-door from the upper shop, as well as everything required for making the pies but the meat, and that you will always find ranged upon shelves either in lumps or steaks, in a small room through this door, but it is only at particular times you will find the door open; and whenever you do so, you had better always take out what meat you think you will require for the next batch."

"I understand all that, madam," said Williams, "but how does it get there?"

"That's no business of yours; so long as you are supplied with it, that is sufficient for you; and now I will go through the process of making one pie, so that you may know how to proceed, and you will find with what amazing quickness they can be manufactured if you set about them in the proper manner."

She then showed him how a piece of meat thrown into a machine became finely minced up, by merely turning a handle; and then how flour and water and lard were mixed up together, to make the crust of the pies, by another machine, which threw out the paste thus manufactured in small pieces, each just large enough for a pie. Lastly, she showed him how a tray, which just held a hundred, could be filled, and, by turning a windlass, sent up to the shop, through a square trap-door, which went right up to the very counter.

"And now," she said, "I must leave you. As long as you are industrious you will go on very well, but as soon as you begin to be idle, and neglect the orders which are sent to you by me, you will get a piece of information which will be useful, and which if you be a prudent man will enable you to know what you are about."

"What is that? you may as well give it to me now."

"No; we seldom find there is occasion for it at first, but, after a time, when you get well fed, you are pretty sure to want it."

So saying she left the place, and he heard the door by which he had entered, carefully barred after her. Suddenly then he heard her voice again, and so clearly and distinctly, too, that he thought she must have come back again; but upon looking up at the door, he found that that arose from her speaking through a small grating at the upper part of it, to which her mouth was closely placed.

"Remember your duty," she said, "and I warn you, that any attempt to leave here will be as futile as it will be dangerous."

"Except with your consent, when I relinquish the situation."

"Oh, certainly--certainly, you are quite right there, everybody who relinquishes the situation goes to his old friends, whom he has not seen for many years, perhaps."

"What a strange manner of talking she has!" said Jarvis Williams to himself, when he found he was alone. "There seems to be some singular and hidden meaning in every word she utters. What can she mean by a communication being made to me, if I neglect my duty! It is very strange; and what a singular looking place this is! I think it would be quite unbearable if it were not for the delightful odour of the pies, and they are indeed delicious--perhaps more delicious to me, who has been famished so long, and have gone through so much wretchedness; there is no one here but myself, and I am hungry now--frightfully hungry, and

whether the pies be done or not, I'll have half a dozen of them at any rate, so here goes."

He opened one of the ovens, and the fragrant steam that came out was perfectly delicious, and he sniffed it up with a satisfaction such as he had never felt before, as regards anything that was eatable.

"Is it possible," he said "that I shall be able to make such delicious pies? At all events one can't starve here, and if it be a kind of imprisonment, it's a pleasant one. Upon my soul, they are nice, even half-cooked--delicious! I'll have another half-dozen, there are lots of them--delightful! I can't keep the gravy from running out of the corners of my mouth. Upon my soul, Mrs. Lovett, I don't know where you get your meat, but it's all as tender as young chickens, and the fat actually melts away in one's mouth. Ah, these are pies, something like pies!--they are positively fit for the gods!"

Mrs. Lovett's new man ate twelve threepenny pies, and then he thought of leaving off. It was a little drawback not to have anything to wash them down with but cold water; but he reconciled himself to this.

"For," as he said, "after all it would be a pity to take the flavour of such pies out of one's mouth--indeed it would be a thousand pities, so I won't think of it, but just put up with what I have got and not complain. I might have gone further and fared worse with a vengeance, and I cannot help looking upon it as a singular piece of good fortune that made me think of coming here in my deep distress to try and get something to do. I have no friends and no money; she whom I loved is faithless, and here I am, master of as many pies as I like, and to all appearance monarch of all I survey; for there really seems to be no one to dispute my supremacy. To be sure my kingdom is rather a gloomy one; but then I can abdicate it when I like, and when I am tired of those delicious pies, if such a thing be possible, which I really very much doubt, I can give up my situation, and think of something else. If I do that, I will leave England for ever; it's no place for me after the many disappointments I have had. No friend left me--my girl false--not a relation but who would turn his back upon me! I will go somewhere where I am unknown and can form new connexions, and perhaps make new friendships of a more permanent and stable character than the old ones, which have all proved so false to me; and, in the meantime, I'll make and eat pies as fast as I can."

## CHAPTER XII. THE RESOLUTION COME TO BY JOHANNA OAKLEY.

The beautiful Johanna--when in obedience to the command of her father she left him, and begged him (the beef-eater) to manage matters with the Rev. Mr. Lupin--did not proceed directly up stairs to her apartment, but lingered on the staircase to hear what ensued; and if anything in her dejected state of mind could have given her amusement, it would

certainly have been the way in which the beef-eater exacted a retribution from the reverend personage, who was not likely again to intrude himself into the house of the spectacle-maker. But when he was gone, and she heard that a sort of peace had been patched up with her mother--a peace which, from her knowledge of the high contracting parties, she conjectured would not last long--she returned to her room, and locked herself in; so that if any attempt were made to get her down to partake of the supper, it might be supposed she was asleep, for she felt herself totally unequal to the task of making one in any party, however much she might respect the individual members that composed it. And she did respect Ben the beef-eater; for she had a lively recollection of much kindness from him during her early years, and she knew that he had never come to the house when she was a child without bringing her some token of his regard in the shape of a plaything, or some little article of doll's finery, which at that time was very precious. She was not wrong in her conjectures that Ben would make an attempt to get her down stairs, for her father came up at the beef-eater's request, and tapped at her door. She thought the best plan, as indeed it was, would be to make no answer, so that the old spectacle-maker concluded at once what she wished him to conclude, namely, that she had gone to sleep; and he walked quietly down the stairs again, glad that he had not disturbed her, and told Ben as much. Now, feeling herself quite secure from interruption for the night, Johanna did not attempt to seek repose, but set herself seriously to reflect upon what had occurred. She almost repeated to herself, word for word, what Colonel Jeffery had told her; and, as she revolved the matter over and over again in her brain, a strange thought took possession of her, which she could not banish, and which, when once it found a home within her breast, began to gather probability from every slight circumstance that was in any way connected with it. This thought, strange as it may appear, was, that the Mr. Thornhill, of whom Colonel Jeffery spoke in terms of such high eulogium, was no other than Mark Ingestrie himself. It is astonishing, when once a thought occurs to the mind, that makes a strong impression, how, with immense rapidity, a rush of evidence will appear to come to support it. And thus it was with regard to this supposition of Johanna Oakley. She immediately remembered a host of little things which favoured the idea, and among the rest, she fully recollected that Mark Ingestrie had told her he meant to change his name when he left England; for that he wished her and her only to know anything of him, or what had become of him; and that his intention was to baffle inquiry, in case it should be made, particularly by Mr. Grant, towards whom he felt a far greater amount of indignation, than the circumstances at all warranted him in feeling. Then she recollected all that Colonel Jeffery had said with regard to the gallant and noble conduct of this Mr. Thornhill, and, girl like, she thought that those high and noble qualities could surely belong to no one but her own lover, to such an extent; and that, therefore, Mr. Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie must be one and the same person. Over and over again, she regretted she had not asked Colonel Jeffery for a personal description of Mr. Thornhill, for that would have settled all her doubts at once, and the idea that she had it still in her power to do so, in consequence of the appointment he had made with her for that day week brought her some consolation.

"It must have been he," she said; "his anxiety to leave the ship, and get here by the day he mentions, proves it; besides, how improbable it is, that at the burning of the ill-fated vessel, Ingestrie should place in the hands of another what he intended for me, when that other was quite as likely, and perhaps more so, to meet with death as Mark himself."

Thus she reasoned, forcing herself each moment into a stronger belief of the identity of Thornhill with Mark Ingestrie, and so certainly narrowing her anxieties to a consideration of the fate of one person instead of two.

"I will meet Colonel Jeffery," she said, "and ask him if this Mr. Thornhill had fair hair, and a soft and pleasing expression about the eyes, that could not fail to be remembered. I will ask him how he spoke, and how he looked; and get him, if he can, to describe to me even the very tones of his voice; and then I shall be sure, without the shadow of a doubt, that it is Mark. But then, oh! then comes the anxious question, of what has been his fate?"

When poor Johanna began to consider the multitude of things that might have happened to her lover during his progress from Sweeney Todd's, in Fleet-street, to her father's house, she became quite lost in a perfect maze of conjecture, and then her thoughts always painfully reverted back to the barber's shop where the dog had been stationed; and she trembled to reflect for a moment upon the frightful danger to which that string of pearls might have subjected him.

"Alas! alas!" she cried, "I can well conceive that the man whom I saw attempting to poison the dog would be capable of any enormity. I saw his face but for a moment, and yet it was one never again to be forgotten. It was a face in which might be read cruelty and evil passions; besides, the man who would put an unoffending animal to a cruel death, shows an absence of feeling, and a baseness of mind, which make him capable of any crime he thinks he can commit with impunity. What can I do--oh! what can I do to unravel this mystery?"

No one could have been more tenderly and gently brought up than Johanna Oakley, but yet, inhabitive of her heart, was a spirit and a determination which few indeed could have given her credit for, by merely looking on the gentle and affectionate countenance which she ordinarily presented. But it is no new phenomenon in the history of the human heart to find that some of the most gentle and loveliest of human creatures are capable of the highest efforts of perversion; and when Johanna Oakley told herself, which she did, she was determined to devote her existence to a discovery of the mystery that enveloped the fate of Mark Ingestrie, she likewise made up her mind that the most likely man for accomplishing that object should not be rejected by her on the score of danger, and she at once set to work considering what those means should be. This seemed an endless task, but still she thought that if, by any means whatever, she could get admittance to the barber's house, she might be able to come to some conclusion as to whether or not it was there where Thornhill, whom she believed to be Ingestrie, had been stayed in his progress.

"Aid me Heaven," she cried, "in the adoption of some means of action on the occasion. Is there any one with whom I dare advise? Alas! I fear not, for the only person in whom I have put my whole heart is my father, and his affection for me would prompt him at once to interpose every possible obstacle to my proceeding, for fear danger should come of it. To be sure, there is Arabella Wilmot, my old school fellow and bosom friend, she would advise me to the best of her ability, but I much fear she is too romantic and full of odd, strange actions, that she has taken from books, to be a good adviser; and yet what can I do? I must speak to some one, if it be but in case any accident happening to me, my father may get news of it, and I know of no one else whom I can trust but Arabella."

After some little more consideration, Johanna made up her mind that on the following morning she would go to the house of her old school friend, which was in the immediate vicinity, and hold a conversation with her.

"I shall hear something," she said, "at least of a kindly and a consoling character; for what Arabella may want in calm and steady judgment, she fully compensates for in actual feeling, and what is most of all, I know I can trust her word implicitly, and that my secret will remain as safely locked in her breast as if it were in my own."

It was something to come to a conclusion to ask advice, and she felt that some portion of her anxiety was lifted from her mind by the mere fact that she had made so firm a mental resolution, that neither danger nor difficulty should deter her from seeking to know the fate of her lover. She retired to rest now with a greater hope, and while she is courting repose, notwithstanding the chance of the discovered images that fancy may present to her in her slumbers, we will take a glance at the parlour below, and see how far Mrs. Oakley is conveying out the pacific intention she had so tacitly expressed, and how the supper is going forward, which, with not the best grace in the world, she is preparing for her husband, who for the first time in his life had begun to assert his rights, and for big Ben, the beef-eater, whom she as cordially disliked as it was possible for any woman to detest any man. Mrs. Oakley by no means preserved her taciturn demeanour, for after a little she spoke, saying--

"There's nothing tasty in the house; suppose I run over the way to Waggarge's, and get some of those Epping sausages with the peculiar flavour."

"Ah, do," said Mr. Oakley, "they are beautiful, Ben, I can assure you."

"Well, I don't know," said Ben the beef-eater, "sausages are all very well in their way, but you need such a plaguey lot of them; for if you only eat them one at a time, how soon will you get through a dozen or two."

"A dozen or two," said Mrs. Oakley; "why, there are only five to a pound."

"Then," said Ben, making a mental calculation, "then, I think, ma'am, that you ought not to get more than nine pounds of them, and that will be a matter of forty-five mouthfuls for us."

"Get nine pounds of them," said Mr. Oakley, "if they be wanted; I know Ben has an appetite."

"Indeed," said Ben, "but I have fell off lately, and don't take to my wittals as I used; you can order, missus, if you please, a gallon of half-and-half as you go along. One must have a drain of drink of some sort; and mind you don't be going to any expense on my account, and getting anything but the little snack I have mentioned, for ten to one I shall take supper when I get to the Tower; only human nature is weak, you know, missus, and requires something to be a continually a holding of it up."

"Certainly," said Mr. Oakley, "certainly, have what you like, Ben; just say the word before Mrs. Oakley goes out; is there anything else?"

"No, no," said Ben, "oh dear no, nothing to speak of; but if you should pass a shop where they sells fat bacon, about four or five pounds, cut into rashers, you'll find, missus, will help down the blessed sausages."

"Gracious Providence," said Mrs. Oakley, "who is to cook it?"

"Who is to cook it, ma'am? why the kitchen fire, I suppose; but mind ye if the man aint got any sausages, there's a shop where they sells biled beef at the corner, and I shall be quite satisfied if you brings in about ten or twelve pounds of that. You can make it up into about half a dozen sandwiches."

"Go, my dear, go at once," said Mr. Oakley, "and get Ben his supper. I am quite sure he wants it, and be as quick as you can."

"Ah," said Ben, when Mrs. Oakley was gone, "I didn't tell you how I was sarved last week at Mrs. Harveys. You know they are so precious genteel there that they don't speak above their blessed breaths for fear of wearing themselves out; and they sits down in a chair as if it were balanced only on one leg, and a little more one way or t'other would upset them. Then, if they sees a crumb a laying on the floor they rings the bell, and a poor half-starved devil of a servant comes and says, 'Did you ring, ma'am?' and then they says 'Yes, bring a dust-shovel and a broom, there is a crumb a laying there,' and then says I--'Damn you all,' says I, 'bring a scavenger's cart, and half-dozen birch brooms, there's a cinder just fell out of the fire.' Then in course they gets shocked, and looks as blue as possible, and arter that, when they see as I aint agoing, one of them says 'Mr. Benjamin Blumergutts, would you like to take a glass of wine?' 'I should think so,' says I. Then he says, says he, 'which would you prefer, red or white?' says he. 'White,' says I, 'while you are screwing up your courage to pull out the red,' so out they pull it; and as soon as I got hold of the bottle, I knocked the neck of it off over the top bar of the fire-place, and then drank it all up. 'Now, damn ye,' says I, 'you thinks all this is mighty genteel and

fine, but I don't, and consider you to be the blessedest set of humbugs ever I set my eyes on; and, if ever you catch me here again, I'll be genteel too, and I can't say more than that. Go to the devil, all of ye.' So out I went, only I met with a little accident in the hall, for they had got a sort of lamp hanging there, and somehow or 'nother, my head went bang into it, and I carried it out round my neck; but when I did get out, I took it off, and shied it slap in at the parlour window. You never heard such a smash in all your life. I dare say they all fainted away for about a week, the blessed humbugs."

"Well, I should not wonder," said Mr. Oakley, "I never go near them, because I don't like their foolish pomposity and pride, which, upon very slender resources, tries to ape what it don't at all understand; but here is Mrs. Oakley with the sausages, and I hope you will make yourself comfortable, Ben."

"Comfortable! I believe ye, I rather shall. I means it, and no mistake."

"I have brought three pounds," said Mrs. Oakley, "and told the man to call in a quarter of an hour, in case there is any more wanted."

"The devil you have; and the bacon, Mrs. Oakley, the bacon!"

"I could not get any--the man had nothing but hams."

"Lor', ma'am, I'd put up with a ham cut thick, and never have said a word about it. I am a angel of a temper, and if you did but know it. Hilloa, look, is that the fellow with the half-and half?"

"Yes, here it is--a pot."

"A what?"

"A pot, to be sure."

"Well, I never; you are getting genteel, Mrs. Oakley. Then give us a hold of it."

Ben took the pot, and emptied it at a draught, and then he gave a tap at the bottom of it with his knuckles, to signify that he had accomplished that feat, and then he said, "I tells you what, ma'am, if you takes me for a baby, it's a great mistake, and any one would think you did, to see you offering me a pot merely; it's an insult, ma'am."

"Fiddle-de-dee," said Mrs. Oakley; "it's a much greater insult to drink it all up, and give nobody a drop."

"Is it? I wants to know how you are to stop it, ma'am, when you gets it to your mouth? that's what I axes you--how are you to stop it, ma'am? You didn't want me to spew it back again, did you, eh, ma'am?"

"You vile, low wretch!"

"Come, come, my dear," said Mr. Oakley, "you know our cousin. Ben don't

live among the most refined society, and so you ought to be able to look over a little of--of--his--I may say, I am sure, without offence, roughness now and then;--come, come, there is no harm done, I'm sure. Forget and forgive say I. That's my maxim, and has always been, and will always be."

"Well," said the beef-eater, "it's a good one to get through the world with, and so there's an end of it. I forgives you, Mother Oakley."

"You forgive--"

"Yes, to be sure. Though I am only a beef-eater, I suppose as I may forgive people for all that--eh, Cousin Oakley?"

"Oh, of course, Ben, of course. Come, come, wife, you know as well as I that Ben has many good qualities, and that take him for all in all, as the man in the play says, we shan't in a hurry look upon his like again."

"And I'm sure I don't want to look upon his like again," said Mrs. Oakley; "I'd rather by a good deal keep him a week than a fortnight. He's enough to breed a famine in the land, that he is."

"Oh, bless you, no," said Ben, "that's amongst your little mistakes, ma'am, I can assure you. By the bye, what a blessed long time that fellow is coming with the rest of the beer and the other sausages--why, what's the matter with you, cousin Oakley--eh, old chap, you look out of sorts?"

"I don't feel just the thing, do you know, Ben."

"Not--the thing--why--why, now you come to mention it, I somehow feel as if all my blessed inside was on a turn and a twist. The devil--I--don't feel comfortable at all I don't."

"And I'm getting very ill," gasped Mr. Oakley.

"And I'm getting iller," said the beef-eater, manufacturing a word for the occasion. "Bless my soul! there's something gone wrong in my inside. I know there's murder--there's a go--oh, Lord! it's a doubling me up, it is."

"I feel as if my last hour had come," said Mr. Oakley--"I'm a--a--dying man--I am--oh, good gracious! there was a twinge!"

Mrs. Oakley, with all the coolness in the world, took down her bonnet from behind the parlour-door where it hung, and, as she put it on said,--

"I told you both that some judgment would come over you, and now you see it has. How do you like it? Providence is good, of course, to its own, and I have--"

"What--what--?"

"\_Pisoned\_ the half-and-half."

Big Ben, the beef-eater, fell off his chair with a deep groan, and poor Mr. Oakley sat glaring at his wife, and shivering with apprehension, quite unable to speak, while she placed a shawl over her shoulders, as she added in the same tone of calmness she had made the terrific announcement concerning the poisoning--

"Now, you wretches, you see what a woman can do when she makes up her mind for vengeance. As long as you all live, you'll recollect me; but, if you don't, that won't much matter, for you won't live long, I can tell you, and now I'm going to my sister's, Mrs. Tiddiblow."

So saying, Mrs. Oakley turned quickly round, and, with an insulting toss of her head, and not at all caring for the pangs and sufferings of her poor victims, she left the place, and proceeded to her sister's house, where she slept as comfortably as if she had not by any means committed two diabolical murders. But has she done so, or shall we, for the honour of human nature, discover that she went to a neighbouring chemist's, and only purchased some dreadfully powerful medicinal compound, which she placed in the half-and-half, and which began to give those pangs to Big Ben, the beef-eater, and to Mr. Oakley, concerning which they were both so eloquent? This must have been the case; for Mrs. Oakley could not have been such a fiend in a human guise as to laugh as she passed the chemist's shop. Oh no! she might not have felt remorse, but that is a very different thing, indeed, from laughing at the matter, unless it were really laughable and not serious, at all. Big Ben and Mr. Oakley must have at length found out how they had been hoaxed, and the most probable thing was that the before-mentioned chemist himself told them; for they sent for him in order to know if anything could be done to save their lives. Ben from that day forthwith made a determination that he would not visit Mr. Oakley, and the next time they met he said--

"I tell you what it is, that old hag, your wife, is one too many for us, that's a fact; she gets the better of me altogether--so, whenever you feels a little inclined for a gossip about old times, just you come down to the Tower."

"I will, Ben."

"Do; we can always find something to drink, and you can amuse yourself, too, by looking at the animals. Remember, feeding time is two o'clock; so, now and then, I shall expect to see you, and, above all, be sure you let me know if that canting parson, Lupin, comes any more to your house."

"I will, Ben."

"Ah, do; and I'll give him another lesson if he should, and I tell you how I'll do it. I'll get a free admission to the wild \_beastesses\_ in the Tower, and when he comes to see 'em, for them 'ere sort of fellows always goes everywhere they can go for nothing, I'll just manage to pop him into a cage along of some of the most \_cantankerous\_ creatures as we

have."

"But would not that be dangerous?"

"Oh dear no! we has a laughing hyaena as would frighten him out of his wits; but I don't think as he'd bite him much, do you know. He's as playful as a kitten, and very fond of standing on his head."

"Well, then, Ben, I have, of course, no objection, although I do think that the lesson you have already given to the reverend gentleman will and ought to be fully sufficient for all purposes, and I don't expect we shall see him again."

"But how does Mrs. O. behave to you?" asked Ben.

"Well, Ben, I don't think there's much difference; sometimes she's a little civil, and sometimes she ain't; it's just as she takes it into her head."

"Ah! that all comes of marrying."

"I have often wondered, though, Ben, that you never married." Ben gave a chuckle as he replied--

"Have you though, really? Well, Cousin Oakley, I don't mind telling you, but the real fact is, once I was very near being served out in that sort of way."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I'll tell you how it was; there was a girl called Angelina Day, and a nice-looking enough creature she was as you'd wish to see, and didn't seem as if she'd got any claws at all; leastways she kept them in, like a cat at meal times."

"Upon my word, Ben, you have a great knowledge of the world."

"I believe you, I have! Haven't I been brought up among the wild beasts in the Tower all my life? That's the place to get a knowledge of the world in, my boy. I ought to know a thing or two, and in course I does."

"Well, but how was it, Ben, that you did not marry this Angelina you speak of?"

"I'll tell you; she thought she had me as safe as a hare in a trap, and she was as amiable as a lump of cotton. You'd have thought, to look at her, that she did nothing but smile; and, to hear her, that she said nothing but nice, mild, pleasant things, and I really began to think as I had found out the proper sort of animal."

"But you were mistaken?"

"I believe you, I was. One day I'd been there to see her, I mean, at her father's house, and she'd been as amiable as she could be; I got up to

go away, with a determination that the next time I got there I would ask her to say yes, and when I had got a little way out of the garden of the house where they lived--it was out of town some distance--I found I had left my little walking-cane behind me, so I goes back to get it, and when I got into the garden I heard a voice."

"Whose voice?"

"Why Angelina's, to be sure; she was speaking to a poor little dab of a servant they had; and oh, my eye! how she did rap out, to be sure! Such a speech as I never heard in all my life. She went on a matter of ten minutes without stopping, and every other word was some ill name or another; and her voice--oh, gracious! it was like a bundle of wire all of a tangle--it was."

"And what did you do, then, upon making such a discovery as that in so very odd and unexpected a manner?"

"Do! What do you suppose I did?"

"I really cannot say, as you are rather an eccentric fellow."

"Well then, I'll tell you. I went up to the house, and just popped in my head, and says I, 'Angelina, I find out that all cats have claws after all; good evening, and no more from your humble servant, who don't mind the job of taming any wild animal but a woman;' and then off I walked, and I never heard of her afterwards."

"Ah, Ben, it's true enough! You never know them beforehand; but after a little time, as you say, then out come the claws."

"They does--they does."

"And I suppose you since, then, made up your mind to be a bachelor for the rest of your life, Ben?"

"Of course I did. After such experience as that, I should have deserved all I got, and no mistake, I can tell you; and if ever you catches me paying any attention to a female woman, just put me in mind of Angelina Day, and you'll see how I shall be off at once like a shot."

"Ah!" said Mr. Oakley, with a sigh, "everybody, Ben, aint born with your good luck, I can tell you. You are a most fortunate man, Ben, and that's a fact. You must have been born under some lucky planet I think, Ben, or else you never would have had such a warning as you have had about the claws. I found 'em out, Ben, but it was a deal too late; so I had only to put up with my fate, and put the best face I could upon the matter."

"Yes, that's what learned folks call--what's its name--fill--fill--something."

"Philosophy, I suppose you mean, Ben."

"Ah, that's it--you must put up with what you can't help, it means, I

take it. It's a fine name for saying you must grin and bear it."

"I suppose that is about the truth, Ben."

It cannot, however, be exactly said that the little incident connected with Mr. Lupin had no good effect upon Mrs. Oakley, for it certainly shook most alarmingly her confidence in that pious individual. In the first place, it was quite clear that he shrank from the horrors of martyrdom; and, indeed, to escape any bodily inconvenience, was perfectly willing to put up with any amount of degradation or humiliation that he could be subjected to; and that was, to the apprehension of Mrs. Oakley, a great departure from what a saint ought to be. Then again, her faith in the fact that Mr. Lupin was such a chosen morsel as he had represented himself, was shaken from the circumstance that no miracle in the shape of a judgment had taken place to save him from the malevolence of Big Ben, the beef-eater; so that, taking one thing in connexion with another, Mrs. Oakley was not near so religious a character after that evening as she had been before it, and that was something gained. Then circumstances soon occurred, of which the reader will very shortly be fully aware, which were calculated to awaken all the feelings of Mrs. Oakley, if she had really any feelings to awaken, and to force her to make common cause with her husband in an affair that touched him to the very soul, and did succeed in awakening some feelings in her heart that had lain dormant for a long time, but which were still far from being completely destroyed. These circumstances were closely connected with the fate of one in whom we hope, that by this time, the reader has taken a deep and kindly interest--we mean Johanna--that young and beautiful, and gentle, creature, who seemed to have been created with all the capacity to be so very happy, and yet whose fate had become so clouded by misfortune, and who appears now to be doomed through her best affections to suffer so great an amount of sorrow, and to go through so many sad difficulties. Alas, poor Johanna Oakley! Better had you loved some one of less aspiring feelings, and of less ardent imagination, than he possessed to whom you have given your heart's young affections. It is true that Mark Ingestrie possessed genius, and perhaps it was the glorious light that hovers around that fatal gift which prompted you to love him. But genius is not only a blight and a desolation to its possessor, but it is so to all who are bound to the gifted being by the ties of fond affection. It brings with it that unhappy restlessness of intellect which is ever straining after the unattainable, and which is never content to know the end and ultimatum of earthly hopes and wishes; no, the whole life of such persons is spent in one long struggle for a fancied happiness, which like the ignis-fatuus of the swamp glitters but to betray those who trust to its delusive and flickering beams.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### JOHANNA'S INTERVIEW WITH ARABELLA WILMOT, AND THE ADVICE.

Alas! poor Johanna, thou hast chosen but an indifferent confidante in

the person of that young and inexperienced girl to whom it seems good to thee to impart thy griefs. Not for one moment do we mean to say, that the young creature to whom the spectacle-maker's daughter made up her mind to unbosom herself, was not all that any one could wish as regards honour, goodness, and friendship. But she was one of those creatures who yet look upon the world as a fresh green garden, and had not yet lost that romance of existence which the world and its ways soon banish from the breasts of all. She was young, even almost to girlhood, and having been the idol of her family circle, she knew just about as little of the great world as a child. But while we cannot but to some extent regret that Johanna should have chosen such a confidant and admirer, we with feelings of great freshness and pleasure proceed to accompany her to that young girl's house. Now, a visit from Johanna Oakley to the Wilmots was not so rare a thing, that it should excite any unusual surprise, but in this case it did excite unusual pleasure, because they had not been there for some time. And the reason that she had not, may well be found in the peculiar circumstances that had for a considerable period environed her. She had a secret to keep which, although it might not proclaim what it was most legibly upon her countenance, yet proclaimed that it had an existence, and as she had not made Arabella a confidant, she dreaded the other's friendly questions of the young creature. It may seem surprising that Johanna Oakley had kept from one whom she so much esteemed, and with whom she had made such a friendship, the secret of her affections; but that must be accounted for by a difference of ages between them to a sufficient extent in that early period of life to show itself palpably. That difference was not quite two years, but when we likewise state, that Arabella was of that small, delicate style of beauty, which makes her look like a child, when even upon the very verge of womanhood, we shall not be surprised that the girl of seventeen hesitated to confide a secret of the heart to what seemed but a beautiful child. The last year, however, had made a great difference in the appearance of Arabella, for, although she still looked a year or so younger than she really was, a more staid and thoughtful expression had come over her face, and she no longer presented, at times when she laughed, that child-like expression, which had been as remarkable in her as it was delightful. She was as different looking from Johanna as she could be, for whereas Johanna's hair was of a rich and glossy brown, so nearly allied to black that it was commonly called such; the long waving ringlets that shaded the sweet countenance of Arabella Wilmot were like amber silk blended to a pale beauty. Her eyes were nearly blue, and not that pale grey, which courtesy calls of that celestial colour, and their long, fringing lashes hung upon a cheek of the most delicate and exquisite hue that nature could produce. Such was the young, loveable, and amiable creature who had made one of those girlish friendships with Johanna Oakley that, when they do endure beyond the period of almost mere childhood, endure for ever, and become one among the most dear and cherished sensations of the heart. The acquaintance had commenced at school, and might have been of that evanescent character of so many school friendships, which, in after life, are scarcely so much remembered as the most dim visions of a dream; but it happened that they were congenial spirits, which, let them be thrown together under any circumstances whatever, would have come together with a perfect and a most endearing confidence in each other's affections. That they were school companions was the mere accident that brought them together, and

not the cause of their friendship. Such, then, was the being to whom Johanna Oakley looked for counsel and assistance; and notwithstanding all that we have said respecting the likelihood of that counsel being of an inactive and girlish character, we cannot withhold our meed of approbation to Johanna, that she had selected one so much in every way worthy of her honest esteem. The hour at which she called was such as to ensure Arabella being within, and the pleasure which showed itself upon the countenance of the young girl, as she welcomed her old playmate, was a feeling of the most delightful and unaffecting character.

"Why, Johanna," she said, "you so seldom call upon me now, that I suppose I must esteem it as a very special act of grace and favour to see you."

"Arabella," said Johanna, "I do not know what you will say to me when I tell you that my present visit is because I am in a difficulty, and want your advice."

"Then you could not have come to a better person, for I have read all the novels in London, and know all the difficulties that anybody can possibly get into, and, what is more important, too, I know all the means of getting out of them, let them be what they may."

"And yet, Arabella, scarcely in all your novel reading will you find anything so strange and so eventful as the circumstances, I grieve to say, it is in my power to record to you. Sit down, and listen to me, dear Arabella, and you shall know all."

"You surprise and alarm me by that serious countenance, Johanna."

"The subject is a serious one. I love."

"Oh! is that all? So do I; there's a young Captain Desbrook in the King's Guards. He comes here to buy his gloves; and if you did but hear him sigh as he leans over the counter, you would be astonished."

"Ah! but, Arabella, I know you well. Yours is one of those fleeting passions that, like the forked lightning, appear for a moment, and ere you can say behold, is gone again. Mine is deeper in my heart, so deep, that to divorce it from it would be to destroy its home for ever."

"But, why so serious, Johanna? You do not mean to tell me that it is possible for you to love any man without his loving you in return?"

"You are right there, Arabella. I do not come to speak to you of a hopeless passion--far from it; but you shall hear. Lend me, my dear friend, your serious attention, and you shall hear of such mysterious matters."

"Mysterious!--then I shall be in my very element. For know that I quite live and exult in mystery, and you could not possibly have come to any one who would more welcomely receive such a commission from you; I am all impatience."

Johanna then, with great earnestness, related to her friend the whole of the particulars connected with her deep and sincere attachment to Mark Ingestrie. She told her how, in spite of all circumstances which appeared to have a tendency to cast a shadow and blight upon their young affection, they had loved, and loved truly; how Ingestrie, disliking, both from principle and distaste, the study of the law, had quarrelled with his uncle, Mr. Grant, and then how, as a bold adventurer, he had gone to seek his fortunes in the Indian seas; fortunes which promised to be splendid, but which might end in disappointment and defeat, and that they had ended in such calamities most deeply and truly did she mourn to be compelled to state. And she concluded by saying--

"And now, Arabella, you know all I have to tell you. You know how truly I have loved, and how, after teaching myself to expect happiness, I have met with nothing but despair; and you may judge for yourself, how sadly the fate, or rather the mystery, which hangs over Mark Ingestrie, must deeply affect me, and how lost my mind must be in all kinds of conjecture concerning him."

The hilarity of spirits which had characterised Arabella in the earlier part of their interview, entirely left her as Johanna proceeded in her mournful narration, and by the time she had concluded, tears of the most genuine sympathy stood in her eyes. She took the hands of Johanna in both her own, and said to her--

"Why, my poor Johanna, I never expected to hear from your lips so sad a tale. This is most mournful, indeed very mournful; and, although I was half inclined before to quarrel with you for this tardy confidence--for you must recollect that it is the first I have heard of this whole affair--but now the misfortunes that oppress you are quite sufficient, Heaven knows, without me adding to them by the shadow of a reproach."

"They are indeed, Arabella, and believe me, if the course of my love ran smoothly, instead of being, as it has been, full of misadventures, you should have had nothing to complain of on the score of want of confidence; but I will own I did hesitate to inflict on you my miseries, for miseries they have been, and, alas! miseries they seem destined to remain."

"Johanna, you could not have used an argument more delusive than that. It is not one which should have come from your lips to me."

"But surely it was a good motive to spare you pain?"

"And did you think so lightly of my friendship that it was to be entrusted with nothing but what wore a pleasant aspect? True friendship surely is best shown in the encounter of difficulty and distress. I grieve, Johanna, indeed, that you have so much mistaken me."

"Nay, now you do me an injustice: it was not that I doubted your friendship for one moment, but that I did indeed shrink from casting the shadow of my sorrows over what should be, and what I hope is, the sunshine of your heart. That was the respect which deterred me from making you a confidant of, what I suppose I must call, this ill-fated

passion."

"No, not ill-fated, Johanna. Let us still believe that the time will come when it will be far otherwise than ill-fated."

"But what do you think of all that I have told you? Can you gather from it any hope?"

"Abundance of hope, Johanna. You have no certainty of the death of Ingestrie."

"I certainly have not, as far as regards the loss of him in the Indian seas; but, Arabella, there is one supposition which, from the first moment that it found a home in my breast, has been growing stronger and stronger, and that supposition is, that this Mr. Thornhill was no other than Mark Ingestrie himself."

"Indeed! Think you so? That would be a strange supposition. Have you any special reasons for such a thought?"

"None--further than a something which seemed ever to tell my heart from the first moment that such was the case, and a consideration of the improbability of the story related by Thornhill. Why should Mark Ingestrie have given him the string of pearls and the message to me, trusting to the preservation of this Thornhill, and assuming, for some strange reason, that he himself must fall?"

"There is good argument in that, Johanna."

"And, moreover, Mark Ingestrie told me he intended altering his name upon the expedition."

"It is strange; but now you mention such a supposition, it appears, do you know, Johanna, each moment more probable to me. Oh, that fatal string of pearls!"

"Fatal, indeed! for if Mark Ingestrie and Thornhill be one and the same person, the possession of those pearls has been the temptation to destroy him."

"There cannot be a doubt upon that point, Johanna, and so you will find in all tales of love and of romance, that jealousy and wealth have been the sources of all the abundant evils which fond and attached hearts have from time to time suffered."

"It is so; I believe, it is so, Arabella; but advise me what to do, for truly I am myself incapable of action. Tell me what you think it is possible to do, under those disastrous circumstances, for there is nothing which I will not dare attempt." "Why, my dear Johanna, you must perceive that all the evidence you have regarding this Thornhill, follows him up to that barber's shop in Fleet-street, and no farther."

"It does, indeed."

"Can you not imagine, then, that there lies the mystery of his fate; and, from what you have yourself seen of this man, Todd, do you think he is one who would hesitate even at murder?"

"Oh, horror! my own thoughts have taken that dreadful turn, but I dreaded to pronounce the word which would embody them. If, indeed, that fearful-looking man fancied that, by any deed of blood, he could become possessed of such a treasure as that which belonged to Mark Ingestrie, unchristian and illiberal as it may sound, the belief clings to me that he would not hesitate to do it."

"Do not, however, conclude, Johanna, that such is the case. It would appear from all you have heard and seen of these circumstances, that there is some fearful mystery; but do not, Johanna, conclude hastily that that mystery is one of death."

"Be it so, or not," said Johanna, "I must solve it, or go distracted. Heaven have mercy upon me!--for even now I feel a fever in my brain that precludes almost the possibility of rational thought."

"Be calm, be calm--we will think the matter over calmly and seriously; and who knows but that, mere girls as we are, we may think of some adventitious mode of arriving at a knowledge of the truth; and now I am going to tell you something, which your narrative has recalled to my mind."

"Say on, Arabella, I shall listen to you with deep attention."

"A short time since, about six months, I think, an apprentice of my father, in the last week of his servitude, was sent to the west-end of the town, to take a considerable sum of money; but he never came back with it, and from that day to this we have heard nothing of him, although, from inquiry that my father made, he ascertained that he received the money, and that he met an acquaintance in the Strand, who parted from him at the corner of Milford-lane, and to whom he said that he intended to call at Sweeney Todd's, the barber, in Fleet-street, to have his hair dressed, because there was to be a regatta on the Thames, and he was determined to go to it whether my father liked or not."

"And he was never heard of?"

"Never. Of course, my father made every inquiry upon the subject, and called upon Sweeney Todd for the purpose; but, as he declared that no such person had ever called at his shop, the inquiry there terminated."

"'Tis very strange."

"And most mysterious; for the friends of the youth were indeed indefatigable in their searches for him; and, by subscribing together for the purpose, they offered a large reward to any one who could or would give them information regarding his fate."

"And was it all in vain?"

"All; nothing could be learned whatever. Not even the remotest clue was obtained, and there the affair has rested, in the most profound of mysteries."

Johanna shuddered, and for some few moments the two young girls were silent. It was Johanna who broke that silence, by exclaiming--

"Arabella, assist me with what advice you can, so that I may set about what I purpose with the best prospect of success and the least danger; not that I shrink on my own account from risk, but if any misadventure were to occur to me, I might thereby be incapacitated from pursuing that object, to which I will now devote the remainder of my life."

"But what can you do, my dear Johanna? It was but a short time since there was a placard in the barber's window to say that he wanted a lad as an assistant in his business, but that has been removed, or we might have procured some one to take the situation for the express purpose of playing the spy upon the barber's proceedings."

"But, perchance, still there may be an opportunity of accomplishing something in that way, if you knew of any one that would undertake the adventure."

"There will be no difficulty, Johanna, in discovering one willing to do so, although we might be long in finding one of sufficient capacity that we could trust; but I am adventurous, Johanna, as you know, and I think I could have got my cousin Albert to personate the character, only that I think he's rather a giddy youth, and scarcely to be trusted with a mission of so much importance."

"Yes, and a mission likewise, Arabella, which, by a single false step, might be made frightfully dangerous."

"It might indeed."

"Then it will be unfair to place it upon any one but those who feel most deeply for its success."

"Johanna, the enthusiasm with which you speak awakens in me a thought which I shrink from expressing to you, and which, I fear, perhaps more originates from a certain feeling of romance, which, I believe, is a besetting sin, than from any other cause."

"Name it, Arabella; name it."

"It would be possible for you or I to accomplish the object, by going disguised to the barber's, and accepting such a situation, if it were vacant, for a period of about twenty-four hours, in order that during that time an opportunity might be taken of searching in his house for some evidence upon the subject nearest to your heart."

"It is a happy thought," said Johanna, "and why should I hesitate at encountering any risk, or toil, or difficulty, for him who has risked so much for me? What is there to hinder me from carrying out such a

resolution? At any moment, if great danger should beset me, I can rush into the street, and claim protection from the passers-by."

"And moreover, Johanna, if you went on such a mission, remember you go with my knowledge, and that consequently I would bring you assistance, if you appeared not in the specified time for your return."

"Each moment, Arabella, the plan assumes to my mind a better shape. If Sweeney Todd be innocent of contriving anything against the life and liberty of those who seek his shop, I have nothing to fear; but if, on the contrary, he be guilty, danger to me would be the proof of such guilt, and that is a proof which I am willing to chance encountering for the sake of the great object I have in view; but how am I to provide myself with the necessary means?"

"Be at rest upon that score. My cousin Albert and you are as nearly of a size as possible. He will be staying here shortly, and I will secure from his wardrobe a suit of clothes, which I am certain will answer your purpose. But let me implore you to wait until you have had your second interview with Colonel Jeffery."

"That is well thought of; I will meet him, and question him closely as to the personal appearance of this Mr. Thornhill; beside, I shall hear if he has any confirmed suspicion on the subject."

"That is well, you will soon meet him, for the week is running on; and let me implore you, Johanna, to come to me the morning after you have so met him, and then we will again consult upon this plan of operations, which appears to us feasible and desirable."

Some more conversation of a similar character ensued between these young girls; and upon the whole, Johanna Oakley felt much comforted by her visit, and more able to think calmly as well as seriously upon the subject which engrossed her whole thoughts and feelings; and when she returned to her own home, she found that much of the excitement of despair which had formerly had possession of her, had given way to hope; and with that natural feeling of joyousness, and that elasticity of mind which belongs to the young, she began to build in her imagination some airy fabrics of future happiness. Certainly, these suppositions went upon the fact that Mark Ingestrie was a prisoner, and not that his life had been taken by the mysterious barber; for although the possibility of his having been murdered had found a home in her imagination, still to her pure spirit it seemed by far too hideous to be true, and she scarcely could be said really and truly to entertain it as a matter which was likely to be true.

#### CHAPTER XIV. TOBIAS'S THREAT, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Perhaps one of the most pitiable objects now in our history is poor

Tobias, Sweeney Todd's boy, who certainly had his suspicions aroused in the most terrific manner, but who was terrified, by the threats of what the barber was capable of doing against his mother, from making any disclosures. The effect upon his personal appearance of this wear and tear of his intellect was striking and manifest. The hue of youth and health entirely departed from his cheeks, and he looked so sad and careworn, that it was quite a terrible thing to look upon a young lad so, as it were, upon the threshold of existence, and in whom anxious thoughts were making such war upon the physical energies. His cheeks were pale and sunken; his eyes had an unnatural brightness about them, and, to look upon his lips, one would think they had never parted in a smile for many a day, so sadly were they compressed together. He seemed ever to be watching likewise for something fearful, and even as he walked the streets he would frequently turn and look inquiringly around him with a shudder; and in his brief interview with Colonel Jeffery and his friend the captain, we can have a tolerably good comprehension of the state of his mind. Oppressed with fears, and all sorts of dreadful thoughts, panting to give utterance to what he knew and to what he suspected, yet terrified into silence for his mother's sake, we cannot but view him as signally entitled to the sympathy of the reader, and as, in all respects, one sincerely to be pitied for the cruel circumstances in which he was placed. The sun is shining brightly, and even that busy region of trade and commerce, Fleet-street, is looking gay and beautiful; but not for that poor spirit-stricken lad are any of the sights and sounds which used to make up the delight of his existence, reaching his eyes or ears now with their accustomed force. He sits moody and alone, and in the position which he always assumes when Sweeney Todd is from home--that is to say, with his head resting on his hands, and looking the picture of melancholy abstraction.

"What shall I do?" he said to himself, "what will become of me? I think if I live here any longer, I shall go out of my senses. Sweeney Todd is a murderer--I am quite certain of it, and I wish to say so, but I dare not for my mother's sake. Alas! alas! the end of it will be, that he will kill me, or that I shall go out of my senses, and then I shall die in some mad-house, and no one will care what I say."

The boy wept bitterly after he had uttered these melancholy reflections, and he felt his tears something of a relief to him, so that he looked up after a little time, and glanced around him.

"What a strange thing," he said, "that people should come into this shop, to my certain knowledge, who never go out of it again, and yet what becomes of them I cannot tell."

He looked with a shuddering anxiety towards the parlour, the door of which Sweeney Todd took care to lock always when he left the place, and he thought that he should like much to have a thorough examination of that room.

"I have been in it," he said, "and it seems full of cupboards and strange holes and corners, such as I never saw before, and there is an odd stench in it that I cannot make out at all; but it's out of the question thinking of ever being in it above a few minutes at a time, for

Sweeney Todd takes good care of that."

The boy rose, and opened a small cupboard that was in the shop. It was perfectly empty.

"Now, that's strange," he said, "there was a walking-stick with an ivory top to it here just before he went out, and I could swear it belonged to a man who came in to be shaved. More than once--ah! and more than twice, too, when I have come in suddenly, I have seen people's hats, and Sweeney Todd would try and make me believe that people go away after being shaved, and leave their hats behind them."

He walked up to the shaving chair as it was called, which was a large, old-fashioned piece of furniture, made of oak, and carved; and, as the boy threw himself into it, he said--

"What an odd thing it is that this chair is screwed so tight to the floor! Here is a complete fixture, and Sweeney Todd says it is so because it's in the best possible light, and if he were not to make it fast in such a way, the customers would shift it about from place to place, so that he could not conveniently shave them; it may be true, but I don't know."

"And you have your doubts," said the voice of Sweeney Todd, as that individual, with a noiseless step, walked into the shop--"you have your doubts, Tobias? I shall have to cut your throat, that is quite clear."

[Illustration: Tobias Alarmed At The Mysterious Appearance Of Todd.]

"No, no, have mercy upon me; I did not mean what I said."

"Then it's uncommonly imprudent to say it, Tobias. Do you remember our last conversation? Do you remember that I can hang your mother when I please, because, if you do not, I beg to put you in mind of that pleasant little circumstance?"

"I cannot forget--I do not forget."

"Tis well; and mark me, I will not have you assume such an aspect as you wear when I am not here. You don't look cheerful, Tobias; and, notwithstanding your excellent situation, with little to do, and the number of Lovett's pies you eat, you fall away."

"I cannot help it," said Tobias, "since you told me what you did concerning my mother. I have been so anxious that I cannot help--"

"Why should you be anxious? Her preservation depends upon yourself, and upon yourself wholly. You have but to keep silent, and she is safe; but if you utter one word that shall be displeasing to me about my affairs, mark me, Tobias, she comes to the scaffold; and if I cannot conveniently place you in the same mad-house where the last boy I had was placed, I shall certainly be under the troublesome necessity of cutting your throat."

"I will be silent--I will say nothing, Mr. Todd. I know I shall die soon, and then you will get rid of me altogether, and I don't care how soon that may be, for I am quite weary of my life--I shall be glad when it is over."

"Very good," said the barber; "that's all a matter of taste. And now, Tobias, I desire that you look cheerful and smile, for a gentleman is outside feeling his chin with his hand, and thinking he may as well come in and be shaved. I may want you, Tobias, to go to Billingsgate, and bring me a pennyworth of shrimps."

"Yes," thought Tobias, with a groan--"yes, while you murder him."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SECOND INTERVIEW BETWEEN JOHANNA AND THE COLONEL IN THE TEMPLE GARDENS.

Now that there was a great object to gain by a second interview with Colonel Jeffery, the anxiety of Johanna Oakley to have it became extremely great, and she counted the very hours until the period should arrive when she could again proceed to the Temple-gardens with something like a certainty of finding him. The object, of course, was to ask him for a description of Mr. Thornhill, sufficiently accurate to enable her to come to something like a positive conclusion as to whether she ought to call him to her own mind as Mark Ingestrie or not. And Colonel Jeffery was not a bit the less anxious to see her than she was to look upon him; for although in divers lands he had looked upon many a fair face, and heard many a voice that had sounded soft and musical in his ears, he had seen none that, to his mind, was so fair, and had heard no voice that he had considered really so musical and charming to listen to, as Johanna Oakley's. A man of more honourable and strict sense of honour than Colonel Jeffery could not have been found, and, therefore, it was that he allowed himself to admire the beautiful under any circumstances, because he knew that his admiration was of no dangerous quality, but that, on the contrary, it was one of those feelings which might exist in a bosom such as his, quite undebased by a meaner influence. We think it necessary, however, before he has his second meeting with Johanna Oakley, to give such an explanation of his thoughts and feelings as it is in our power. When first he met her, the purity of her mind, and the genuine and beautiful candour of all she said, struck him most forcibly, as well as her great beauty, which could not fail to be extremely manifest. After that he began to reason with himself as to what ought to be his feelings with regard to her--namely, what portion of these ought to be suppressed, and what ought to be encouraged. If Mark Ingestrie were dead, there was not a shadow of interference or dishonour in him, Colonel Jeffery, loving the beautiful girl, who was surely not to be shut out of the pale of all affection because the first person to whom her heart had warmed with a pure and holy passion, was no more.

"It may be," he thought, "that she is incapable of feeling a sentiment which can at all approach that which once she has felt; but still she may be happy and serene, and may pass many joyous hours as the wife of another."

He did not positively make these reflections as applicable to himself, although they had a tendency that way, and he was fast verging to a state of mind which might induce him to give them a more actual application. He did not tell himself that he loved her--no, the word "admiration" took the place of the more powerful term; but then, can we not doubt that, at this time, the germ of a very pure and holy affection was lighted up in the heart of Colonel Jeffery for the beautiful creature who suffered the pangs of so much disappointment, and who loved one so well, who, we almost fear, if he were living, was scarcely the sort of person fully to requite such an affection. But we know so little of Mark Ingestrie, and there appears to be so much doubt as to whether he be alive or dead, that we should not prejudge him upon such very insufficient evidence. Johanna Oakley did think of taking Arabella Wilmot with her to this meeting with Colonel Jeffery, but she abandoned the idea, because it really looked as if she was either afraid of him or afraid of herself, so she resolved to go alone; and when the hour of appointment came, she was then walking upon that broad gravelled path, which has been trodden by some of the best, and some of the most eminent, as well as some of the worst of human beings. It was not likely that with the feelings of Colonel Jeffery towards her, he would keep her waiting. Indeed, he was then a good hour before the time, and his only great dread was, that she might not come. He had some reason for this dread, because it will be readily recollected by the reader, that she had not positively promised to come; so that all he had was a hope that way tending and nothing further. As minute after minute had passed away, she came not, although the time had not yet really arrived; his apprehension that she would not give him the meeting had grown in his mind almost to a certainty, when he saw her timidly advancing along the garden walk. He rose to meet her at once, and for a few moments after he had greeted her with kind civility she could do nothing but look inquiringly in his face, to know if he had any news to tell her of the object of her anxious solicitude.

"I have heard nothing, Miss Oakley," he said, "that can give you any satisfaction concerning the fate of Mr. Thornhill, but we have much suspicion--I say we, because I have taken a friend into my confidence--that something serious must have happened to him, and that the barber, Sweeney Todd, in Fleet-street, at whose door the dog so mysteriously took his post, knows something of that circumstance, be it what it may."

He led her to a seat as she spoke, and when she had recovered sufficiently the agitation of her feelings to speak, she said in a timid, hesitating voice--

"Had Mr. Thornhill fair hair, and large, clear, grey eyes?"

"Yes, he had such; and, I think, his smile was the most singularly beautiful I ever beheld in a man."

"Heaven help me!" said Johanna.

"Have you any reason for asking that question concerning Thornhill?"

"God grant I had not; but, alas! I have indeed. I feel that in Thornhill, I must recognise Mark Ingestrie himself."

"You astonish me."

"It must be so, it must be so; you have described him to me, and I cannot doubt it; Mark Ingestrie and Thornhill are one! I knew that he was going to change his name, when he went out upon that wild adventure to the Indian Sea. I was well aware of that fact."

"I cannot think, Miss Oakley, that you are correct in that supposition. There are many things which induce me to think otherwise; and the first and foremost of them is, that the ingenuous character of Mr. Thornhill forbids the likelihood of such a thing occurring. You may depend it is not--cannot be, as you suppose."

"The proofs are too strong for me, and I find I dare not doubt them. It is so, Colonel Jeffery, as time, perchance, may show; it is sad, very sad, to think that it is so, but I dare not doubt it, now that you have described him to me exactly as he lived."

"I must own, that in giving an opinion on such a point to you, I may be accused of arrogance and presumption, for I have had no description of Mark Ingestrie, and never saw him; and although you never saw certainly Mr. Thornhill, yet I have described him to you, and therefore you are able to judge from that description something of him."

"I am indeed, and I cannot--dare not doubt. It is horrible to be positive on this point to me, because I do fear with you that something dreadful has occurred, and that the barber in Fleet-street could unravel a frightful secret, if he chose, connected with Mark Ingestrie's fate."

"I do sincerely hope from my heart that you are wrong; I hope it, because I tell you frankly, dim and obscure as the hope that Mark Ingestrie may have been picked up from the wreck of his vessel, it is yet stronger than the supposition that Thornhill has escaped the murderous hands of Sweeney Todd, the barber."

Johanna looked in his face so imploringly, and with such an expression of hopelessness, that it was most sad indeed to see her, and quite involuntarily he exclaimed--

"If the sacrifice of my life would be to you a relief, and save you from the pangs you suffer, believe me, it should be made."

She started as she said--

"No, no: Heaven knows enough has been sacrificed already--more than enough, much more than enough. But do not suppose that I am ungrateful

for the generous interest you have taken in me. Do not suppose that I think any the less of the generosity and nobility of soul that would offer a sacrifice, because it is one that I would hesitate to accept. No, believe me, Colonel Jeffery, that among the few names that are enrolled in my breast--and such to me will ever be honoured--remember yours will be found while I live, but that will not be long--but that will not be long."

"Nay, do not speak so despairingly."

"Have I not cause for despair?"

"Cause have you for great grief, but yet scarcely for despair. You are young yet, and let me entertain a hope that even if a feeling of regret may mingle with your future thoughts, time will achieve something in tempering your sorrow; and if not great happiness, you may know yet great serenity."

"I dare not hope it, but I know your words are kindly spoken, and most kindly meant."

"You may well assure yourself that they are so."

"I will ascertain his fate, or perish."

"You alarm me by those words, as well as by your manner of uttering them. Let me implore you, Miss Oakley, to attempt nothing rash; remember how weak and inefficient must be the exertions of a young girl like yourself, one who knows so little of the world, and can really understand so little of its wickedness."

"Affection conquers all obstacles, and the weakest and most inefficient girl that ever stepped, if she have strong within her that love which, in all its sacred intensity, knows no fear, shall indeed accomplish much. I feel that, in such a cause, I could shake off all girlish terrors and ordinary alarms; and if there be danger, I would ask, what is life to me without all that could adorn it and make it beautiful?"

"This, indeed, is the very enthusiasm of affection, when, believe me, it will lead you to some excess--to some romantic exercise of feeling, such as will bring great danger in its train, to the unhappiness of those who love you."

"Those who love me--who is there to love me now?"

"Johanna Oakley, I dare not and will not utter words that come thronging to my lips, but which I fear might be unwelcome to your ears; I will not say that I can answer the question that you have asked, because it would sound ungenerous at such a time as this, when you have met me to talk about the fate of another. Oh! forgive me, that, hurried away by the feeling of a moment, I have uttered these words, for I meant not to utter them."

Johanna looked at him in silence, and it might be that there was the

slightest possible tinge of reproach in her look, but it was very slight, for one glance at that ingenuous countenance would be sufficient to convince the most sceptical of the truth and single-mindedness of its owner: of this there could be no doubt whatever, and if anything in the shape of a reproach was upon the point of coming from her lips, she forbore to utter it.

"May I hope," he added, "that I have not lowered myself in your esteem, Miss Oakley, by what I have said?"

"I hope," she said gently, "that you will continue to be my friend."

He laid an emphasis on the word "friend," and he fully understood what she meant to imply thereby, and after a moment's pause said--

"Heaven forbid that ever, by word or by action, Johanna, I should do aught to deprive myself of that privilege. Let me be yet your friend, since--"

He left the sentence unfinished, but if he had added the words--"Since I can do no more," he could not have made it more evident to Johanna that those were the words he intended to utter.

"And now," he added, "that I hope and trust we understand each other better than we did, and you are willing to call me by the name of friend, let me once more ask of you, by the privilege of such a title, to be careful of yourself, and not to risk much in order that you may, perhaps, have some remote chance of achieving very little."

"But can I endure this dreadful suspense?"

"It is, alas! too common an infliction on human nature, Johanna. Pardon me for addressing you as Johanna."

"Nay, it requires no excuse. I am accustomed so to be addressed by all who feel a kindly interest for me. Call me Johanna if you will, and I shall feel a greater assurance of your friendship and your esteem."

"I will then avail myself of that permission, and again and again I will entreat you to leave to me the task of making what attempts may be made to discover the fate of Mr. Thornhill. There must be danger even in inquiring for him, if he has met with any foul play, and therefore I ask you to let that danger be mine."

Johanna asked herself if she should or not tell him of the scheme of operations that had been suggested by Arabella Wilmot, but, somehow or another, she shrank most wonderfully from so doing, both on account of the censure which she concluded he would be likely to cast upon it, and the romantic, strange nature of the plan itself, so she said, gently and quickly--

"I will attempt nothing that shall not have some possibility of success attending it. I will be careful, you may depend, for many considerations. My father, I know, centres all his affections in me, and

for his sake I will be careful."

"I shall be content then, and now may I hope that this day week I may see you here again, in order that I may tell you if I have made any discovery, and that you may tell me the same; for my interest in Thornhill is that of a sincere friend, to say nothing of the deep interest in your happiness which I feel, and which now has become an element in the transaction of the highest value?"

"I will come," said Johanna, "if I can come."

"You do not doubt?"

"No, no. I will come, and I hope to bring you some news of him in whom you are so much interested. It shall be no fault of mine if I come not."

He walked with her from the gardens, and together they passed the shop of Sweeney Todd, but the door was close shut, and they saw nothing of the barber, or of that poor boy, his apprentice, who was so much to be pitied. He parted with Johanna near to her father's house, and he walked slowly away with his mind so fully impressed with the excellence and beauty of the spectacle-maker's daughter, that it was quite clear, as long as he lived, he would not be able to rid himself of the favourable impression she had made upon him.

"I love her," he said; "I love her, but she seems in no respect willing to enchain her affections. Alas! alas! how sad it is for me, that the being who above all others I could wish to call my own, instead of a joy to me, I have only encountered that she might impart a pang to my heart. Beautiful and excellent Johanna, I love you, but I can see that your own affections are withered for ever."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE BARBER MAKES ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO SELL THE STRING OF PEARLS.

It would seem as if Sweeney Todd, after his adventure in already trying to dispose of the string of pearls which he possessed, began to feel little doubtful about his chances of success in that matter, for he waited patiently for a considerable period before he again made the attempt, and then he made it after a totally different fashion. Towards the close of night on that same evening when Johanna Oakley had met Colonel Jeffery, for the second time, in the Temple Garden, and while Tobias sat alone in the shop in his usual deep dejection, a stranger entered the place, with a large blue bag in his hand, and looked inquiringly about him.

"Hilloa, my lad!" said he, "is this Mr. Todd's?"

"Yes," said Tobias; "but he is not at home. What do you want?"

"Well, I'll be hanged," said the man, "if this don't beat everything; you don't mean to tell me he is a barber, do you?"

"Indeed I do; don't you see?"

"Yes, I see to be sure; but I'll be shot if I thought of it beforehand. What do you think he has been doing?"

"Doing," said Tobias, with animation; "do you think he will be hung?"

"Why, no, I don't say it is a hanging matter, although you seem as if you wished it was; but I'll just tell you now we are artists at the west-end of the town."

"Artists! Do you mean to say you draw pictures?"

"No, no, we make clothes; but we call ourselves artists now, because tailors are out of fashion."

"Oh, that's it, is it?"

"Yes, that's it; and you would scarcely believe it, but he came to our shop actually, and ordered a suit of clothes, which were to come to no less a sum than thirty pounds, and told us to make them up in such a style that they were to do for any nobleman, and he gave his name and address, as Mr. Todd, at this number in Fleet-street, but I hadn't the least idea that he was a barber; if I had, I am quite certain the clothes would not have been finished in the style they are, but quite the reverse."

"Well," said Tobias, "I can't think what he wants such clothing for, but I suppose it's all right. Was he a tall, ugly-looking fellow?"

"As ugly as the very devil. I'll just show you the things, as he is not at home. The coat is of the finest velvet, lined with silk, and trimmed with lace. Did you ever, in all your life, see such a coat for a barber?"

"Indeed, I never did; but it is some scheme of his, of course. It is a superb coat."

"Yes, and all the rest of the dress is of the same style; what on earth he can be going to do with it I can't think, for it's only fit to go to court in."

"Oh, well, I know nothing about it," said Tobias, with a sigh, "you can leave it or not as you like, it is all one to me."

"Well, you do seem the most melancholy wretch ever I came near; what's the matter with you?"

"The matter with me? Oh, nothing. Of course, I am as happy as I can be. Ain't I Sweeney Todd's apprentice, and ain't that enough to make anybody sing all day long?"

"It may be for all I know, but certainly you don't seem to be in a singing humour; but, however, we artists cannot waste our time, so just be so good as to take care of the clothes, and be sure you give them to your master; and so I wash my hands of the transaction."

"Very good, he shall have them; but do you mean to leave such valuable clothes without getting the money for them?"

"Not exactly, for they are paid for."

"Oh! that makes all the difference--he shall have them."

Scarcely had this tailor left the place, when a boy arrived with a parcel, and, looking around him with undisguised astonishment, said--

"Isn't there some other Mr. Todd, in Fleet-street?"

"Not that I know of," said Tobias. "What have you got there?"

"Silk stockings, gloves, lace, cravats, ruffles, and so on."

"The deuce you have; I dare say it's all right."

"I shall leave them--they are paid for. This is the name, and this is the number."

"Now, stupid!"

This last exclamation arose from the fact that this boy, in going out, ran up against another who was coming in.

"Can't you see where you are going?" said the new arrival.

"What's that to you? I have a good mind to punch your head."

"Do it, and then come down our court, and see what a licking I'll give you."

"Will you? Why don't you? Only let me catch you, that's all."

They stood for some moments so closely together that their noses very nearly touched; and then, after mutual assertions of what they would do if they caught each other--although, in either case, to stretch out an arm would have been quite sufficient to have accomplished that object--they separated, and the last comer said to Tobias, in a tone of irritation, probably consequent upon the misunderstanding he had just had with the hosier's boy--

"You can tell Mr. Todd that the carriage will be ready at half-past seven precisely."

And then he went away, leaving Tobias in a state of great bewilderment as to what Sweeney Todd could possibly be about to do with such an

amount of finery as that which was evidently coming home for him.

"I can't make it out," he said. "It's some villainy, of course, but I can't make out what it is--I wish I knew; I might thwart him in it. He is a villain, and neither could nor would project anything good; but what can I do? I am quite helpless in this, and will just let it take its course. I can only wish for a power of action I shall never possess. Alas, alas! I am very sad, and know not what will become of me. I wish that I was in my grave, and there I am sure I shall be soon, unless something happens to turn the tide of all this wretched evil fortune that has come upon me."

It was in vain for Tobias to think of vexing himself with conjectures as to what Sweeney Todd was about to do with so much finery, for he had not the remotest foundation to go upon in the matter, and could not for the life of him imagine any possible contingency or chance which should make it necessary for the barber to deck himself in such gaudy apparel. All he could do was to lay down in his own mind a general principle as regarded Sweeney Todd's conduct, and that consisted in the fact, that whatever might be his plans, and whatever might be his objects, they were for no good purpose; but, on the contrary, were most certainly intended for the accomplishment of some great evil which that most villanous person intended to perpetrate.

"I will observe all I can," thought Tobias to himself, "and do what I can to put a stop to his mischiefs; but I fear it will be very little he will allow me to observe, and perhaps still less that he will allow me to do; but I can but try, and do my best."

Poor Tobias's best, as regarded achieving anything against Sweeney Todd, we may well suppose would be little indeed, for that individual was not the man to give anybody an opportunity of doing much; and, possessed as he was of the most consummate art, as well as the greatest possible amount of unscrupulousness, there can be very little doubt but that any attempt poor Tobias might make would recoil upon himself. In about half an hour the barber returned, and his first question was--

"Have any things been left for me?"

"Yes, sir," said Tobias, "here are two parcels, and a boy has been to say that the carriage will be ready at half-past seven precisely."

"Tis well," said the barber, "that will do; and Tobias, you will be careful, whilst I am gone, of the shop. I shall be back in half an hour, mind you, and not later; and be sure that I find you here at your post. But you may say, if any one comes here on business, there will be neither shaving nor dressing to-night. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir, certainly."

Sweeney Todd then took the bundles which contained the costly apparel, and retired into the parlour with them; and, as it was then seven o'clock, Tobias correctly enough supposed that he had gone to dress himself, and he waited with a considerable amount of curiosity to see

what sort of an appearance the barber would cut in his fine apparel. Tobias had not to control his impatience long, for in less than twenty minutes, out came Sweeney Todd, attired in the very height of fashion for the period. His waistcoat was something positively gorgeous, and his fingers were loaded with such costly rings, that they quite dazzled the sight of Tobias to look upon; then, moreover, he wore a sword with a jewelled hilt, but it was one which Tobias really thought he had seen before, for he had a recollection that a gentleman had come to have his hair dressed, and had taken it off, and laid just such a sword across his hat during the operation.

"Remember," said Sweeney Todd, "remember your instructions; obey them to the letter, and no doubt you will ultimately become happy and independent."

With these words, Sweeney Todd left the place, and poor Tobias looked after him with a frown, as he repeated the words--

"Happy and independent. Alas! what a mockery it is of this man to speak to me in such a way--I only wish that I were dead!"

But we will leave Tobias to his own reflections, and follow the more interesting progress of Sweeney Todd, who, for some reason best known to himself, was then playing so grand a part, and casting away so large a sum of money. He made his way to a livery-stables in the immediate neighbourhood, and there, sure enough, the horses were being placed to a handsome carriage; and all being very soon in readiness, Sweeney Todd gave some whispered directions to the driver, and the vehicle started off westward. At that time Hyde Park Corner was very nearly out of town, and it looked as if you were getting a glimpse of the country, and actually seeing something of the peasantry of England, when you got another couple of miles off, and that was the direction in which Sweeney Todd went; and as he goes, we may as well introduce to the reader the sort of individual whom he was going to visit in so much state, and for whom he thought it necessary to go to such great expense. At that period the follies and vices of the nobility were somewhere about as great as they are now, and consequently extravagance induced on many occasions tremendous sacrifice of money, and it was found extremely convenient on many occasions for them to apply to a man of the name of John Mundel, an exceedingly wealthy person, a Dutchman by extraction, who was reported to make immense sums of money by lending to the nobility and others what they required on emergencies, at enormous rates of interest. But it must not be supposed that John Mundel was so confiding as to lend his money without security. It was quite the reverse, for he took care to have the jewels, some costly plate, or the title-deeds of an estate, perchance, as security, before he would part with a single shilling of his cash. In point of fact, John Mundel was nothing more than a pawnbroker on a very extensive scale, and, although he had an office in town, he usually received his more aristocratic customers at his private residence, which was about two miles off, on the Uxbridge Road. After this explanation, it can very easily be imagined what was the scheme of Sweeney Todd, and that he considered, if he borrowed from John Mundel a sum equal in amount to half the real value of the pearls, he should be well rid of a property which he certainly could not sufficiently well account for the

possession of, to enable him to dispose of it openly to the highest bidder. We give Sweeney Todd great credit for the scheme he proposed. It was eminently calculated to succeed, and one which, in the way he undertook it, was certainly set about in the best possible style. During the ride, he revolved in his mind exactly what he should say to John Mundel, and, from what we know of him, we may be well convinced that Sweeney Todd was not likely to fail from any amount of bashfulness in the transaction; but that, on the contrary, he was just the man to succeed in any scheme which required great assurance to carry it through; for he was most certainly master of great assurance, and possessed of a kind of diplomatic skill, which, had fortune placed him in a more elevated position of life, would no doubt have made a great man of him, and gained him great political reputation. John Mundel's villa, which was called, by the by, Mundel House, was a large, handsome, and modern structure, surrounded by a few acres of pleasure-gardens, which, however, the money-lender never looked at, for his whole soul was too much engrossed by his love for cash to enable him to do so; and, if he derived any satisfaction at all from it, that satisfaction must have been entirely owing to the fact, that he had wrung mansion, grounds, and all the costly furnishing of the former, from an improvident debtor, who had been forced to fly the country, and leave his property wholly in the hands of the money-lender and usurer. It was but a short drive with the really handsome horses that Sweeney Todd had succeeded in hiring for the occasion, and he soon found himself opposite the entrance gates of the residence of John Mundel. His great object now was that the usurer should see the equipage which he had brought down; and he accordingly desired the footman who accompanied him at once to ring the bell at the entrance-gate, and to say that a gentleman was waiting in his carriage to see Mr. Mundel. This was done; and when the money-lender's servant reported to him that the equipage was a costly one, and that, in his opinion, the visitor must be some nobleman of great rank, John Mundel made no difficulty about the matter, but walked down to the gate at once, where he immediately mentally subscribed to the opinion of his servant, by admitting to himself that the equipage was faultless, and presumed at once that it did belong to some person of great rank. He was proportionally humble, as such men always are, and, advancing to the side of the carriage, he begged to know what commands his lordship--for so he called him at once--had for him?

[Illustration: The Barber Acts The Duke To Pawn The Pearls.]

"I wish to know," said Sweeney Todd, "Mr. Mundel, if you are inclined to lay under an obligation a rather illustrious lady, by helping her out of a little pecuniary difficulty?"

John Mundel glanced again at the equipage, and he likewise saw something of the rich dress of his visitor, who had not disputed the title which had been applied to him, of lord; and he made up his mind accordingly that it was just one of the transactions that would suit him, provided the security that would be offered was of a tangible nature. That was the only point upon which John Mundel had the remotest doubt, but, at all events, he urgently pressed his visitor to alight and walk in.

CHAPTER XIV.  
THE GREAT CHANGE IN THE PROSPECTS OF SWEENEY TODD.

As Sweeney Todd's object, so far as regarded the money-lender having seen the carriage, was fully answered, he had no objection to enter the house, which he accordingly did at once, being preceded by John Mundel, who became each moment more and more impressed with the fact, as he considered it, that his guest was some person of very great rank and importance in society. He ushered him into a splendidly-furnished apartment, and after offering him refreshments, which Sweeney Todd politely declined, he waited with no small degree of impatience for his visitor to be more explicit with regard to the object of his visit.

"I should," said Sweeney Todd, "have myself accommodated the illustrious lady with the sum of money she requires, but as I could not do so without incumbering some estates, she positively forbade me to think of it."

"Certainly," said Mr. Mundel, "she is a very illustrious lady, I presume?"

"Very illustrious indeed, but it must be a condition of this transaction, if you at all enter into it, that you are not to inquire precisely who she is, nor are you to inquire precisely who I am."

"It's not my usual way of conducting business, but if everything else be satisfactory, I shall not cavil at that."

"Very good; by everything else being satisfactory, I presume you mean the security offered?"

"Why, yes, that is of great importance, my lord."

"I informed the illustrious lady, that, as the affair was to be wrapped up in something of a mystery, the security must be extremely ample."

"That's a very proper view to take of the matter, my lord. I wonder," thought John Mundel, "if he is a duke; I'll call him 'your grace' next time, and see if he objects to it."

"Therefore," continued Sweeney Todd, "the illustrious lady placed in my hands security to a third greater amount than she required."

"Certainly, certainly, a very proper arrangement, your grace; may I ask the nature of the proffered security?"

"Jewels."

"Highly satisfactory and unexceptionable security; they go into a small space, and do not deteriorate in value."

"And if they do," said the barber, "deteriorate in value, it would make no difference to you, for the illustrious person's honour would be committed to your redemption."

"I don't doubt that, your grace, in the least; I merely made the remark incidentally, quite incidentally."

"Of course, of course; and I trust, before going further, that you are quite in a position to enter into this subject."

"Certainly I am, and, I am proud to say, to any amount. Show me the money's worth, your grace, and I will show you the money--that's my way of doing business; and no one can say that John Mundel ever shrunk from a matter that was brought fairly before him, and that he considered worth his going into."

"It was by hearing such a character of you that I was induced to come to you. What do you think of that?"

Sweeney Todd took from his pocket, with a careless air, the string of pearls, and cast them down before the eyes of the money-lender, who took them up and ran them rapidly through his fingers for a few seconds before he said--

"I thought there was but one string like this in the kingdom, and those belonged to the Queen."

"Well," said Sweeney Todd.

"I humbly beg your grace's pardon. How much money does your grace require on these pearls?"

"Twelve thousand pounds is their current value, if a sale of them was enforced; eight thousand pounds are required of you on their security."

"Eight thousand is a large sum. As a general thing I lend but half the value upon anything; but in this case, to oblige your grace and the illustrious personage, I do not, of course, hesitate for one moment but shall for one month lend you the required amount."

"That will do," said Sweeney Todd, scarcely concealing the exultation he felt at getting so much more from John Mundel than he expected, and which he certainly would not have got if the money-lender had not been most fully and completely impressed with the idea that the pearls belonged to the Queen, and that he had actually at length majesty itself for a customer. He did not suppose for one moment that it was the queen who wanted the money; but his view of the case was, that she had lent the pearls to this nobleman to meet some exigency of his own, and that, of course, they would be redeemed very shortly. Altogether a more pleasant transaction for John Mundel could not have been imagined. It was just the sort of thing he would have looked out for, and had the greatest satisfaction in bringing to a conclusion, and he considered it was opening the door to the highest class of business in his way that he was capable of doing.

"In what name, your grace," he said, "shall I draw a cheque upon my banker?"

"In the name of Colonel George."

"Certainly, certainly; and if your grace will give me an acknowledgment for eight thousand pounds, and please to understand that at the end of a month from this time the transaction will be renewed if necessary, I will give you a cheque for seven thousand five hundred pounds."

"Why seven thousand five hundred only, when you mentioned eight thousand pounds?"

"The five hundred pounds is my little commission upon the transaction. Your grace will perceive that I appreciate highly the honour of your grace's custom, and consequently charge the lowest possible price. I can assure your grace I could get more for my money by a great deal, but the pleasure of being able to meet your grace's views is so great, that I am willing to make a sacrifice, and therefore it is that I say five hundred, when I really ought to say one thousand pounds, taking into consideration the great scarcity of money at the present juncture; and I can assure your grace that--"

"Peace, peace," said Sweeney Todd; "and if it be not convenient to redeem the jewels at the end of a month from this time, you will hear from me most assuredly."

"I am quite satisfied of that," said John Mundel, and he accordingly drew a cheque for seven thousand five hundred pounds, which he handed to Sweeney Todd, who put it in his pocket, not a little delighted that at last he had got rid of his pearls, even at a price so far beneath their real value.

"I need scarcely urge upon you, Mr. Mundel," he said, "the propriety of keeping this affair profoundly secret."

"Indeed you need not, your grace, for it is part of my business to be discreet and cautious. I should very soon have nothing to do in my line, your grace may depend, if I were to talk about it. No, this transaction will for ever remain locked up in my own breast, and no living soul but your grace and I need know what has occurred."

With this, John Mundel showed Sweeney Todd to his carriage, with abundance of respect, and in two minutes more he was travelling along towards town with what might be considered a small fortune in his pocket. We should have noticed earlier that Sweeney Todd had, upon the occasion of his going to sell the pearls to the lapidary, in the city, made some great alterations in his appearance, so that it was not likely he should be recognised again to a positive certainty. For example--having no whiskers whatever of his own, he had put on a large black pair of false ones, as well as moustachios, and he had given some colour to his cheeks likewise which had so completely altered his appearance, that those who were most intimate with him would not have

known him except by his voice, and that he took good care to alter in his intercourse with John Mundel, so that it should not become a future means of detection.

"I thought that this would succeed," he muttered to himself, as he went towards town, "and I have not been deceived. For three months longer, and only three, I will carry on the business in Fleet-street, so that any sudden alteration in my fortunes may not give rise to suspicion."

He was then silent for some minutes, during which he appeared to be revolving some very knotty question in his brain, and then he said, suddenly--

"Well, well, as regards Tobias, I think it will be safer, unquestionably, to put him out of the way by taking his life, than to try to dispose of him in a mad-house, and I think there are one or two more persons whom it will be highly necessary to prevent being mischievous, at all events at present. I must think--I must think."

When such a man as Sweeney Todd set about thinking, there could be no possible doubt but that some serious mischief was meditated, and any one who could have watched his face during that ride home from the money-lender's, would have seen by its expression that the thoughts which agitated him were of a dark and desperate character, and such as anybody but himself would have shrunk from aghast. But he was not a man to shrink from anything, and, on the contrary, the more a set of circumstances presented themselves in a gloomy and a terrific aspect, the better they seemed to suit him, and the peculiar constitution of his mind. There can be no doubt but that the love of money was the predominant feeling in Sweeney Todd's intellectual organization, and that, by the amount it would bring him, or the amount it would deprive him of, he measured everything. With such a man, then, no question of morality or ordinary feeling could arise, and there can be no doubt that he would quite willingly have sacrificed the whole human race, if, by so doing, he could have achieved any of the objects of his ambition. And so, on his road homeward, he probably made up his mind to plunge still deeper into criminality, and perchance to indulge in acts that a man not already so deeply versed in iniquity would have shrunk from with the most positive terror. And by a strange style of reasoning, such men as Sweeney Todd reconcile themselves to the most heinous crimes upon the ground of what they call policy. That is to say, that having committed some serious offence, they are compelled to commit a great number more for the purpose of endeavouring to avoid the consequences of the first lot, and hence the continuance of criminality becomes a matter necessary to self-defence, and an essential ingredient in their consideration of self-preservation. Probably Sweeney Todd had been for the greater part of his life, aiming at the possession of extensive pecuniary resources, and, no doubt, by the aid of a superior intellect, and a mind full of craft and design, he had managed to make others subservient to his views; and now that those views were answered, and that his underlings and accomplices were no longer required, they became positively dangerous. He was well aware of that cold-blooded policy which teaches that it is far safer to destroy than to cast away the tools by which a man carves his way to power and fortune.

"They shall die," said Sweeney Todd--"dead men tell no tales, nor women nor boys either, and they shall all die; after which there will, I think, be a serious fire in Fleet-street. Ha! ha! it may spread to what mischief it likes, always provided it stops not short of the entire destruction of my house and premises. Rare sport--rare sport will it be to me, for then I will at once commence a new career, in which the barber will be forgotten, and the man of fashion only seen and remembered, for with this sad addition to my means, I am fully capable of vying with the highest and the noblest, let them be whom they may."

This seemed a pleasant train of reflections to Sweeney Todd, and as the coach entered Fleet-street, there sat such a grim smile upon his countenance that he looked like some fiend in human shape, who had just completed the destruction of a human soul. When he reached the livery stables to which he directed them to drive, instead of his own shop, he rewarded all who had gone with him most liberally, so that the coachman and footman, who were both servants out of place, would have had no objection for Sweeney Todd every day to have gone on some such an expedition, so that they should receive as liberal wages for the small part they enacted in it as they did upon that occasion. He then walked from the stables toward his own house, but upon reaching there a little disappointment awaited him, for he found to his surprise that no light was burning; and when he placed his hand upon the shop-door, it opened, but there was no trace of Tobias, although he, Sweeney Todd, called loudly upon him the moment he set foot within the shop. Then a feeling of apprehension crept across the barber, and he groped anxiously about for some matches, by the aid of which he hoped to procure a light, and then an explanation of the mysterious absence of Tobias. But in order that we may, in its proper form, relate how it was that Tobias had had the daring thus, in open contradiction of his master, to be away from the shop, we must devote to Tobias a chapter, which will plead his extenuation.

## CHAPTER XV.

### TOBIAS'S ADVENTURES DURING THE ABSENCE OF SWEENEY TODD.

Tobias guessed, and guessed rightly too, that when Sweeney Todd said he would be away half an hour, he only mentioned that short period of time, in order to keep the lad's vigilance on the alert, and to prevent him from taking any advantage of a more protracted absence. The very style and manner in which he had gone out, precluded the likelihood of it being for so short a period of time; and that circumstance set Tobias seriously thinking over a situation which was becoming more intolerable every day. The lad had the sense to feel that he could not go on much longer as he was going on, and that in a short time such a life would destroy him.

"It is beyond endurance," he said, "and I know not what to do; and since Sweeney Todd has told me that the boy he had before went out of his

senses, and is now in the cell of a mad-house, I feel that such will be my fate, and that I too shall come to that dreadful end, and then no one will believe a word I utter, but consider everything to be mere raving."

After a time, as the darkness increased, he lit the lamp which hung in the shop, and which, until it was closed for the night, usually shed a dim ray from the window. Then he sat down to think again, and he said to himself--

"If I could now but summon courage to ask my mother about this robbery which Sweeney Todd imputes to her, she might assure me it was false, and that she never did such a deed; but then it is dreadful for me to ask her such a question, because it may be true; and then, how shocking it would be for her to be forced to confess to me, her own son, such a circumstance."

These were the honourable feelings which prevented Tobias from questioning his mother as regarded Todd's accusation of her--an accusation too dreadful to believe implicitly, and yet sufficiently probable for him to have a strong suspicion that it might be true after all. It is to be deeply regretted that Tobias's philosophy did not carry him a little further, and make him see, the moment the charge was made, that he ought unquestionably to investigate it to the very utmost. But still we could hardly expect, from a mere boy, that acute reasoning and power of action, which depend so much upon the knowledge of the world and an extensive practice in the usages of society. It was sufficient if he felt correctly--we could scarcely expect him to reason so. But upon this occasion, above all others, he seemed completely overcome by the circumstances which surrounded him; and from his excited manner, one might have almost imagined that the insanity he himself predicted at the close of his career was really not far off. He wrung his hands, and he wept, every now and then, in sad speech, bitterly bemoaning his situation, until at length, with a sudden resolution, he sprang to his feet, exclaiming--

"This night shall end it. I can endure it no more. I will fly from this place, and seek my fortune elsewhere. Any amount of distress, danger, or death itself even, is preferable to the dreadful life I lead."

He walked some paces towards the door, and then he paused, as he said to himself in a low tone--

"Todd will surely not be home yet awhile, and why should I then neglect the only opportunity I may ever have of searching this house to satisfy my mind as regards any of the mysteries that it contains?"

He paused over this thought, and considered well its danger, for dangerous indeed it was to no small extent, but he was desperate; and with a resolution that scarcely could have been expected from him, he determined upon taking that step, above all others, which Todd was almost sure to punish with death. He closed the shop door, and bolted it upon the inside, so that he could not be suddenly interrupted, and then he looked round him carefully for some weapon, by the aid of which he should be able to break his way into the parlour, which the barber

always kept closed and locked in his absence. A weapon that would answer the purpose of breaking any lock, if he, Tobias, chose to proceed so roughly to work, was close at hand in the iron bar, which, when the place was closed at night, secured a shutter to the door. Wrought up as he was to almost frenzy, Tobias seized this bar, and, advancing towards the parlour door, he with one blow smashed the lock to atoms, and the door yielded. The moment it did so, there was a crash of glass, and when Tobias entered the room he saw that upon its threshold lay a wine-glass shattered to atoms, and he felt certain that it had been placed in some artful position by Sweeney Todd as a detector, when he should return, of any attempt that had been made upon the door of the parlour. And now Tobias felt that he was so far committed that he might as well go on with his work, and accordingly he lit a candle, which he found upon the parlour table, and then proceeded to make what discoveries he could. Several of the cupboards in the room yielded at once to his hands, and in them he found nothing remarkable; but there was one that he could not open; so, without a moment's hesitation, he had recourse to the bar of iron again, and broke its lock, when the door swung open,--and to his astonishment there tumbled out of this cupboard such a volley of hats of all sorts and descriptions, some looped with silver, some three-cornered, and some square, that they formed quite a museum of that article of attire, and excited the greatest surprise in the mind of Tobias, at the same time that they tended very greatly to confirm some other thoughts and feelings which he had concerning Sweeney Todd. This was the only cupboard which was fast, although there was another door which looked as if it opened into one, but when Tobias broke that down with the bar of iron, he found it was the door which led to the staircase conducting to the upper part of the house--that upper part which Sweeney Todd, with all his avarice, would never let, and of which the shutters were kept continually closed, so that the opposite neighbours never caught a glimpse into any of the apartments. With cautious and slow steps, which he adopted instantaneously, although he knew that there was no one in the house but himself, Tobias ascended the staircase.

"I will go to the very top rooms first," he said to himself, "and so examine them all as I come down, and then if Todd should return suddenly, I shall have a better chance of hearing him, than as if I began below and went upwards."

Acting upon this prudent scheme, he went up to the attics, all the doors of which were swinging open, and there was nothing in any of them whatever. He descended to the second floor with the like result, and a feeling of great disappointment began to creep over him at the thought that, after all, the barber's house might not repay the trouble of examination. But when he reached the first floor he soon found abundant reason to alter his opinion. The doors were fast, and he had to burst them open; and, when he got in, he found that those rooms were partially furnished, and that they contained a great quantity of miscellaneous property of all kinds and descriptions. In one corner was an enormous quantity of walking-sticks, some of which were of a very costly and expensive character, with gold and silver chased tops to them, and in another corner was a great number of umbrellas--in fact, at least a hundred of them. Then there were boots and shoes lying upon the floor,

partially covered up, as if to keep them from dirt; there were thirty or forty swords of different styles and patterns, many of them appearing to be very firm blades, and in one or two cases the scabbards were richly ornamented. At one end of the front and larger of these two rooms, was an old-fashioned-looking bureau of great size, and with as much wood-work in it as seemed required to make at least a couple of such articles of furniture. This was very securely locked, and presented more difficulties in the way of opening it than any of the doors had done, for the lock was of great strength and apparent durability. Moreover it was not so easily got at, but at length by using the bar as a sort of lever, instead of as a mere machine to strike with, Tobias succeeded in forcing this bureau open, and then his eyes were perfectly dazzled with the amount of jewellery and trinkets of all kinds and descriptions that were exhibited to his gaze. There was a great number of watches, gold chains, silver and gold snuff-boxes, and a large assortment of rings, shoe-buckles, and brooches. These articles must have been of great value, and Tobias could not help exclaiming aloud--

"How could Sweeney Todd come by these articles, except by the murder of their owners?"

This, indeed, seemed but too probable a supposition, and the more especially so, as in a further part of this bureau a great quantity of apparel was found by Tobias. He stood with a candle in his hand, looking upon these various objects for more than a quarter of an hour, and then as a sudden and a natural thought came across him of how completely a few of them even would satisfy his wants and his mother's for a long time to come, he stretched forth his hand towards the glittering mass, but he drew it back again with a shudder, saying--

"No--no, these things are the plunder of the dead. Let Sweeney Todd keep them to himself, and look upon them, if he can, with eyes of enjoyment. I will have none of them; they would bring misfortune along with every guinea that they might be turned into."

As he spoke, he heard St. Dunstan's clock strike nine, and he started at the sound, for it let him know that already Sweeney Todd had been away an hour beyond the time he said he would be absent, so that there was a probability of his quick return now, and it would scarcely be safe to linger longer in his house.

"I must be gone--I must be gone. I should like to look upon my mother's face once more before I leave London for ever perhaps. I may tell her of the danger she is in from Todd's knowledge of her secret; no--no, I cannot speak to her of that; I must go, and leave her to those chances which I hope and trust will work favourably for her."

Flinging down the iron bar which had done him such good service, Tobias stopped not to close any of those receptacles which contained the plunder that Sweeney Todd had taken most probably from murdered persons, but he rushed down stairs into the parlour again, where the boots that had fallen out of the cupboard still lay upon the floor in wild disorder. It was a strange and sudden whim that took him, rather than a matter of reflection, that induced him, instead of his own hat, to take

one of those which were lying so indiscriminately at his feet; and he did so. By mere accident it turned out to be an exceedingly handsome hat, of rich workmanship and material, and then Tobias, feeling terrified lest Sweeney Todd should return before he could leave the place, paid no attention to anything, but turned from the shop, merely pulling the door after him, and then darting over the road towards the Temple like a hunted hare; for his great wish was to see his mother, and then he had an undefined notion that his best plan for escaping the clutches of Sweeney Todd would be to go to sea. In common with all boys of his age, who know nothing whatever of the life of a sailor, it presented itself in the most fascinating colours. A sailor ashore and a sailor afloat, are about as two different things as the world can present; but, to the imagination of Tobias Ragg, a sailor was somebody who was always dancing hornpipes, spending money, and telling wonderful stories. No wonder, then, that the profession presented itself under such fascinating colours to all such persons as Tobias; and as it seemed, and seems still, to be a sort of general understanding that the real condition of a sailor should be mystified in every possible way and shape by both novelist and dramatist, it is no wonder that it requires actual experience to enable those parties who are in the habit of being carried away by just what they hear, to come to a correct conclusion.

"I will go to sea!" ejaculated Tobias. "Yes, I will go to sea!"

As he spoke these words he passed out of the gate of the Temple leading into Whitefriars, in which ancient vicinity his mother dwelt, endeavouring to eke out a living as best she might. She was very much surprised (for she happened to be at home) at the unexpected visit of her son, Tobias, and uttered a faint scream as she let fall a flat-iron very nearly upon his toes.

"Mother," he said, "I cannot stay with Sweeney Todd any longer, so do not ask me."

"Not stay with such a respectable man?"

"A respectable man, mother! Alas, alas, how little you know of him! But what am I saying? I dare not speak! Oh, that fatal, fatal candlestick!"

"But how are you to live, and what do you mean by a fatal candlestick?"

"Forgive me--I did not mean to say that! Farewell, mother! I am going to sea."

"To see what, my dear?" said Mrs. Ragg, who was much more difficult to talk to, than even Hamlet's grave-digger. "You don't know how much I am obliged to Sweeney Todd."

"Yes, I do, and that's what drives me mad to think of. Farewell, mother, perhaps for ever! If I can, of course I will communicate with you, but now I dare not stay."

"Oh! what have you done, Tobias--what have you done?"

"Nothing--nothing! but Sweeney Todd is--"

"What--what?"

"No matter--no matter! Nothing--nothing! And yet at this last moment I am almost tempted to ask you concerning a candlestick."

"Don't mention that," said Mrs. Ragg; "I don't want to hear anything said about it."

"It is true, then?"

"Yes; but did Mr. Todd tell you?"

"He did--he did. I have now asked the question I never thought could have passed my lips. Farewell, mother; for ever farewell!"

Tobias rushed out of the place, leaving old Mrs. Ragg astonished at his behaviour, and with a strong suspicion that some accession of insanity had come over him.

"The Lord have mercy upon us!" she said, "what shall I do? I am astonished at Mr. Todd telling him about the candlestick; it's true enough, though, for all that. I recollect it as well as though it were yesterday; it was a very hard winter, and I was minding a set of chambers, when Todd came to shave the gentleman, and I saw him with my own eyes put a silver candlestick in his pocket. Then I went over to his shop and reasoned with him about it, and he gave it me back again, and I brought it to the chambers, and laid it down exactly on the spot where he took it from."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Ragg, after a pause of a few moments, "to be sure, he has been a very good friend to me ever since, but that I suppose is for fear I should tell, and get him hung or transported. But, however, we must take the good with the bad, and when Tobias comes to think of it, he will go back again to his work, I dare say; for, after all, it's a very foolish thing for him to trouble his head whether Mr. Todd stole a silver candlestick or not."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE STRANGE ODOUR IN OLD ST. DUNSTAN'S CHURCH.

About this time, and while the incidents of our most strange and eventful narrative were taking place, the pious frequenters of old St. Dunstan's church began to perceive a strange and most abominable odour throughout that sacred edifice. It was in vain that old women who came to hear the sermons, although they were too deaf to catch a third part of them, brought smelling bottles and other means of stifling their noses; still that dreadful charnel-house sort of smell would make itself most painfully and most disagreeably apparent. And the Rev. Joseph

Stillingport, who was the regular preacher, smelt it in the pulpit; and had been seen to sneeze in the midst of a most pious discourse indeed, and to hold to his pious mouth a handkerchief, in which was some strong and pungent essence, for the purpose of trying to overcome the horrible effluvia. The organ-blower and the organ-player were both nearly stifled, for the horrible odour seemed to ascend to the upper part of the church; although those who sat in what may be called the pit, by no means escaped it. The churchwardens looked at each other in their pews with contorted countenances, and were almost afraid to breathe; and the only person who did not complain bitterly of the dreadful odour in St. Dunstan's church, was an old woman who had been a pew-opener for many years; but then she had lost the faculties of her nose, which, perhaps, accounted satisfactorily for that circumstance. At length, however, the nuisance became so intolerable, that the beadle, whose duty it was in the morning to open the church doors, used to come up to them with the massive key in one hand, and a cloth soaked in vinegar in the other, just as the people used to do in the time of the great plague of London; and when he had opened the doors, he used to run over to the other side of the way.

"Ah, Mr. Blunt!" he used to say to the bookseller, who lived opposite--"ah! Mr. Blunt, I is obligated to cut over here, leastways till the \_atymouspheric\_ air is mixed up all along with the \_stinkifications\_ which come from the church."

By this it will be seen that the beadle was rather a learned man, and no doubt went to some mechanics' institution of those days, where he learned something of everything but what was calculated to be of some service to him. As might be supposed, from the fact that this sort of thing had gone on for a few months, it began to excite some attention with a view to a remedy; for, in the great city of London, a nuisance of any sort or description requires to become venerable by age before any one thinks of removing it; and after that, it is quite clear that that becomes a good argument against removing it at all. But at last, the churchwardens began to have a fear that some pestilential disease would be the result if they for any longer period of time put up with the horrible stench, and that they might be among its first victims, so they began to ask each other what could be done to obviate it. Probably, if this frightful stench, being suggestive, as it was, of all sorts of horrors, had been graciously pleased to confine itself to some poor locality, nothing would have been heard of it; but when it became actually offensive to a gentleman in a metropolitan pulpit, and when it began to make itself perceptible to the sleepy faculties of the churchwardens of St. Dunstan's church, Fleet-street, so as to prevent them even from dozing through the afternoon sermon, it became a very serious matter indeed. But what was it, what could it be, and what was to be done to get rid of it? These were the anxious questions that were asked right and left, as regarded the serious nuisance, without the fates graciously acceding any reply. But yet one thing seemed to be generally agreed, and that was, that it did come, and must come, somehow or other, out of the vaults from beneath the church. But then, as the pious and hypocritical Mr. Butterwick, who lived opposite, said--

"How could that be, when it was satisfactorily proved by the present

books that nobody had been buried in the vaults for some time, and therefore it was a very odd thing that dead people, after leaving off smelling and being disagreeable, should all of a sudden burst out again in that line, and be twice as bad as ever they were at first."

And on Wednesdays sometimes, too, when pious people were not satisfied with the Sunday's devotion, but began again in the middle of the week, that stench was positively terrific. Indeed, so bad was it, that some of the congregation were forced to leave, and have been seen to slink into Bell-yard, where Lovett's pie-shop was situated, and then and there solace themselves with a pork or a veal pie, in order that their mouths and noses should be full of a delightful and agreeable flavour, instead of one most peculiarly and decidedly the reverse. At last there was a confirmation to be held at St. Dunstan's church, and a great concourse of persons assembled, for a sermon was to be preached by the bishop after the confirmation; and a very great fuss indeed was to be made about really nobody knew exactly what. Preparations, as newspapers say, upon an extensive scale, and regardless of expense, were made for the purpose of adding lustre to the ceremony, and surprising the bishop, when he came, with a good idea that the people who attended St. Dunstan's church were somebodies, and really worth confirming. The confirmation was to take place at twelve o'clock, and the bells ushered in the morning with their most pious tones, for it was not every day that the authorities of St. Dunstan succeeded in catching a bishop, and when they did so, they were determined to make the most of him. And the numerous authorities, including churchwardens, and even the very beadle, were in an uncommon fluster, and running about, and impeding each other, as authorities always do upon public occasions. But, to those who only look to the surface of things, and who came to admire what was grand and magnificent in the preparations, the beadle certainly carried away the palm, for that functionary was attired in a completely new cocked hat and coat, and certainly looked very splendid and showy upon the occasion. Moreover, that beadle had been well and judiciously selected, and the parish authorities made no secret of it, when there was an election for beadle, that they threw all their influence into the scale of that candidate who happened to be the biggest, and consequently, who was calculated to wear the official costume with an air that no smaller man could have possibly aspired to on any account. At half-past eleven o'clock the bishop made his gracious appearance, and was duly ushered into the vestry, where there was a comfortable fire, and on the table in which, likewise, were certain cold chickens and bottles of rare wines; for confirming a number of people, and preaching a sermon besides, was considered no joke, and might, for all they knew, be provocative of a great appetite in the bishop. And with what a bland and courtly air the bishop smiled as he ascended the steps of St. Dunstan's Church. How affable he was to the churchwardens, and he actually smiled upon a poor miserable charity boy, who, his eyes glaring wide open, and his muffin cap in his hand, was taking his first stare at a real live bishop. To be sure, the beadle knocked him down directly the bishop had passed, for having the presumption to look at such a great personage, but then that was to be expected fully and completely, and only proved that the proverb, which permits a cat to look at a king, is not equally applicable to charity boys and bishops. When the bishop got to the vestry, some very complimentary words were uttered to him by the usual

officiating clergyman, but, somehow or other, the bland smile had left the lips of the great personage, and, interrupting the vicar in the midst of a fine flowing speech, he said--

"That's all very well, but what a terrible stink there is here!"

The churchwardens gave a groan, for they had flattered themselves that perhaps the bishop would not notice the dreadful smell, or that, if he did, he would think it was accidental, and say nothing about it; but now, when he really did mention it, they found all their hopes scattered to the winds, and that it was necessary to say something.

"Is this horrid charnel-house sort of smell always here?"

"I am afraid it is," said one of the churchwardens.

"Afraid!" said the bishop, "surely you know; you seem to me to have a nose."

"Yes," said the churchwarden, in great confusion, "I have that honour, and I have the pleasure of informing you, my Lord Bishop--I mean I have the honour of informing you that this smell is always here."

The bishop sniffed several times, and then he said--

"It is very dreadful; and I hope that by the next time I come to St. Dunstan's, you will have the pleasure and the honour, both, of informing me that it has gone away."

The churchwarden bowed, and got into an extreme corner, saying to himself--

"This is the bishop's last visit here, and I don't wonder at it, for, as if out of pure spite, the smell is ten times worse than ever to-day."

And so it was, for it seemed to come up through all the crevices of the flooring of the church, with a power and perseverance that was positively dreadful.

The people coughed, and held their handkerchiefs to their noses, remarking to each other--

"Isn't it dreadful?--did you ever know the smell in St. Dunstan's so bad before," and everybody agreed that they never had known it anything like so bad, for that it was positively awful--and so indeed it was.

The anxiety of the bishop to get away was quite manifest, and, if he could have decently taken his departure without confirming anybody at all, there is no doubt but that he would have willingly done so, and left all the congregation to die and be--something or another. But this he could not do, but he could cut it short, and he did so. The people found themselves confirmed before they almost knew where they were, and the bishop would not go into the vestry again on any account, but hurried down the steps of the church, and into his carriage, with the

greatest precipitation in the world, thus proving that holiness is no proof against a most abominable stench. As may be well supposed, after this, the subject assumed a much more serious aspect, and on the following day a solemn meeting was held of all the church authorities, at which it was determined that men should be employed to make a thorough and searching examination of the vaults of St. Dunstan's, with the view of discovering, if possible, from whence particularly the abominable stench emanated. And then it was decided that the stench was to be put down, and that the bishop was to be apprized it was put down, and that he might visit the church in perfect safety.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### SWEENEY TODD'S PROCEEDINGS CONSEQUENT UPON THE DEPARTURE OF TOBIAS.

We left the barber in his own shop, much wondering that Tobias had not responded to the call which he had made upon him, but yet scarcely believing it possible that he could have ventured upon the height of iniquity, which we know Tobias had really been guilty of. He paused for a few moments, and held up the light which he had procured, and gazed around him with inquiring eyes, for he could, indeed, scarcely believe it possible that Tobias had sufficiently cast off his dread of him, Sweeney Todd, to be enabled to achieve any act for his liberation. But when he saw that the lock of the parlour-door was open, positive rage obtained precedence over every other feeling.

"The villain!" he cried, "has he dared really to consummate an act I thought he could not have dreamt of for a moment? Is it possible that he can have presumed so far as to have searched the house?"

That Tobias, however, had presumed so far, the barber soon discovered, and when he went into his parlour and saw what had actually occurred, and that not only was every cupboard door broken open, but that likewise the door which led to the staircase and the upper part of the house had not escaped, he got perfectly furious, and it was some time before he could sufficiently calm himself to reflect upon the probable and possible amount of danger he might run in consequence of these proceedings. When he did, his active mind at once told him that there was not much to be dreaded immediately, for that most probably Tobias, still having the fear before his eyes of what he might do as regarded his mother, had actually run away; and, "in all likelihood," muttered the barber, "he has taken with him something which would allow me to fix upon him the stigma of robbery, but that I must see to."

Having fastened the shop-door securely, he took the light in his hands, and ascended to the upper part of his house--that is to say, the first floor, where alone anything was to be found. He saw at once the open bureau, with all its glittering display of jewels, and as he gazed upon the heap, he muttered--

"I have not so accurate a knowledge of what is here as to be able to say

if anything be extracted or not, but I know the amount of money, if I do not know the precise number of jewels which this bureau contains."

He opened a small drawer which had entirely escaped the scrutiny of Tobias, and proceeded to count a large number of guineas which were there.

"These are correct," he said, when he had finished his examination--"these are correct, and he has touched none of them."

He then opened another drawer, in which were a great many packets of silver done up in paper, and these likewise he carefully counted, and was satisfied they were right.

"It is strange," he said, "that he has taken nothing, but yet perhaps it is better that it should be so, inasmuch as it shows a wholesome fear of me. The slightest examination would have shown him these hoards of money; and since he has not made that slight examination, nor discovered any of them, it seems to my mind decisive upon the subject, that he has taken nothing, and perchance I shall discover him easier than I imagine."

[Illustration: Tobias Discovers The Barber's Hidden Plunder.]

He repaired to the parlour again, and carefully divested himself of everything which had enabled him so successfully to impose upon John Mundel, and replaced them by his ordinary costume, after which he fastened up his house and sallied forth, taking his way direct to Mrs. Ragg's humble home, in the expectation that there he would hear something of Tobias, which would give him a clue where to search for him, for search for him he fully intended; but what were his precise intentions perhaps he could hardly have told himself, until he actually found him. When he reached Mrs. Ragg's house, and made his appearance abruptly before that lady, who seemed somehow or another to be always ironing and always to drop the iron when any one came in, very near their toes, he said--

"Where did your son Tobias go after he left you to-night?"

"Lor! Mr. Todd, is it you? You are as good as a conjuror, sir, for he was here; but bless you, sir, I know no more where he is gone to, than the man in the moon. He said he was going to sea, but I am sure I should not have thought it, that I should not."

"To sea!--then the probability is that he would go down to the docks, but surely not to-night. Do you not expect him back here to sleep?"

"Well, sir, that's a very good thought of yours; and he may come back here to sleep, for all I know to the contrary."

"But you do not know it for a fact?"

"He didn't say so; but he may come, you know, sir, for all that."

"Did he tell you his reason for leaving me?"

"Indeed no, sir; he really did not, and he seemed to me to be a little bit out of his senses."

"Ah! Mrs. Ragg," said Sweeney Todd, "there you have it. From the first moment that he came into my service, I knew and felt confident that he was out of his senses. There was a strangeness of behaviour about him, which soon convinced me of that fact, and I am only anxious about him, in order that some effort may be made to cure him of such a malady, for it is a serious, and a dreadful one, and one which, unless taken in time, will be yet the death of Tobias."

These words were spoken with such solemn seriousness, that they had a wonderful effect upon Mrs. Ragg, who, like most ignorant persons, began immediately to confirm that which she most dreaded.

"Oh, it's too true," she said, "it's too true. He did say some extraordinary things to-night, Mr. Todd, and he said he had something to tell, which was too horrid to speak of. Now the idea, you know, Mr. Todd, of anybody having anything at all to tell, and not telling it at once, is quite singular."

"It is!--and I am sure that his conduct is such you never would be guilty of, Mrs. Ragg;--but hark! what's that?"

"It's a knock, Mr. Todd."

"Hush, stop a moment--what if it be Tobias?"

"Gracious goodness! it can't be him, for he would have come in at once."

"No; I slipped the bolt of the door, because I wished to talk to you without observation; so it may be Tobias, you perceive, after all. But let me hide somewhere, so that I may hear what he says, and be able to judge how his mind is affected. I will not hesitate to do something for him, let it cost what it may."

"There's the cupboard, Mr. Todd. To be sure there is some dirty saucepans and a frying-pan in it, and of course it aint a fit place to ask you to go into."

"Never mind that--never mind that; only you be careful, for the sake of Tobias's very life, to keep secret that I am here."

The knocking at the door increased each moment in vehemence, and scarcely had Sweeney Todd succeeded in getting into the cupboard along with Mrs. Ragg's pots and pans, and thoroughly concealed himself, when she opened the door; and, sure enough--Tobias, heated, tired, and looking ghastly pale--staggered into the room.

"Mother," he said, "I have taken a new thought, and have come back to you."

"Well, I thought you would, Tobias; and a very good thing it is that you have."

"Listen to me: I thought of flying from England for ever, and of never again setting foot upon its shores. I have altered that determination completely, and I feel now that it is my duty to do something else."

"To do what, Tobias?"

"To tell all I know--to make a clean breast, mother, and, let the consequences be what they may, to let justice take its course."

"What do you mean, Tobias?"

"Mother, I have come to a conclusion, that what I have to tell is of such vast importance, compared with any consequences that may arise from the petty robbery of the candlestick, which you know of, that I ought not to hesitate a moment in revealing everything."

"But, my dear Tobias, remember that that is a dreadful secret, and one that must be kept."

"It cannot matter--it cannot matter; and, besides, it is more than probable that by revealing what I actually know, and which is of such great magnitude, I may, mother, in a manner of speaking, perchance completely exonerate you from the consequences of that transaction. Besides, it was long ago, and the prosecutor may have mercy; but, be all that how it may, and be the consequences what they may, I must and will tell what I now know."

"But what is it Tobias, that you know?"

"Something too dreadful for me to utter to you alone. Go into the Temple, mother, to some of the chambers you attend to, and ask them to come to me, and listen to what I have got to say. They will be amply repaid for their trouble, for they will hear that which may, perhaps, save their own lives."

"He is quite gone," thought Mrs. Ragg, "and Mr. Todd is correct; poor Tobias is as mad as he can be!" "Alas, alas, Tobias, why don't you try to reason yourself into a better state of mind! You don't know a bit what you are saying, any more than the man in the moon."

"I know I am half mad, mother, but yet I know what I am saying well; so do not fancy that it is not to be relied upon, but go and fetch some one at once to listen to what I have to relate."

"Perhaps," thought Mrs. Ragg, "if I were to pretend to humour him, it would be as well, and, while I am gone, Mr. Todd can speak to him."

This was a bright idea of Mrs. Ragg's, and she forthwith proceeded to carry it into execution, saying--

"Well, my dear, if it must be, it must be--and I will go; but I hope

while I have gone, somebody will speak to you, and convince you that you ought to try to quiet yourself."

These words Mrs. Ragg uttered aloud, for the special benefit of Sweeney Todd, who, she considered, would have been there to take the hint accordingly. It is needless to say he did hear them, and how far he profited by them, we shall quickly perceive. As for poor Tobias, he had not the remotest idea of the close proximity of his arch enemy; if he had, he would quickly have left that spot, where he might well to conjecture so much danger awaited him; for although Sweeney Todd, under the circumstances, probably felt that he dared not take Tobias's life, still he might exchange something that could place it in his power to do so shortly, with the least personal danger to himself. The door closed after the retreating form of Mrs. Ragg, and as, considering the mission she was gone upon, it was very clear some minutes must elapse before she could return, Sweeney Todd did not feel that there was any very particular hurry in the transaction.

"What shall I do?" he said to himself. "Shall I await his mother's coming again, and get her to aid me, or shall I of myself adopt some means which will put an end to trouble on this boy's account?"

Sweeney Todd was a man tolerably rapid in thought, and he contrived to make up his mind that the best plan, unquestionably, would be to lay hold of Tobias at once, and so prevent the possibility of any appeal to his mother becoming effective. Tobias, when his mother left the place, as he imagined, for the purpose of procuring some one to listen to what he considered to be Sweeney Todd's delinquencies, rested his face upon his hands, and gave himself up to painful and deep thought. He felt that he had arrived at quite a crisis in his history, and that the next few hours could not surely but be very important to him in their results; and so they were indeed, but not certainly exactly in the way that he all along anticipated, for he thought of nothing but of the arrest and discomfiture of Todd, little expecting how close was his proximity to that formidable personage.

"Surely," thought Tobias, "I shall, by disclosing all that I know about Todd, gain some consideration for my mother, and after all, she may not be prosecuted for the robbery of the candlestick, for how very trifling is that affair compared to the much more dreadful things which I more than suspect Sweeney Todd to be guilty of. He is and must be, from all that I have seen and heard, a murderer, although how he disposes of his victims is involved in the most complete mystery, and is to me a matter past all human power of comprehension. I have no idea even upon that subject whatever."

This, indeed, was a great mystery; for, even admitting that Sweeney Todd was a murderer, and it must be allowed that as yet we have only circumstantial evidence of that fact, we can form no conclusion from such evidence as to how he perpetrated the deed, or how afterwards he disposed of the body of his victim. This grand and principal difficulty in the way of committing murder with impunity, namely, the disposal of a corpse, certainly did not seem at all to have any effect upon Sweeney Todd; for if he made corpses, he had some means of getting rid of them

with the most wonderful expedition as well as secrecy.

"He is a murderer," thought Tobias. "I know he is, although I have never seen him do the deed, or seen any appearances in the shop of a deed of blood having been committed. Yet why is it that occasionally, when a better dressed person than usual comes into the shop, that he sends me out on some errand to a distant part of the town?"

Tobias did not forget, too, that on more than one occasion he had come back quicker than he had been expected, and that he had caught Sweeney Todd in some little confusion, and seen the hat, the stick, or perhaps the umbrella of the last customer quietly waiting there, although the customer had gone; and even if the glaring improbability of a man leaving his hat behind him in a barber's shop was got over, why did he not come back for it? This was a circumstance which was entitled to all the weight which Tobias, during his mental cogitations, could give to it, and there could be but one possible explanation of a man not coming back for his hat, and that was that he had not the power to do so.

"This house will be searched," thought Tobias, "and all those things, which of course must have belonged to so many different people, will be found, and then they will be identified, and he will be required to say how he came by them, which, I think, will be a difficult task indeed for Sweeney Todd to accomplish. What a relief it will be to me, to be sure, when he is hanged, as I think he is tolerably sure to be!"

"What a relief," muttered Sweeney Todd, as he slowly opened the door, unseen by Tobias--"what a relief it will be to me when this boy is in his grave, as he will be soon, or else I have forgotten all my moral learning, and turned chicken-hearted--neither of them very likely circumstances."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MISADVENTURE OF TOBIAS.--THE MAD-HOUSE ON PECKHAM-RYE.

Sweeney Todd paused for a moment at the cupboard door, before he made up his mind as to whether he should pounce upon poor Tobias at once, or adopt a more creeping, cautious mode of operation. The latter course was by far the most congenial to his mind, and so he adopted it in a moment or so, and stole quietly from his place of concealment, and with so little noise, that Tobias could not have the least suspicion that any one was in the room but himself. Treading, as if each step might involve some serious consequences, he thus at length got completely behind the chair on which Tobias was sitting, and stood with folded arms, and such a hideous smile upon his face, that they together formed no inapt representation of the Mephistopheles of the German drama.

"I shall at length," murmured Tobias, "be free from my present dreadful state of mind, by thus accusing Todd. He is a murderer--of that I have no doubt: it is but a duty of mine to stand forward as his accuser."

Sweeney Todd stretched out his two brawny hands, and clutched Tobias by the head, which he turned round till the boy could see him, and then he said--

"Indeed, Tobias; and did it never strike you that Todd was not so easily to be overcome as you would wish him, eh, Tobias?"

The shock of this astonishing and sudden appearance of Sweeney Todd was so great, that for a few moments Tobias was deprived of all power of speech or action, and with his head so strangely twisted as to seem to threaten the destruction of his neck. He glared in the triumphant and malignant countenance of his persecutor, as he would into that of the arch enemy of all mankind, which probably he now began to think the barber really was. If one thing more than another was calculated to delight such a man as Todd, it certainly was to perceive what a dreadful effect his presence had upon Tobias, who remained for about a minute and a half in this state before he ventured upon uttering a shriek, which, however, when it did come, almost frightened Todd himself. It was one of those cries which can only come from a heart in its utmost agony--a cry which might have heralded the spirit to another world, and proclaimed, as it very nearly did the destruction of the intellect for ever. The barber staggered back a pace or two as he heard it, for it was too terrific even for him, but it was for a very brief period that it had that stunning effect upon him, and then, with a full consciousness of the danger to which it subjected him, he sprang upon poor Tobias as a tiger might be supposed to do upon a lamb, and clutched him by the throat, exclaiming--

"Such another cry, and it is the last you ever live to utter, although it cover me with difficulties to escape the charge of killing you. Peace! I say, peace!"

This exhortation was quite needless, for Tobias could not have uttered a word, had he been ever so much inclined to do so; the barber held his throat with such an iron clutch, as if it had been in a vise.

"Villain," growled Todd, "villain; so this is the way in which you have dared to disregard my injunctions. But no matter, no matter!--you shall have plenty of leisure to reflect upon what you have done for yourself. Fool! to think that you could cope with me--Sweeney Todd! Ha! ha!"

He burst into a laugh, so much more hideous, than his ordinary efforts in that way, that, had Tobias heard it--which he did not, for his head had dropped upon his breast, and he had become insensible--it would have terrified him almost as much as Sweeney Todd's sudden appearance had done.

"So," muttered the barber, "he has fainted, has he? Dull child, that is all the better. For once in a way, Tobias, I will carry you--not to oblige you, but to oblige myself. By all that's damnable, it was a lively thought that brought me here to-night, or else I might, by the dawn of the morning, have had some very troublesome inquiries made of me."

He took Tobias up as easily as if he had been an infant, and strode from the chambers with him, leaving Mrs. Ragg to draw whatever inference she chose from his absence; but feeling convinced that she was too much under his controul, to take any steps of a nature to give him the smallest amount of uneasiness.

"The woman," he muttered to himself, "is a double-distilled ass, and can be made to believe anything, so that I have no fear whatever of her. I dare not kill Tobias, because it is necessary, in case of the matter being at any other period mentioned, that his mother shall be in a position to swear that she saw him after this night alive and well."

The barber strode through the Temple, carrying the boy, who seemed not at all in a hurry to recover from the nervous and partial state of suffocation into which he had fallen. As they passed through the gate opening into Fleet-street, the porter, who knew the barber well by sight, said--

"Hilloa, Mr. Todd, is that you? Why, who are you carrying?"

"Yes, it's I," said Todd, "and I am carrying my apprentice boy, Tobias Ragg, poor fellow."

"Poor fellow!--why, what's the matter with him?"

"I can hardly tell you, but he seems to me and to his mother to have gone out of his senses. Good night to you, good night. I'm looking for a coach."

"Good night, Mr. Todd; I don't think you'll get one nearer than the market--what a kind thing now of him to carry the boy! It ain't every master would do that; but we must not judge of people by their looks, and even Sweeney Todd, though he has a face that one would not like to meet in a lonely place on a dark night, may be a kind-hearted man."

Sweeney Todd walked rapidly down Fleet-street, towards old Fleet Market, which was then in all its glory, if that could be called glory which consisted in all sorts of filth, enough to produce a pestilence within the city of London. When there, he addressed a large bundle of great coats, in the middle of which was supposed to be a hackney coachman of the regular old school, and who was lounging over his vehicle, which was as long and lumbering as a city barge.

"Jarvey," he said, "what will you take me to Peckham Rye for?"

"Peckham Rye--you and the boy--there ain't any more of you waiting round the corner, are there--'cos, you know, that won't be fair?"

"No, no, no."

"Well, don't be in a passion, master. I only asked, you know, so you need not be put out about it; I will take you for twelve shillings, and that's what I call remarkably cheap, all things considered."

"I'll give half the amount," said Sweeney Todd, "and you may consider yourself well paid."

"Half, master?--that is cutting it low; but, howsomdever, I suppose I must put up with it, and take you. Get in, I must try and make it up by some better fare out of somebody else."

The barber paid no heed to these renewed remonstrances of the coachman, but got into the vehicle, carrying Tobias with him, apparently with great care and consideration; but when the coach door closed, and no one was observing him, he flung him down among the straw that was at the bottom of the vehicle, and resting his immense feet upon him, he gave one of his disagreeable laughs, as he said--

"Well, I think I have you now, Master Tobias; your troubles will soon be over. I am really very much afraid that you will die suddenly, and then there will be an end of you altogether, which will be a very sad thing, though I don't think I shall go into mourning, because I have an opinion that that only keeps alive the bitterness of regret, and that it's a great deal better done without, Master Tobias."

The hackney coach swung about from side to side, in the proper approved manner of hackney coaches in the olden time, when they used to be called "bone setters," and to be thought wonderful if they made a progress of three miles and a half an hour. This was the sort of vehicle, then, in which poor Tobias, still perfectly insensible, was rumbled over Blackfriars-bridge, and so on towards Peckham, which Sweeney Todd had announced to be his place of destination. Going at the rate they did, it was nearly two hours before they arrived upon Peckham Rye; and any one acquainted with that locality is well aware that there are two roads, the one to the left, and the other to the right, both of which are pleasantly enough studded with villa residences. Sweeney Todd directed the coachman to take the road to the left, which he accordingly did, and they pursued it for a distance of about a mile and a half. It must not be supposed that this pleasant district of country was then in the state it is now, as regards inhabitants or cultivation. On the contrary, it was rather a wild spot, on which now and then a serious robbery had been committed; and which had witnessed some of the exploits of those highwaymen, whose adventures, in the present day, if one may judge from the public patronage they may receive, are viewed with such a great amount of interest. There was a lonely, large, rambling, old-looking house by the way side, on the left. A high wall surrounded it, which only allowed the topmost portion of it to be visible, and that presented great symptoms of decay, in the dilapidated character of the chimney-pot, and the general appearance of discomfort which pervaded it. There Sweeney Todd directed the coachman to stop, and when the vehicle, after swinging to and fro for several minutes, did indeed at last resolve itself into a state of repose, Sweeney Todd got out himself, and rang a bell, the handle of which hung invitingly at the gate. He had to wait several minutes before an answer was given to this summons, but at length a noise proceeded from within, as if several bars and bolts were being withdrawn; and presently the door was opened, and a huge, rough-looking man made his appearance on the threshold.

[Illustration: The Barber Carries Off Tobias To A Private Mad-House.]

"Well! what is it now?" he cried.

"I have a patient for Mr. Fogg," said Sweeney Todd. "I want to see him immediately."

"Oh! well, the more the merrier: it don't matter to me a bit. Have you got him with you--and is he tolerably quiet?"

"It's a mere boy, and he is not violently mad, but very decidedly so as regards what he says."

"Oh! that's it, is it? He can say what he likes here, it can make no difference in the world to us. Bring him in--Mr. Fogg is in his own room."

"I know the way: you take charge of the lad, and I will go and speak to Mr. Fogg about him. But stay, give the coachman these six shillings, and discharge him."

The doorkeeper of the lunatic asylum, for such it was, went out to obey the injunctions of Sweeney Todd, while that rascally individual himself walked along a wide passage to a door which was at the further extremity of it.

## CHAPTER XIX. THE MADHOUSE CELL.

When the porter of the madhouse went out to the coach, his first impression was, that the boy, who was said to be insane, was dead--for not even the jolting ride to Peckham had been sufficient to arouse him to a consciousness of how he was situated; and there he lay still at the bottom of the coach alike insensible to joy or sorrow.

"Is he dead?" said the man to the coachman.

"How should I know?" was the reply; "he may be or he may not, but I want to know how long I am to wait here for my fare?"

"There is your money, be off with you. I can see now that the boy is all right, for he breathes, although it's after an odd fashion that he does so. I should rather think he has had a knock on the head, or something of that kind."

As he spoke, he conveyed Tobias within the building, and the coachman, since he had got his six shillings, feeling that he had no further interest in the matter, drove away at once, and paid no more attention to it whatever. When Sweeney Todd reached the door at the end of the

passage, he tapped at it with his knuckles, and a voice cried--

"Who knocks--who knocks? Curses on you all! Who knocks?"

Sweeney Todd did not make any verbal reply to this polite request, but opening the door he walked into the apartment, which is one that really deserves some description. It was a large room with a vaulted roof, and in the centre was a superior oaken table, at which sat a man considerably advanced in years, as was proclaimed by his grizzled locks that graced the sides of his head, but whose herculean frame and robust constitution had otherwise successfully resisted the assaults of time. A lamp swung from the ceiling, which had a shade over the top of it, so that it cast a tolerably bright glow upon the table below, which was covered with books and papers, as well as glasses and bottles of different kinds, which showed that the madhouse-keeper was, at all events, as far as himself was concerned, not at all indifferent to personal comfort. The walls, however, presented the most curious aspect, for they were hung with a variety of tools and implements, which would have puzzled any one not initiated into the matter even to guess at their uses. These were, however, in point of fact, specimens of the different kinds of machinery which were used for the purpose of coercing the unhappy persons whose evil destiny made them members of that establishment. Those were what is "called the good old times," when all sorts of abuses flourished in perfection, and when the unhappy insane were actually punished as if they were guilty of some great offence. Yes, and worse than that were they punished, for a criminal who might have injustice done to him by any who were in authority over him, could complain, and if he got hold of a person of higher power, his complaints might be listened to, but no one heeded what was said by the poor maniac, whose bitterest accusations of his keepers, let their conduct be what it might, was only listened to and set down as a further proof of his mental disorder. This was indeed a most awful and sad state of things, and, to the disgrace of this country, it is a social evil allowed until very late years to continue in full force. Mr. Fogg, the madhouse-keeper fixed his keen eyes from beneath his shaggy brows, upon Sweeney Todd, as the latter entered his apartment, and then he said--

"Mr. Todd, I think, unless my memory deceives me."

"The same," said the barber, making a hideous face, "I believe I am not easily forgotten."

"True," said Mr. Fogg, as he reached a book, the edge of which was cut into a lot of little slips, on each of which was a capital letter, in the order of the alphabet--"true, you are not easily forgotten, Mr. Todd."

He then opened the book at the letter T, and read from it:--

"Mr. Sweeney Todd, Fleet-street, London, paid one year's keep and burial of Thomas Simkins, aged 15, found dead in his bed, after a residence in the asylum of 10 months and 4 days. I think, Mr. Todd, that was our last little transaction; what can I do now for you, sir?"

"I am rather unfortunate," said Todd, "with my boys. I have got another here, who has shown such decided symptoms of insanity, that it becomes absolutely necessary to place him under your care."

"Indeed!--does he rave?"

"Why, yes he does, and it's the most absurd nonsense in the world that he raves about; for, to hear him, one would really think that, instead of being one of the most humane of men, I was, in point of fact, an absolute murderer."

"A murderer, Mr. Todd!"

"Yes, a murderer--a murderer to all intents and purposes; could anything be more absurd than such an accusation?--I, that have the milk of human kindness flowing in every vein, and whose very appearance ought to be sufficient to convince anybody at once of my kindness of disposition."

Sweeney Todd finished his speech by making such a hideous face, that the madhouse-keeper could not for the life of him tell what to say to it; and then there came one of those short, disagreeable laughs which Todd would at times utter, which, somehow or other, never appeared exactly to come from his mouth, but always made people look up at the walls and ceiling of the apartment in which they were, in great doubt as to whence the remarkable sound came.

"For how long," said the madhouse-keeper, "do you think this malady will continue?"

"I will pay," said Sweeney Todd, as he leaned over the table, and looked in the face of his questioner, "I will pay for twelve months; but I don't think between you and I, that the case will last anything like so long--I think he will die suddenly."

"I shouldn't wonder if he did. Some of our patients do die very suddenly, and, somehow or other, we never know exactly how it happens; but it must be some sort of fit, for they are found dead in the morning in their beds, and then we bury them privately and quietly, without troubling anybody about it at all, which is decidedly the best way, because it saves a great annoyance to friends and relations, as well as prevents any extra expense which otherwise might be foolishly gone to."

"You are wonderfully correct and considerate," said Todd, "and it's no more than what I expected from you, or what any one might expect from a person of your great experience, knowledge, and acquirements. I must confess I am quite delighted to hear you talk in so elevated a strain."

"Why," said Mr. Fogg, with a strange leer upon his face, "we are forced to make ourselves useful, like the rest of the community; and we could not expect people to send their mad friends and relatives here, unless we took good care that their ends and views were answered by so doing. We make no remarks, and we ask no questions. Those are the principles upon which we have conducted business so successfully and so long; those are the principles upon which we shall continue to conduct it, and to

merit, we hope, the patronage of the British public."

"Unquestionably--most unquestionably."

"You may as well introduce me to your patient at once, Mr. Todd, for I suppose, by this time, he has been brought into this house."

"Certainly, certainly--I shall have great pleasure in showing him to you."

The madhouse-keeper rose, and so did Mr. Todd, and the former, pointing to the bottles and glasses on the table, said--

"When this business is settled, we can have a friendly glass together."

To this proposition Sweeney Todd assented with a nod, and then they both proceeded to what was called a reception-room in the asylum, and where poor Tobias had been conveyed and laid upon a table, when he showed slight symptoms of recovering from the state of insensibility into which he had fallen, and a man was sluicing water on his face by the assistance of a hearth broom occasionally dipped into a pailful of that fluid.

"Quite young," said the madhouse-keeper, as he looked upon the pale and interesting face of Tobias.

"Yes," said Sweeney Todd, "he is young--more's the pity--and, of course, we deeply regret his present situation."

"Oh, of course, of course; but see, he opens his eyes, and will speak directly."

"Rave, you mean, rave!" said Todd; "don't call it speaking, it is not entitled to the name. Hush! listen to him."

"Where am I?" said Tobias, "where am I? Todd is a murderer--I denounce him."

"You hear--you hear?" said Todd.

"Mad indeed," said the keeper.

"Oh, save me from him--save me from him!" said Tobias, fixing his eyes upon Mr. Fogg. "Save me from him; it is my life he seeks because I know his secrets. He is a murderer--and many a person comes into his shop, who never leaves it again in life, if at all."

"You hear him?" said Todd. "Was there ever anybody so mad?"

[Illustration: Tobias In The Hands Of The Mad-House Keepers.]

"Desperately mad," said the keeper. "Come, come, young fellow, we shall be under the necessity of putting you in a strait waistcoat if you go on in that way. We must do it, for there is no help in such cases if we

don't."

Todd slunk back into the dark of the apartment, so that he was not seen, and Tobias continued, in an imploring tone--

"I do not know who you are, sir, or where I am; but let me beg of you to cause the house of Sweeney Todd, the barber, in Fleet-street, near St. Dunstan's church, to be searched, and you will find that he is a murderer. There are at least a hundred hats, quantities of walking sticks, umbrellas, watches, and rings, all belonging to unfortunate persons who, from time to time, have met with their deaths through him."

"How uncommonly mad!" said Mr. Fogg.

"No, no," said Tobias, "I am not mad. Why call me mad, when the truth or falsehood of what I say can be ascertained so easily? Search his house, and if those things be not found there, say that I am mad, and have but dreamed of them. I do not know how he kills the people. That is a great mystery to me yet; but that he does kill them, I have no doubt--I cannot have a doubt."

"Watson!" cried the mad-house keeper. "Hilloa! here, Watson."

"I am here, sir," said the man, who had been dashing water upon poor Tobias's face.

"You will take this lad, Watson, as he seems extremely feverish and unsettled. You will take him and shave his head, Watson, and put a strait waistcoat upon him, and let him be put in one of the dark, damp cells. We must be careful of him, and too much light encourages delirium and fever."

"Oh! no, no!" cried Tobias; "What have I done that I should be subjected to such cruel treatment? what have I done that I should be placed in a cell? If this be a madhouse, I am not mad. Oh! have mercy upon me!--have mercy upon me!"

"You will give him nothing but bread and water, Watson; and the first symptom of his recovery, which will produce better treatment, will be his exonerating his master from what he has said about him; for he must be mad so long as he continues to accuse such a gentleman as Mr. Todd of such things; nobody but a mad man or a mad boy would think of it."

"Then," said Tobias, "I shall continue mad; for if it be madness to know and aver that Sweeney Todd, the barber, of Fleet-street, is a murderer, mad am I, for I know it, and aver it. It is true--it is true."

"Take him away, Watson, and do as I desired you. I begin to find that the boy is a very dangerous character, and more viciously mad than anybody we have had here for a considerable time."

The man named Watson seized upon Tobias, who again uttered a shriek something similar to the one which had come from his lips when Sweeney Todd clutched hold of him in his mother's room. But they were used to

such things in that madhouse, and cared little for them, so no one heeded the cry in the least; but poor Tobias was carried to the door half maddened in reality by the horrors that surrounded him. Just as he was being conveyed out, Sweeney Todd stepped up to him, and putting his mouth close to his ear, he whispered--

"Ha! ha! Tobias! how do you feel now? Do you think Sweeney Todd will be hung, or will you die in the cell of a madhouse?"

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE NEW COOK TO MRS. LOVETT GETS TIRED OF HIS SITUATION.

From what we have already had occasion to record about Mrs. Lovett's new cook, who ate so voraciously in the cellar, our readers will no doubt be induced to believe that he was a gentleman likely enough soon to be tired of his situation. To a starving man, and one who seemed completely abandoned even by hope, Lovett's bake-house, with an unlimited leave to eat as much as possible, must of course present itself in the most desirable and lively colours: and no wonder therefore, that, banishing all scruple, a man so placed, would take the situation, with very little inquiry. But people will tire of good things; and it is a remarkable well-authenticated fact that human nature is prone to be discontented. And those persons who are well acquainted with the human mind, and who know well how little value people set upon things which they possess, while those which they are pursuing, and which seem to be beyond their reach, assume the liveliest colours imaginable, adopt various means of turning this to account. Napoleon took good care that the meanest of his soldiers should see in perspective the possibility of grasping a marshal's baton. Confectioners at the present day, when they take a new apprentice, tell him to eat as much as he likes of those tempting tarts and sweetmeats, one or two of which before had been a most delicious treat. The soldier goes on fighting away, and never gets the marshal's baton. The confectioner's boy crams himself with Banbury cakes, gets dreadfully sick, and never touches one afterwards. And now, to revert to our friend in Mrs. Lovett's bakehouse. At first everything was delightful, and, by the aid of the machinery, he found that it was no difficult matter to keep up the supply of pies by really a very small amount of manual labour. And that labour also was such a labour of love, for the pies were delicious; there could be no mistake about that. He tasted them half cooked, he tasted them wholly, and he tasted them over-done; hot and cold; pork and veal with seasoning, and without seasoning, until at last he had had them in every possible way and shape; and when the fourth day came after his arrival in the cellar, he might have been sitting in rather a contemplative attitude with a pie before him. It was twelve o'clock: he had heard that sound come from the shop. Yes, it was twelve o'clock, and he had eaten nothing yet; but he kept his eye fixed upon the pie that lay untouched before him.

"The pies are all very well," he said; "in fact, of course they are capital pies; and now that I see how they are made, and know that there

is nothing wrong in them, I, of course, relish them more than ever; but one can't always live upon pies; it's quite impossible one can subsist upon pies from one end of the year to the other, if they were the finest pies the world ever saw, or ever will see. I don't say anything against the pies--I know they are made of the finest flour, the best possible butter, and that the meat, which comes from God knows where, is the most delicate looking and tender I ever ate in all my life."

He stretched out his hand and broke a small portion of the crust from the pie that was before him, and he tried to eat it. He certainly did succeed; but it was a great effort; and when he had done, he shook his head, saying--

"No, no!--d--n it! I cannot eat it, and that's the fact--one cannot be continually eating pies: it is out of the question, quite out the question; and all I have to remark is--d--n the pies! I really don't think I shall be able to let another one pass my lips."

He rose and paced with rapid strides the place in which he was, and then suddenly he heard a noise; and, looking up, he saw a trap door in the roof open, and a sack of flour begin gradually to come down.

"Hilloa, hilloa!" he cried, "Mrs. Lovett--Mrs. Lovett!"

Down came the flour, and the trap door was closed.

"Oh, I can't stand this sort of thing," he exclaimed; "I cannot be made into a mere machine for the manufacture of pies. I cannot and will not endure it--it is past all bearing."

For the first time almost since his incarceration, for such it really was, he began to think that he would take an accurate survey of the place where this tempting manufacture was carried on. The fact was, his mind had been so intensely occupied during the time he had been there in providing merely for his physical wants, that he had scarcely had time to think or reason upon the probabilities of an uncomfortable termination of his career; but now, when he had really become quite surfeited with the pies, and tired of the darkness and gloom of the place, many unknown fears began to creep across him, and he really trembled, as he asked himself what was to be the end of all. It was with such a feeling as this that he now set about a careful and accurate survey of the place; and taking a little lamp in his hand, he resolved upon peering into every corner of it, with a hope that surely he should find some means by which he should effect an escape from what otherwise threatened to be an intolerable imprisonment. The vault in which the ovens were situated was the largest; and although a number of smaller ones communicated with it, containing the different mechanical contrivances for pie-making, he could not from any one of them discover an outlet. But it was to the vault where the meat was deposited upon stone shelves that he paid the greatest share of attention, for to that vault he felt convinced there must be some hidden and secret means of ingress, and therefore of egress likewise, or else how came the shelves always so well stocked with meat as they were? This vault was larger than any of the other subsidiary ones, and the roof was very high, and,

come into it when he would, it always happened that he found meat enough upon the shelves, cut into large lumps, and sometimes into slices, to make a batch of pies with. When it got there, was not so much a mystery to him as how it got there; for, of course, as he must sleep sometimes, he concluded, naturally enough, that it was brought in by some means during the period that he devoted to repose. He stood in the centre of this vault with the lamp in his hand, and he turned slowly round, surveying the walls and the ceilings with the most critical and marked attention, but not the smallest appearance of an outlet was observable. In fact, the walls were so entirely filled up with the stone shelves, that there was no space left for a door; and as for the ceiling, it seemed perfectly entire. Then the floor was of earth; so that the idea of a trap door opening in it was out of the question, because there was no one on his side of it to place the earth again over it, and give it its compact and usual appearance.

"This is most mysterious," he said; "and if ever I could have been brought to believe that any one had the assistance of the devil himself in conducting human affairs, I should say that by some means Mrs. Lovett had made it worth the while of that elderly individual to assist her; for, unless the meat gets here by some supernatural agency, I really cannot see how it can get here at all. And yet here it is--so fresh, and pure, and white-looking, although I never could tell the pork from the veal myself, for they seemed to me both alike."

He now made a still narrower examination of this vault, but he gained nothing by that. He found that the walls at the back of the shelves were composed of flat pieces of stone, which, no doubt, were necessary for the support of the shelves themselves; but beyond that he made no further discovery, and he was about leaving the place, when he fancied he saw some writing on the inner side of the door. A closer inspection convinced him that there were a number of lines written with lead pencil, and after some difficulty he decyphered them as follows:--

"Whatever unhappy wretch reads these lines may bid adieu to the world and all hope, for he is a doomed man! He will never emerge from these vaults with life, for there is a secret connected with them so awful and so hideous, that to write it makes one's blood curdle, and the flesh to creep upon my bones. That secret is this--and you may be assured, whoever is reading these lines, that I write the truth, and that it is as impossible to make that awful truth worse by any exaggeration, as it would be by a candle at mid-day to attempt to add any new lustre to the sunbeams."

Here, most unfortunately, the writing broke off, and our friend, who, up to this point, had perused the lines with the most intense interest, felt great bitterness of disappointment, from the fact that enough should have been written to stimulate his curiosity to the highest possible point, but not enough to gratify it.

"This is, indeed, most provoking," he exclaimed. "What can this most dreadful secret be, which it is impossible to exaggerate? I cannot, for a moment, divine to what it can allude."

In vain he searched over the door for some more writing--there was none to be found, and from the long straggling pencil-mark, which followed the last word, it seemed as if he who had been then writing had been interrupted, and possibly met the fate that he had predicted, and was about to explain the reason of.

"This is worse than no information. I had better have remained in ignorance than have received so indistinct a warning; but they shall not find me an easy victim, and, besides, what power on earth can force me to make pies unless I like, I should wish to know?"

As he stepped out of the place in which the meat was kept into the large vault where the ovens were, he trod upon a piece of paper that was lying upon the ground, and which he was quite certain he had not observed before. It was fresh and white, and clean too, so that it could not have been long there, and he picked it up with some curiosity. That curiosity was, however, soon turned to dismay when he saw what was written upon it, which was to the following effect, and well calculated to produce a considerable amount of alarm in the breast of any one situated as he was, so entirely friendless and so entirely hopeless of any extraneous aid in those dismal vaults, which he began, with a shudder, to suspect would be his tomb:--

"You are getting dissatisfied, and therefore it becomes necessary to explain to you your real position, which is simply this:--You are a prisoner, and were such from the first moment that you set foot where you now are; and you will find, unless you are resolved upon sacrificing your life, that your best plan will be to quietly give into the circumstances in which you find yourself placed. Without going into any argument or details upon the subject, it is sufficient to inform you that so long as you continue to make the pies, you will be safe; but if you refuse, then the first time you are caught asleep your throat will be cut."

This document was so much to the purpose, and really had so little of verbosity about it, that it was extremely difficult to doubt its sincerity. It dropped from the half-paralysed hands of that man, who, in the depth of his distress, and urged on by great necessity, had accepted a situation that he would have given worlds to escape from, had he been possessed of them.

"Gracious Heaven!" he exclaimed, "and am I then indeed condemned to such a slavery? Is it possible, that even in the heart of London, I am a prisoner, and without the means of resisting the most frightful threats that are uttered against me? Surely, surely this must be all a dream! It is too terrific to be true!"

He sat down upon that low stool where his predecessor had sat before, receiving his death-wound from the assassin who had glided in behind him, and dealt him that crashing blow, whose only mercy was that it had at once deprived the victim of existence. He could have wept bitterly, wept as he there sat, for he thought over days long passed away, of opportunities let go by with the heedless laugh of youth; he thought over all the chances and fortunes of his life, and now to find himself

the miserable inhabitant of a cellar, condemned to a mean and troublesome employment, without even the liberty of leaving that, to starve if he chose, upon pain of death--a frightful death, which had been threatened him, was indeed torment! No wonder that at times he felt himself unnerved, and that a child might have conquered him, while at other moments such a feeling of despair would come across him, that he called aloud upon his enemies to make their appearance, and give him at least the chance of a struggle for his life.

"If I am to die," he cried, "let me die with some weapon in my hand, as a brave man ought, and I will not complain, for there is little indeed in life now which should induce me to cling to it; but I will not be murdered in the dark."

He sprang to his feet, and rushing up to the door, which opened from the house into the vaults, he made a violent and desperate effort to shake it. But such a contingency as this had surely been looked forward to and provided against, for the door was of amazing strength, and most effectually resisted all his efforts, so that the result of his endeavours was but to exhaust himself, and he staggered back, panting and despairing, to the seat he had so recently left. Then he heard a voice, and upon looking up he saw that the small square opening in the upper part of the door, through which he had been before addressed, was open, and a face there appeared, but it was not the face of Mrs. Lovett. On the contrary, it was a large and hideous male physiognomy, and the voice that came from it was croaking and harsh, sounding most unmusically upon the ears of the unfortunate man who was thus made a victim to Mrs. Lovett's pie popularity.

"Continue at your work," said the voice, "or death will be your portion as soon as sleep overcomes you, and you sink exhausted to that repose which you will never awaken from, except to feel the pangs of death, and to be conscious that you are weltering in your blood. Continue at your work, and you will escape all this--neglect it, and your doom is sealed."

[Illustration: The Stranger In Mrs. Lovett's Bakehouse.]

"What have I done that I should be made such a victim of? Let me go, and I will swear never to divulge the fact that I have been in these vaults, so I cannot disclose any of their secrets, even if I knew them."

"Make pies," said the voice, "eat them, and be happy. How many a man would envy your position--withdrawn from all the struggles of existence, amply provided with board and lodging, and engaged in a pleasant and delightful occupation; it is astonishing how you can be dissatisfied!"

Bang! went the little square orifice at the top of the door, and the voice was heard no more. The jeering mockery of those tones, however, still lingered upon the ear of the unhappy prisoner, and he clasped his head in his hands with a fearful impression upon his brain that he surely must be going mad.

"He will drive me to insanity," he cried; "already I feel a sort of

slumber stealing over me for want of exercise, and the confined air of these vaults hinder me from taking regular repose; but now, if I close an eye, I shall expect to find the assassin's knife at my throat."

He sat for some time longer, and not even the dread he had of sleep could prevent a drowsiness creeping across his faculties, and this weariness would not be shaken off by any ordinary means, until at length he sprang to his feet, and shaking himself roughly, like one determined to be wide awake, he said to himself, mournfully--

"I must do their bidding or die; hope may be a delusion here, but I cannot altogether abandon it, and not until its faintest image has departed from my breast can I lie down to sleep and say--Let death come in any shape it may, it is welcome."

With a desperate and despairing energy he set about replenishing the furnaces of the oven, and, when he had got them all in a good state, he commenced manufacturing a batch of one hundred pies, which, when he had finished and placed upon the tray, and set the machine in motion which conducted them up to the shop, he considered to be a sort of price paid for his continued existence, and flinging himself upon the ground, he fell into a deep slumber.

## CHAPTER XXI. THE NIGHT AT THE MADHOUSE.

When Sweeney Todd had, with such diabolical want of feeling, whispered the few words of mockery which we have recorded in Tobias's ear, when he was carried out of Mr. Fogg's reception-room to be taken to a cell, the villanous barber drew back and indulged in rather a longer laugh than usual.

"Mr. Todd," said Fogg, "I find that you still retain your habit of merriment; but yours ain't the most comfortable laugh in the world, and we seldom hear anything equal to it, even from one of our cells."

"No!" said Sweeney Todd, "I don't suppose you do, and for my part I never heard of a cell laughing yet."

"Oh! you know what I mean, Mr. Todd, well enough."

"That may be," said Todd, "but it would be just as well to say it for all that. I think, however, as I came in you said something about refreshment?"

"I certainly did; and, if you will honour me by stepping back to my room, I think I can offer you, Mr. Todd, a glass of as nice wine as the king himself could put on his table, if he were any judge of that commodity, which I am inclined to think he is not."

"What do you expect," said Sweeney Todd, "that such an idiot should be a judge of?--but I shall have great pleasure in tasting your wine, for I have no hesitation in saying that my work to-night has made me thirsty."

At this moment a shriek was heard, and Sweeney Todd shrank away from the door.

"Oh! it's nothing, it's nothing," said Mr. Fogg; "if you had resided here as long as I have, you would get accustomed to now and then hearing a slight noise. The worst of it is, when half a dozen of the mad fellows get shrieking against each other in the middle of the night. Then, I grant, it is a little annoying."

"What do you do with them?"

"We send in one of the keepers with the lash, and soon put a stop to that. We are forced to keep the upper hand of them, or else we should have no rest. Hark! do you not hear that fellow now?--he is generally pretty quiet, but he has taken it into his head to be outrageous to-day; but one of my men will soon put a stop to that. This way, Mr. Todd, if you please, and as we don't often meet, I think when we do we ought to have a social glass."

Sweeney Todd made several horrible faces as he followed the madhouse-keeper, and he looked as if it would have given him quite as much pleasure, and no doubt it would, to brain that individual, as to drink his wine, although probably he would have preferred doing the latter process first, and executing the former afterwards, and at his leisure. They soon reached the room which was devoted to the use of Mr. Fogg and his friends, and which contained the many little curiosities in the way of madhouse discipline that were in that age considered indispensable in such establishments. Mr. Fogg moved away with his hands a great number of the books and papers which were on the table, so as to leave a vacant space, and then drawing the cork of a bottle, he filled himself a large glass of its contents, and invited Sweeney Todd to do the same, who was by no means slow in following his example. While these two villains are carousing, and caring nothing for the scenes of misery with which they are surrounded, poor Tobias, in conformity with the orders that had been issued with regard to him, was conveyed along a number of winding passages, and down several staircases, towards the cells of the establishment. In vain he struggled to get free from his captor--as well might a hare have struggled in the fangs of a wolf--nor were his cries at all heeded; although, now and then, the shrieks he uttered were terrible to hear, and enough to fill any one with dismay.

"I am not mad," said he, "indeed I am not mad--let me go, and I will say nothing--not one word shall ever pass my lips regarding Mr. Todd--let me go, oh, let me go, and I will pray for you as long as I live."

Mr. Watson whistled a lively tune.

"If I promise--if I swear to tell nothing, Mr. Todd will not wish me kept here--all he wants is my silence, and I will take any oath he likes. Speak to him for me, I implore you, and let me go."

Mr. Watson commenced the second part of his lively tune, and by that time he reached a door, which he unlocked, and then, setting down Tobias upon the threshold, he gave him a violent kick, which flung him down two steps on to the stone floor of a miserable cell, from the roof of which continual moisture was dripping, the only accommodation it possessed being a truss of damp straw flung into one corner.

"There," said Mr. Watson, "my lad, you can stay there and make yourself comfortable till somebody comes to shave your head, and after that you will find yourself quite a gentleman."

"Mercy! mercy--have mercy upon me!"

"Mercy!--what the devil do you mean by mercy? Well, that's a good joke; but I can tell you, you have come to the wrong shop for that; we don't keep it in stock here, and if we wanted ever so little of it, we should have to go somewhere else for it."

[Illustration]

Mr. Watson laughed so much at his own joke, that he felt quite amiable, and told Tobias that if he were perfectly quiet, and said "thank you" for everything, he wouldn't put him on the strait waistcoat, although Mr. Fogg had ordered it; "for," added Mr. Watson, "so far as that goes, I don't care a straw what Mr. Fogg says, or what he does; he can't do without me, damn him! because I know too many of his secrets."

Tobias made no answer to this promise, but he lay upon his back on the floor of the cell wringing his hands despairingly, and feeling that almost already the very atmosphere of that place seemed pregnant with insanity, and giving himself up for lost entirely.

"I shall never--never," he said, "look upon the bright sky and the green fields again. I shall be murdered here, because I know too much; what can save me now? Oh, what an evil chance it was that brought me back again to my mother, when I ought to have been far, far away by this time, instead of being, as I know I am, condemned to death in this frightful place. Despair seizes upon me! What noise is that--a shriek? Yes, yes, there is some other blighted heart beside mine in this dreadful house. Oh, Heaven! what will become of me? I feel already stifled and sick, and faint with the air of this dreadful cell. Help, help, help! have mercy upon me, and I will do anything, promise anything, swear anything."

If poor Tobias had uttered his complaints on the most desolate shore that ever a shipwrecked mariner was cast upon, they could not have been more unheeded than they were in that house of terror. He screamed and shrieked for aid. He called upon all the friends he had ever known in early life, and at that moment he seemed to remember the name of every one who had ever uttered a kind word to him; and to those persons who, alas! could not hear him, but were far enough removed away from his cries, he called for aid in that hour of his deep distress. At length, faint, wearied and exhausted, he lay a mere living wreck in that damp,

unwholesome cell, and felt almost willing that death should come and relieve him, at least from the pang of constantly expecting it! His cries, however, had had the effect of summoning up all the wild spirits in that building; and, as he now lay in the quiet of absolute exhaustion, he heard from far and near smothered cries and shrieks and groans, such as one might expect would fill the air of the infernal regions with dismal echoes. A cold and clammy perspiration broke out upon him, as these sounds each moment more plainly fell upon his ear, and as he gazed upon the profound darkness of the cell, his excited fancy began to people it with strange unearthly beings, and he could suppose that he saw hideous faces grinning at him, and huge mis-shapen creatures crawling on the walls, and floating in the damp, pestiferous atmosphere of the wretched cell. In vain he covered his eyes with his hands; those creatures of his imagination were not to be shut out from the mind, and he saw them, if possible, more vividly than before, and presenting themselves in more frightfully tangible shapes. Truly, if such visions should continue to haunt him, poor Tobias was likely enough to follow the fate of many others who had been placed in that establishment perfectly sane, but in a short time exhibited in it as raving lunatics.

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"A nice clear cool glass of wine," said Sweeney Todd, as he held up his glass between him and the light, "and pleasant drinking; so soft and mild in the mouth, and yet gliding down the throat with a pleasant strength of flavour!"

"Yes," said Mr. Fogg, "it might be worse. You see some patients, who are low and melancholy mad, require stimulants, and their friends send them wine. This is some that was so sent."

"Then you don't trouble the patients with it?"

"What! give a madman wine, while I am here in my senses to drink it? Oh, dear no! that won't do on any account."

"I should certainly, Mr. Fogg, not expect such an act of indiscretion from you, knowing you as I do to be quite a man of the world."

"Thank you for the compliment. This wine, now, was sent for an old gentleman who had turned so melancholy, that he not only would not take food enough to keep life and soul together, but he really terrified his friends so by threatening suicide that they sent him here for a few months; and, as stimulants were recommended for him, they sent this wine, you see; but I stimulated him without it quite as well, for I drink the wine myself and give him an infernal good kick or two every day, and that stimulates him, for it puts him in such a devil of a passion that I am quite sure he doesn't want any wine."

"A good plan," said Sweeney Todd, "but I wonder you don't contrive that your own private room should be free from the annoyance of hearing such sounds as those that have been coming upon my ears for the last five or ten minutes."

"It's impossible; you cannot get out of the way if you live in the house at all; and you see, as regards these mad fellows, they are quite like a pack of wolves, and when once one of them begins howling and shouting, the others are sure to chime in, in full chorus, and make no end of disturbance till we stop them, as I have already told you we do, with a strong hand."

"While I think of it," said Sweeney Todd, as he drew from his pocket a leathern bag, "while I think of it, I may as well pay you the year's money for the lad I have now brought you; you see I have not forgot the excellent rule you have of being paid in advance. There is the amount."

"Ah, Mr. Todd," said the madhouse-keeper as he counted the money, and then placed it in his pocket, "it's a pleasure to do business with a thorough business man like yourself. The bottle stands with you, Mr. Todd, and I beg you will not spare it. Do you know, Mr. Todd, this is a line of life which I have often thought would have suited you; I am certain you have a genius for such things."

"Not equal to you," said Todd; "but as I am fond, certainly, of what is strange and out of the way, some of the scenes and characters you come across would, I have no doubt, be highly entertaining to me."

"Scenes and characters--I believe you! During the course of a business like ours, we come across all sorts of strange things; and if I choose to do it, which of course I don't, I could tell a few tales which would make some people shake in their shoes; but I have no right to tell them, for I have been paid, and what the deuce is it to me?"

"Oh, nothing, of course nothing. But just while we are sipping our wine, now, couldn't you tell me something that would not be betraying anybody's confidence?"

"I could, I could; I don't mean to say that I could not, and I don't care much if I do to you."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### MR. FOGG'S STORY AT THE MADHOUSE TO SWEENEY TODD.

After a short pause, during which Mr. Fogg appeared to be referring to the cells of memory, with the view of being refreshed in a matter that had long since been a by-gone, but which he desired to place as clearly before his listener as he could, in fact, to make, if possible, the relation real to him, and to omit nothing during its progress that should be told; or possibly, that amiable individual was engaged in considering if there were any salient point that might criminate himself, or give even a friend a handle to make use of against him; but apparently there was nothing of the kind, for, after a loud "hem!" he filled the glasses, saying--

"Well, now, as you are a friend, I don't mind telling you how we do business here--things that have been done, you know, by others; but I have had my share as well as others--I have known a thing or two, Mr. Todd, and I may say I have done a thing or two, too."

"Well, we must live and let live," said Sweeney Todd, "there's no going against that, you know; if all I have done could speak, why--but no matter, I am listening to you--however, if deeds could speak, one or two clever things would come out rather, I think."

"Ay, 'tis well they don't," said Mr. Fogg, with much solemnity, "if they did they would be constantly speaking at times when it would be very inconvenient to hear them, and dangerous besides."

"So it would," said Sweeney, "a still tongue makes a wise head--but then the silent system would bring no grist to the mill, and we must speak when we know we are right and among friends."

"Of course," said Fogg, "of course, that's the right use of speech, and one may as well be without it, as to have it and not use it; but come--drink, and fill again before I begin, and then to my tale. But we may as well have a sentiment. Sentiment, you know," continued Fogg, "is the very soul of friendship. What do you say to 'The heart that can feel for another?'"

"With all my soul," said Sweeney Todd; "it's very touching--very touching, indeed. 'The heart that can feel for another!'" and as he spoke, he emptied the glass, which he pushed towards Fogg to refill.

"Well," said Fogg, as he complied, "we have had the sentiment, we may as well have the exemplification."

"Ha! ha! ha!" said Todd, "very good, very good indeed; pray go on, that will do capitally."

"I may as well tell you the whole matter, as it occurred; I will then let you know all I know, and in the same manner. None of the parties are now living, or, at least, they are not in this country, which is just the same thing, so far as I am concerned."

"Then that is an affair settled and done with," remarked Sweeney Todd, parenthetically.

"Yes, quite.--Well, it was one night--such a one as this, and pretty well about the same hour, perhaps somewhat earlier than this. However, it doesn't signify a straw about the hour, but it was quite night, a dark and wet night too, when a knock came at the street-door--a sharp double knock--it was. I was sitting alone, as I might have been now, drinking a glass or two of wine; I was startled, for I was thinking about an affair I had on hand at that very moment, of which there was a little stir. However, I went to the door, and peeped through a grating that I had there, and saw only a man; he had drawn his horse inside the gate, and secured him. He wore a large Whitney riding-coat, with a nap

that would have thrown off a deluge. I fancied, or thought I could tell, that he meant no mischief; so I opened the door at once and saw a tall, gentlemanly man, but wrapped up so, that you could not tell who or what he was; but my eyes are sharp, you know, Mr. Todd. We haven't seen so much of the world without learning to distinguish what kind of person one has to deal with?"

"I should think not," said Todd.

"Well," said I, 'what is your pleasure, sir?'

"The stranger paused a moment or two before he made any reply to me.

"Is your name Fogg?' he said.

"Yes, it is,' said I; 'my name is Fogg--what is your pleasure with me, sir?'

"Why,' said he, after another pause, during which he fixed his keen eye very hard upon me--'why, I wish to have a little private conversation with you, if you can spare so much time, upon a very important matter which I have in hand.'

"Walk in, sir,' said I, as soon as I heard what it was he wanted, and he followed me in. 'It is a very unpleasant night, and it's coming on to rain harder. I think it is fortunate you have got housed.'

"Yes,' he replied; 'but I am tolerably well protected against the rain, at all events.'

"He came into this very parlour, and took a seat before the fire, with his back to the light, so that I couldn't see his face very well. However, I was determined that I would be satisfied in these particulars, and so, when he had taken off his hat, I stirred up the fire, and had a blaze that illuminated the whole room, and which showed me the sharp, thin visage of my visitor, who was a dark man, with keen grey eyes that were very restless--'

"Will you have a glass of wine?' said I; 'the night is cold as well as wet.'

"Yes, I will,' he replied; 'I am cold with riding. You have a lonely place about here; your house, I see, stands alone too. You have not many neighbours.'

"No, sir,' said I, 'we hadn't need, for when any of the poor things set to screaming, it would make them feel very uncomfortable indeed.'

"So it would, there is an advantage in that to yourself as well as to them. It would be disagreeable to you to know that you were disturbing your neighbours, and they would feel equally uncomfortable in being disturbed, and yet you must do your duty.'

"Ay! to be sure,' said I; 'I must do my duty, and people won't pay me

for letting madmen go, though they may for keeping them; and besides that, I think some on 'em would get their throats cut, if I did.'

"You are right--quite right," said he; 'I am glad to find you of that mind, for I came to you concerning an affair that requires some delicacy about it, since it is a female patient.'

"Ah!" said I, 'I always pay great attention, very great attention; and I don't recollect a case, however violent it may be, but what I can overcome. I always make 'em acknowledge me, and there's much art in that.'

"To be sure, there must be.'

"And, moreover, they wouldn't so soon crouch and shrink away from me, and do what I tell 'em, if I did not treat them with kindness, that is, as far as is consistent with one's duty, for I mustn't forget that.'

"Exactly," he replied; 'those are my sentiments exactly.'

"And now, sir, will you inform me in what way I can serve you?'

"Why I have a relative, a female relative, who is unhappily affected with a brain disease; we have tried all we can do, without any effect. Do what we will, it comes to the same thing in the end.'

"Ah!" said I; 'poor thing--what a dreadful thing it must be to you or any of her friends, who have the charge of her, to see her day by day an incurable maniac. Why, it is just as bad as when a friend or relative is dead, and you are obliged to have the dead body constantly in your house, and before your eyes.'

"Exactly, my friend," said the stranger; 'exactly, you are a man of discernment, Mr. Fogg. I see, that is truly the state of the case. You may then guess at the state of our feelings, when we have to part with one beloved by us.'

"As he spoke, he turned right round, and faced me, looking very hard into my face.

"Well," said I, 'your's is a hard case; but to have one afflicted about you in the manner the young lady is, is truly distressing; it's like having a perpetual lumbago in your back.'

"Exactly," said the stranger. 'I tell you what, you are the very man to do this thing for me.'

"I am sure of it," said I.

"Then we understand each other, eh?" said the stranger. 'I must say I like your appearance, it is not often such people as you and I meet.'

"I hope it will be to our mutual advantage," said I, 'because such people don't meet every day, and we oughtn't to meet to no purpose; so,

in anything delicate and confidential you may command me.'

"I see, you are a clever man,' said he; 'well, well, I must pay you in proportion to your talents. How do you do business--by the job, or by the year?'

"Well,' said I, 'where it's a matter of some nicety, it may be both--but it entirely depends upon circumstances. I had better know exactly what it is I have to do.'

"Why, you see, it is a young female about eighteen, and she is somewhat troublesome--takes to screaming, and all that kind of thing. I want her taken care of, though you must be very careful she neither runs away nor suddenly commits any mischief, as her madness does not appear to me to have any particular form, and would at times completely deceive the best of us, and then suddenly she will break out violently, and snap or fly at anybody with her teeth.'

"Is she so bad as that?'

"Yes, quite. So it is quite impossible to keep her at home; and I expect it will be a devil of a job to get her here. I tell you what you shall have; I'll pay you your yearly charge for board and care, and I'll give you a ten-pound note for your trouble, if you'll come and assist me in securing her, and bringing her down. It will take some trouble.'

"Very well,' said I, 'that will do, but you must double the note and make it twenty, if you please; it will cost something to come and do the thing well.'

"I see--very well--we won't disagree about a ten-pound note; but you'll know how to dispose of her if she comes here.'

"Oh, yes--very healthy place.'

"But I don't know that health is a very great blessing to any one under such circumstances; indeed, who could regret an early grave to one so severely afflicted?'

"Nobody ought,' said I; 'if they knew what mad people went through, they would not, I'm sure.'

"That is very true again, but the fact is, they don't, and they only look at one side of the picture; for my own part, I think that it ought to be so ordained, that when people are so afflicted, nature ought to sink under the affliction, and so insensibly to revert to the former state of nonentity.'

"Well,' said I, 'that may be as you please, I don't understand all that; but I tell you what, I hope if she were to die much sooner than you expect, you would not think it too much trouble to afford me some compensation for my loss.'

"Oh dear no! and to show you that I shall entertain no such illiberal

feeling, I will give you two hundred pounds, when the certificate of her burial can be produced. You understand me?'

"Certainly.'

"Her death will be of little value to me, without the legal proof,' said the stranger; 'so she must die at her own pleasure, or live while she can.'

"Certainly,' said I.

"But what terrifies me,' continued the stranger, 'most is, her terror-stricken countenance, always staring us in our faces; and it arose from her being terrified; indeed I think if she were thoroughly frightened, she would fall dead. I am sure, if any wickedly-disposed person were to do so, death would no doubt result.'

"Ah!' said I, 'it would be a bad job; now tell me where I am to see you, and how about the particulars.'

"Oh, I will tell you; now, can you be at the corner of Grosvenor-street, near Park-lane?'

"Yes,' I replied, 'I will.'

"With a coach too. I wish you to have a coach, and one that you can depend upon, because there may be a little noise. I will try to avoid it, if possible, but we cannot always do what we desire; but you must have good horses.'

"Now, I tell you what is my plan; that is, if you don't mind the damages, if any happen.'

"What are they?'

"This:--suppose a horse falls, and is hurt, or an upset--would you stand the racket?'

"I would, of course.'

"Then listen to me; I have had more of these affairs than you have, no doubt. Well, then, I have had experience, which you have not. Now, I'll get a trotting-horse, and a covered cart or chaise--one that will go along well at ten miles an hour, and no mistake about it.'

"But will it hold enough?'

"Yes, four or five or six, and, upon a push, I have known eight to cram in it; but then you know we were not particular how we were placed; but still it will hold as many as a hackney coach, only not so conveniently; but then we have nobody in the affair to drive us, and there can't be too few.'

"Well, that is perhaps best; but have you a man on whom you can

depend?--because if you have, why, I would not be in the affair at all.'

"You must,' said I; 'in the first place, I can depend upon one man best; him I must leave here to mind the place; so if you can manage the girl, I will drive, and I know the road as well as the way to my own mouth--I would rather have as few in it as possible.'

"Your precaution is very good, and I think I will try and so manage it, that there shall be only you and I acquainted with the transaction; at all events, should it become necessary, it will be time enough to let some other person into the secret at the moment their services are required. That, I think, will be the best arrangement that I can come to--what do you say?'

"That will do very well--when we get her here, and when I have seen her a few days, I can tell what to do with her.'

"Exactly; and now, good night--there is the money I promised, and now again, good night! I shall see you at the appointed time.'

"You will,' said I--'one glass more, it will do you good, and keep the rain out.'

"He took off a glass of wine, and then pulled his hat over his face, and left the house. It was a dark, wet night, and the wind blew, and we heard the sound of his horse's hoofs for some time; however, I shut the door and went in, thinking over in my own mind what would be the gain of my own exertions.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Well, at the appointed hour, I borrowed a chaise cart, a covered one, with what you call a head to it, and I trotted to town in it. At the appointed time I was at the corner of Grosvenor-street; it was late, and yet I waited there an hour or more before I saw any one. I walked into a little house to get a glass of spirits to keep up the warmth of the body, and when I came out again, I saw some one standing at my horse's head. I immediately went up.

"Oh, you are here,' he said.

"Yes I am,' said I, 'I have been here the Lord knows how long. Are you ready?'

"Yes, I am; come,' said he, as he got into the cart--'come to the place I shall tell you--I shall only get her into the cart, and you must do the rest.'

"You'll come back with me; I shall want help on the road, and I have no one with me.'

"Yes, I will come with you, and manage the girl, but you must drive, and take all the casualties of the road, for I shall have enough to do to hold her and keep her from screaming when she does awake.'

"What! is she asleep?"

"I have given her a small dose of laudanum, which will cause her to sleep comfortably for an hour or two, but the cold air and disturbance will most probably awaken her at first."

"Throw something over her, and keep her warm, and have something ready to thrust into her mouth, in case she takes to screaming, and then you are all right."

"Good," he replied: "now wait here. I am going to yon house. When I have entered, and disappeared several minutes, you may quietly drive up, and take your station on the other side of the lamp-post."

"As he spoke he got out, and walked to a large house, which he entered softly, and left the door ajar; and after he had gone in, I walked the horse quietly up to the lamp-post, and as I placed it, the horse and front of the cart were completely in the dark. I had scarcely got up to the spot, when the door opened, and he looked out to see if anybody was passing. I gave him the word, and out he came, leaving the door, and came with what looked like a bundle of clothes, but which was the young girl and some clothes he had brought with him."

"Give her to me," said I, "and jump up and take the reins; go on as quickly as you can."

"I took the girl into my arms, and handed her into the back part of the chaise, while he jumped up, and drove away. I placed the young girl in an easy position upon some hay, and stuffed the clothes under her, so as to prevent the jolting from hurting her."

"Well," said I, "you may as well come back here, and sit beside her: she is all right. You seem rather in a stew."

"Well, I have run with her in my arms, and altogether it has flurried me."

"You had better have some brandy," said I.

"No, no! don't stop."

"Pooh, pooh!" I replied, pulling up, "here is the last house we shall come to, to have a good stiff tumbler of hot brandy and water. Come, have you any change--about a sovereign will do, because I shall want change on the road? Come, be quick."

"He handed me a sovereign, saying--"

"Don't you think it's dangerous to stop--we may be watched, or she may wake."

"Not a bit of it. She snores too loudly to wake just now, and you'll faint without the cordial; so keep a good look-out upon the wench, and"

you will recover your nerves again.'

"As I spoke I jumped out, and got two glasses of brandy and water, hot, strong, and sweet, I had in about two minutes made, out of the house.

"Here,' said I, 'drink--drink it all up--it will make your eyes start out of your head.'

"I spoke the truth, for what with my recommendations, and his nervousness and haste, he drank nearly half of it at a gulp.

"I shall never forget his countenance. Ha! ha! ha! I can't keep my mirth to myself. Just imagine the girl inside a covered cart, all dark, so dark that you could hardly see the outline of the shadow of a man, and then imagine, if you can, a pair of keen eyes, that shone in the dark like cat's eyes, suddenly give out a flash of light, and then turn round in their sockets, showing the whites awfully, and then listen to the fall of the glass, and see him grasp his throat with one hand, and thrust the other hand into his stomach. There was a queer kind of voice came from his throat, and then something like a curse and a groan escaped him.

"Damn it,' said I, 'what is the matter now?--you've upset all the liquor--you are very nervous--you had better have another dose.'

"No more--no more,' he said faintly and huskily, 'no more--for God's sake no more. I am almost choked--my throat is scalded, and my entrails on fire!'

"I told you it was hot,' said I.

"Yes, hot, boiling hot--go on. I'm mad with pain--push on.'

"Will you have any water, or anything to cool your throat?' said I.

"No, no--go on.'

"Yes,' said I, 'but the brandy and water is hot; however, it's going down very fast now--very fast indeed, here is the last mouthful;' and as I said so, I gulped it down, returned with the one glass, and then paid for the damage.

"This did not occupy five minutes, and away we came along the road at a devil of a pace, and we were all right enough; my friend behind me got over his scald, though he had a very sore gullet, and his intestines were in a very uncomfortable state; but he was better. Away we rattled, the ground rattling to the horse's hoofs and the wheels of the vehicle, the young girl still remaining in the same state of insensibility in which she had first been brought out. No doubt she had taken a stronger dose of the opium than she was willing to admit. That was nothing to me, but made it all the better, because she gave the less trouble, and made it safer. We got here easy enough, drove slap up to the door, which was opened in an instant, jumped out, took the girl, and carried her in. When once these doors are shut upon any one, they may rest assured that

it is quite a settled thing, and they don't get out very easy, save in a wooden surtout; indeed, I never lost a boarder by any other means; we always keep one connection, and they are usually so well satisfied, that they never take any one away from us. Well, well! I carried her indoors, and left her in a room by herself on a bed. She was a nice girl--a handsome girl, I suppose people would call her, and had a low, sweet, and plaintive voice. But enough of this.

"She's all right,' said I, when I returned to this room, 'It's all right--I have left her.'

"She isn't dead,' he inquired, with much terror.

"Oh! no, no! she is only asleep, and has not woke up yet from the effects of the laudanum. Will you now give me one year's pay in advance?'

"Yes,' he replied, as he handed the money, and the remainder of the bonds. 'Now, how am I to do about getting back to London to-night?'

"You had better remain here.'

"Oh, no! I should go mad too, if I were to remain here; I must leave here soon.'

"Well, will you go to the village inn?'

"How far is that off?'

"About a mile--you'll reach it easy enough; I'll drive you over for the matter of that, and leave you there. I shall take the cart there.'

"Very well, let it be so; I will go. Well, well, I am glad it is all over, and the sooner it is over for ever, the better. I am truly sorry for her, but it cannot be helped. It will kill her, I have no doubt; but that is all the better: she will escape the misery consequent upon her departure, and release us from a weight of care.'

"So it will,' said I 'but come, we must go at once, if going you are.'

"Yes, yes,' he said hurriedly.

"Well then, come along; the horse is not yet unharnessed, and if we do not make haste, we shall be too late to obtain a lodging for the night.'

"That is very good,' he said, somewhat wildly: 'I am quite ready--quite.'

"We left the house, and trotted off to the inn at a good rate, where we arrived in about ten minutes or less, and then I put up the horse, and saw him to the inn, and came back as quick as I could on foot. 'Well, well,' I thought, 'this will do, I have had a good day of it--paid well for business, and haven't wanted for sport on the road.'

"Well, I came to the conclusion that if the whole affair was to speedily end, it would be more in my pocket than if she were living, and she would be far happier in heaven than here, Mr. Todd."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Sweeney Todd, "undoubtedly, that is a very just observation of yours."

"Well, then, I set to work to find out how the matter could be managed, and I watched her until she awoke. She looked around her, and seemed much surprised and confused, and did not seem to understand her position, while I remained at hand."

"She sighed deeply, and put her hand to her head, and appeared for a time to be quite unable to comprehend what had happened to her, or where she was. I sent some tea to her, as I was not prepared to execute my purpose, and she seemed to recover, and asked some questions, but my man was dumb for the occasion, and would not speak, and the result was, she was very much frightened. I left her so for a week or two, and then, one day, I went into her cell. She had greatly altered in her appearance, and looked very pale.

"Well," said I, "how do you find yourself, now?"

"She looked up into my face, and shuddered; but she said in a calm voice, looking round her--

"Where am I?"

"You are here!" said I, "and you'll be very comfortable if you only take on kindly, but you will have a strait waistcoat put on you if you do not."

"Good God!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "have they put me here--in--in--"

"She could not finish the sentence, and I supplied the word which she did not utter, and then she screamed loudly--

"Come," said I, "this will never do; you must learn to be quiet, or you'll have fearful consequences."

"Oh mercy, mercy! I will do no wrong! What have I done that I should be brought here?--what have I done? They may take all I have if they will let me live in freedom. I care not where or how poor I may be. Oh, Henry! Henry!--if you knew where I was, would you not fly to my rescue? Yes, you would, you would!"

"Ah," said I, "there is no Henry here, and you must be content to do without one."

"I could not have believed that my brother would have acted such a base part. I did not think him wicked, although I knew him to be selfish, mean, and stern, yet I did not think he intended such wickedness; but he thinks to rob me of all my property; yes, that is the object he has in

sending me here.'

"No doubt,' said I.

"Shall I ever get out?' she inquired, in a pitiful tone; 'do not say my life is to be spent here!'

"Indeed it is,' said I; 'while he lives, you will never leave these walls.'

"He shall not attain his end, for I have deeds about me that he will never be able to obtain; indeed, he may kill me, but he cannot benefit by my death.'

"Well,' said I, 'it serves him right. And how did you manage that matter? how did you contrive to get the deeds away?'

"Never mind that; it is a small deed, and I have secured it. I did not think he would have done this thing; but he may yet relent. Will you aid me? I shall be rich, and can pay you well.'

"But your brother,' said I.

"Oh, he is rich without mine, but he is over-avaricious; but say you will help me--only help me to get out, and you shall be no loser by the affair.'

"Very well,' said I. 'Will you give me this deed as a security that you will keep your word?'

"Yes,' she replied, drawing forth the deed--a small parchment--from her bosom. 'Take it; and now let me out. You shall be handsomely rewarded.'

"Ah!' said I; 'but you must allow me first to settle this matter with my employers. You must really be mad. We do not hear of young ladies carrying deeds and parchments about them when they are in their senses.'

"You do not mean to betray me?' she said, springing up wildly and rushing towards the deed, which I carefully placed in my breast coat-pocket.

"Oh dear no! but I shall retain the deed, and speak to your brother about this matter.'

"My God! my God!' she exclaimed, and then she sank back on her bed, and in another moment she was covered with blood. She had burst a blood-vessel. I sent for a surgeon and physician, and they both gave it as their opinion that she could not be saved, and that a few hours would see the last of her. This was the fact. She was dead before another half hour, and then I sent to the authorities for the purpose of burial; and, producing the certificate of the medical men, I had no difficulty, and she was buried all comfortably without any trouble.

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"Well,' thought I, 'this is a very comfortable affair; but it will be more profitable than I had any idea of, and I must get my first reward first, and if there should be any difficulty, I have the deed to fall back upon. He came down next day, and appeared with rather a long face.

"Well,' said he, 'how do matters go on here?'

"Very well,' said I, 'how is your throat?'

"I thought he cast a malicious look at me, as much as to imply he laid it all to my charge.

"Pretty well,' he replied; 'but I was ill for three days. How is the patient?'

"As well as you could possibly wish,' said I.

"She takes it kindly, eh? Well, I hardly expected it--but no matter. She'll be a long while on hand, I perceive. You haven't tried the frightening system yet, then?'

"Hadn't any need,' I replied, putting the certificate of her burial in his hand, and he jumped as if he had been stung by an adder, and turned pale; but he soon recovered, and smiled complaisantly as he said--

"Ah! well, I see you have been diligent, but I should have liked to have seen her, to have asked her about a missing deed; but no matter.'

"Now about the two hundred pounds,' said I.

"Why,' said he, 'I think one will do when you come to consider what you have received, and the short space of time and all: you had a year's board in advance.'

"I know I had; but because I have done more than you expected, and in a shorter time, instead of giving me more, you have the conscience to offer me less.'

"No, no, not the--the--what did you call it?--we'll have nothing said about that,--but here is a hundred pounds, and you are well paid.'

"Well,' said I, taking the money, 'I must have five hundred pounds at any rate, and unless you give it me, I will tell other parties where a certain deed is to be found.'

"What deed?'

"The one you were alluding to. Give me four hundred more, and you shall have the deeds.'

"After much conversation and trouble he gave it to me, and I gave him the deed, with which he was well pleased, but looked hard at the money, and seemed to grieve at it very much.

"Since that time I have heard that he was challenged by his sister's lover, and they went out to fight a duel, and he fell--and died. The lover went to the continent, where he has since lived.

"Ah," said Sweeney Todd, "you have had decidedly the best of this affair: nobody gained anything but you."

"Nobody at all that I know of, save distant relations, and I did very well; but then, you know, I can't live upon nothing: it costs me something to keep my house and cellar, but I stick to business, and so I shall as long as business sticks to me."

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

#### COLONEL JEFFERY MAKES ANOTHER EFFORT TO COME AT SWEENEY TODD'S SECRET.

If we were to say that Colonel Jeffery was satisfied with the state of affairs as regarded the disappearance of his friend Thornhill, or that he made up his mind now contentedly to wait until chance, or the mere progress of time, blew something of a more defined nature in his way, we should be doing that gentleman a very great injustice indeed. On the contrary, he was one of those chivalrous persons who when they do commence anything, take the most ample means to bring it to a conclusion, and are not satisfied that they have made one great effort, which, having failed, is sufficient to satisfy them. Far from this, he was a man who, when he commenced any enterprise, looked forward to but one circumstance that could possibly end it, and that was its full and complete accomplishment in every respect; so that in this affair of Mr. Thornhill, he certainly did not intend by any means to abandon it. But he was not precipitate. His habits of military discipline, and the long life he had led in camps, where anything in the shape of hurry and confusion is much reprobated, made him pause before he decided upon any particular course of action; and this pause was not one contingent upon a belief, or even a surmise in the danger of the course that suggested itself, for such a consideration had no effect whatever upon him; and if some other mode had suddenly suggested itself, which, while it placed his life in the most imminent peril, would have seemed more likely to accomplish his object, it would have been at once most gladly welcomed. And now, therefore, he set about thinking deeply over what could possibly be done further in a matter that as yet appeared to be involved in the most profound of possible mysteries. That the barber's boy, who had been addressed by him, and by his friend, the captain, knew something of an extraordinary character, which fear prevented him from disclosing, he had no doubt, and, as the colonel remarked--

"If fear keeps that lad silent upon the subject, fear may make him speak; and I do not see why we should not endeavour to make ourselves a match for Sweeney Todd in such a matter."

"What do you propose then?" said the captain.

"I should say that the best plan would be, to watch the barber's shop, and take possession of the boy, as we may chance to find an opportunity of so doing."

"Carry him off?"

"Yes, certainly; and as in all likelihood his fear of the barber is but a visionary affair after all, it can easily, when we have him to ourselves, be dispelled; and then, when he finds that we can and will protect him, we shall hear all he has to say."

After some further conversation, the plan was resolved upon; and the captain and the colonel, after making a careful "reconnoissance," as they called it, of Fleet-street, found that by taking up a station at the window of a tavern, which was nearly opposite to the barber's shop, they should be able to take such effectual notice of whoever went in and came out, that they would be sure to see the boy some time during the course of the day. This plan of operations would no doubt have been greatly successful, and Tobias would have fallen into their hands, had he not, alas! for him, poor fellow, already been treated by Sweeney Todd as we have described by being incarcerated in that fearful madhouse on Peckham Rye, which was kept by so unscrupulous a personage as Fogg. And we cannot but consider that it was most unfortunate for the happiness of all those persons in whose fate we take so deep an interest--and in whom we hope, as regards the reader, we have likewise awakened a feeling of great sympathy--if Tobias had not been so infatuated as to make the search he did of the barber's house, but had waited even for twenty-four hours before doing so; in that case, not only would he have escaped the dreadful doom which had awaited him, but Johanna Oakley would have been saved from much danger which afterwards befel her. But we must not anticipate; and the fearful adventures which it was her doom to pass through, before she met with the reward of her great virtue, and her noble perseverance will speak for themselves, trumpet-tongued indeed. It was at a very early hour in the morning that the two friends took up their station at the public-house so nearly opposite to Sweeney Todd's, in Fleet street; and then, having made an arrangement with the landlord of the house, that they were to have undisturbed possession of the room as long as they liked, they both sat at the window, and kept an eye upon Todd's house. It was during the period of time there spent, that Colonel Jeffery first made the captain acquainted with the fact of his great affection for Johanna, and that in her he thought he had at length fixed his wandering fancy, and found, really, the only being with whom he thought he could, in this world taste the sweets of domestic life, and know no regret.

"She is all," he said, "in beauty that the warmest imagination can possibly picture, and along with these personal charms, which certainly are most peerless, I have seen enough of her to feel convinced that she has a mind of the purest order that ever belonged to any human being in the world."

"With such sentiments and feelings towards her, the wonder would be," said the captain, "if you did not love her, as you now avow you do."

"I could not be insensible to her attractions. But, understand me, my dear friend, I do not, on account of my own suddenly-conceived partiality for this young and beautiful creature, intend to commit the injustice of not trying might and main, and with heart and hand, to discover if, as she supposes, it be true that Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie be one and the same person; and when I say that I love her with a depth and a sincerity of affection that makes her happiness of greater importance to me than my own--you know, I think, enough of me to feel convinced that I am speaking only what I really feel."

"I can," said the captain, "and I do give you credit for the greatest possible amount of sincerity, and I feel sufficiently interested myself in the future fate of this fair young creature to wish that she may be convinced her lover is no more, and may so much better herself, as I am quite certain she would, by becoming your wife; for all we can hear of this Ingestrie seems to prove that he is not the most stable-minded of individuals the world ever produced, and perhaps not exactly the sort of man--however, of course, she may think to the contrary, and he may in all sincerity think so likewise--to make such a girl as Johanna Oakley happy."

"I thank you for the kind feeling towards me, my friend, which has dictated that speech, but--"

"Hush!" said the captain, suddenly, "hush! look at the barber!"

"The barber? Sweeney Todd?"

"Yes, yes, there he is; do you not see him? There he is, and he looks as if he had come off a long journey. What can he have been about, I wonder? He is draggled in mud!"

Yes, there was Sweeney Todd, opening his shop from the outside with a key, that after a vast amount of fumbling, he took from his pocket; and, as the captain said, he did indeed look as if he had come off a long journey, for he was draggled with mud, and his appearance altogether was such as to convince any one that he must have been out in most of the heavy rain which had fallen during the early part of the morning upon London and its suburbs. And this was just the fact, for after staying with the madhouse-keeper in the hope that the bad weather which had set in would be alleviated, he had been compelled to give up all chance of such a thing, and as no conveyance of any description was to be had, he enjoyed the pleasure, if it could be called such, of walking home up to his knees in the mud of that dirty neighbourhood. It was, however, some satisfaction to him to feel that he had got rid of Tobias, who, from what he had done as regarded the examination of the house, had become extremely troublesome indeed, and perhaps the most serious enemy that Sweeney Todd had ever had.

"Ha!" he said, as he came within sight of his shop in Fleet-street,--"ha! Master Tobias is safe enough; he will give me no more trouble, that is quite clear. What a wonderfully convenient thing it is to have such a friend as Fogg, who for a consideration will do so

much towards ridding one of an uncomfortable encumbrance. It is possible enough that that boy might have compassed my destruction. I wish I dared now chance, with the means I have for the sale of the string of pearls, joined to my other resources, leaving business, and so not be obliged to run the risk and have the trouble of another boy."

Yes, Sweeney Todd would have been glad now to shut up his shop in Fleet-street at once and for ever, but he dreaded that when John Mundel found that his customer did not come back to him to redeem the pearls, that he (John Mundel) would proceed to sell them, and that then their beauty and great worth would excite much attention, and some one might come forward who knew more about their early history than he did.

"I must keep quiet," he thought,--"I must keep quiet; for although I think I was pretty well disguised, and it is not at all likely that any one--no, not even the acute John Mundel himself--would recognise in Sweeney Todd, the poor barber of Fleet-street, the nobleman who came from the queen to borrow £8,000 upon a string of pearls; yet there is a remote possibility of danger; and should there be a disturbance about the precious stones, it is better that I should remain in obscurity until that disturbance is completely over."

This was no doubt admirable policy on the part of Todd, who, although he found himself a rich man, had not, as many people do when they make that most gratifying and interesting discovery, forgotten all the prudence and tact that made him one of that most envied class of personages. He was some few minutes before he could get the key to turn in the lock of his street door, but at length he effected that object and disappeared from before the eyes of the colonel and his friend into his own house, and the door was instantly again closed upon him.

"Well," said Colonel Jeffery, "what do you think of that?"

"I don't know what to think, further than that your friend Todd has been out of town, as the state of his boots abundantly testifies."

"They do, indeed, and he has the appearance of having been a considerable distance, for the mud that is upon his boots is not London mud."

"Certainly not; it is quite of a different character altogether. But see, he is coming out again."

Sweeney Todd strode out of his house, bareheaded now, and proceeded to take down the shutters of his shop, which, there being but three, he accomplished in a few seconds of time, and walked in again with them in his hand, along with the iron bar which had secured them, and which he had released from the inside. This was all the ceremony that took place at the opening of Sweeney Todd's shop, and the only surprise our friends, who were at the public-house window, had upon the subject was, that having a boy, he, Todd, should condescend to make himself so useful as to open his own shop. And nothing could be seen of the lad, although the hour, surely, for his attendance must have arrived; and Todd, equally surely, was not the sort of man to be so indulgent to a boy,

whom he employed to make himself generally useful, as to allow him to come when all the dirty work of the early morning was over. But yet such to all appearance would seem to be the case, for presently Todd appeared with a broom in his hand, sweeping out his shop with a rapidity and a vengeance which seemed to say, that he did not perform that operation with the very best grace in the world.

"Where can the boy be?" said the captain. "Do you know, little reason as I may really appear to have for such a supposition, I cannot help in my own mind connecting Todd's having been out of town somehow with the fact of that boy's non-appearance this morning."

"Indeed!--the coincidence is curious, for such was my own thought likewise upon the occasion; and the more I do think of it, the more I feel convinced that such must be the case, and that our watch will be a fruitless one completely. Is it likely--for possible enough it is--that the villain has found out that we have been asking some questions of the boy, and has thought proper to take his life?"

"Do not let us go too far," said the captain, "in mere conjecture; recollect that as yet, let us suspect what we may, we know nothing, and that the mere facts of our not being able to trace Thornhill beyond the shop of this man, will not be sufficient to found an action upon."

"I know all that, and I feel how very cautious we must be; and yet to my mind the whole of the circumstances have been day by day assuming a most hideous air of probability, and I look upon Todd as a murderer already."

"Shall we continue our watch?"

"I scarcely see its utility. Perchance we may see some proceedings which may interest us; but I have a powerful impression that we certainly shall not see the boy we want. But, at all events, the barber, you perceive, has a customer already."

As they looked across the way, they saw a well dressed looking man, who, from a certain air and manner which he had, could be detected not to be a Londoner. He rather resembled some substantial yeoman, who had come to town to pay or to receive money, and, as he came near to Sweeney Todd's shop he might have been observed to stroke his chin, as debating in his mind the necessity or otherwise of a shave. The debate, if it were taking place in his mind, ended by the ayes having it, for he walked into Todd's shop, being most unquestionably the first customer which he had had that morning. Situated as the colonel and his friend were, they could not see into Todd's shop, even if the door had been opened, but they saw that after the customer had been in for a few moments, it was closed, so that, had they been close to it, all the interior of the shaving establishment would have been concealed. They felt no great degree of interest in this man, who was a commonplace personage enough, who had entered Sweeney Todd's shop; but when an unreasonable time had elapsed, and he did not come out, they did begin to feel a little uneasy. And when another man, went in and was only about five minutes before he emerged, shaved, and yet the first man did not come, they knew not what to make of it, and looked at each other for some few moments in

silence. At length the colonel spoke--and he did so in a tone of excitement, saying--

"My friend, have we waited here for nothing now? What can have become of that man whom we saw go into the barber's shop; but who, I suppose, we feel ourselves to be in a condition to take our oaths never came out?"

"I could take my oath; and what conclusion can we come to?"

"None, but that he met his death there; and that, let his fate be what it may, it is the same which poor Thornhill has suffered. I can endure this no longer. Do you stay here, and let me go alone."

"Not for worlds--you would rush into an unknown danger; you cannot know what may be the powers of mischief that man possesses. You shall not go alone, colonel, you shall not indeed; but something must be done."

"Agreed; and yet that something surely need not be of the desperate character you meditate."

"Desperate emergencies require desperate remedies; and yet I think that in this case everything is to be lost by precipitation, and nothing is to be gained. We have to do with one who, to all appearance, is keen and subtle, and if anything is to be accomplished contrary to his wishes, it is not to be done by that open career, which for its own sake, under ordinary circumstances, both you and I would gladly embrace."

"Well, well," said the colonel, "I do not and will not say but you are right."

"I know I am--I am certain I am; and now hear me: I think we have gone quite far enough unaided in this transaction, and that it is time we drew some others into the plot."

"I do not understand what you mean."

"I will soon explain. I mean, that if in the pursuit of this enterprise, which grows each moment to my mind more serious, anything should happen to you and me, it is absolutely frightful to think that there would then be an end of it."

"True, true; and as for poor Johanna and her friend Arabella, what could they do?"

"Nothing, but expose themselves to great danger. Come, now, colonel, I am glad to see that we understand each other better about this business; you have heard, of course, of Sir Richard Blunt?"

"Sir Richard Blunt--Blunt--oh, you mean the magistrate?"

"I do; and what I propose is that we have a private and confidential interview with him about the matter--that we make him possessed of all the circumstances, and take his advice what to do. The result of placing the affair in such hands will, at all events, be that if, in anything we

may attempt, we may by force or fraud be overpowered, we shall not fall wholly unavenged."

"Reason backs your proposition."

"I knew it would, when you came to reflect. Oh, Colonel Jeffery, you are too much a creature of impulse."

"Well," said the colonel, half jestingly, "I must say that I do not think the accusation comes well from you, for I have certainly seen you do some rather impulsive things, I think."

"We won't dispute about that; but since you think with me upon the matter, you will have no objection to accompany me at once to Sir Richard Blunt's?"

"None in the least; on the contrary, if anything is to be done at all, for Heaven's sake let it be done quickly. I am quite convinced that some fearful tragedy is in progress, and that, if we are not most prompt in our measures, we shall be too late to counteract its dire influence upon the fortunes of those in whom we have become deeply interested."

"Agreed, agreed! Come this way, and let us now for a brief space, at all events, leave Mr. Todd and his shop to take care of each other, while we take an effectual means of circumventing him. Why do you linger?"

"I do linger. Some mysterious influence seems to chain me to the spot."

"Some mysterious fiddlestick! Why, you are getting superstitious, colonel."

"No, no! Well, I suppose I must come with you. Lead the way, lead the way; and believe me that it requires all my reason to induce me to give up a hope of making some important discovery by going to Sweeney Todd's shop."

"Yes, you might make an important discovery; and only suppose now that the discovery you did make was that he murdered some of his customers. If he does so, you may depend that such a man takes good care to do the deed effectually, and you might make the discovery just a little too late. You understand that?"

"I do, I do. Come along, for I positively declare, that if we see anybody else go into the barber's, I shall not be able to resist rushing forward at once, and giving an alarm."

It was certainly a good thing that the colonel's friend was not quite so enthusiastic as he was, or from what we happen actually to know of Sweeney Todd, and from what we suspect, the greatest amount of danger might have befallen Jeffery, and instead of being in a position to help others in unravelling the mysteries connected with Sweeney Todd's establishment, he might himself have been past all help, and most absolutely one of the mysteries. But such was not to be.

CHAPTER XXV.  
TOBIAS MAKES AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM THE MADHOUSE.

We cannot find it in our hearts to force upon the mind of the reader the terrible condition of poor Tobias. No one, certainly, of all the *\_dramatis personæ\_* of our tale, is suffering so much as he; and, consequently, we feel it to be a sort of duty to come to a consideration of his thoughts and feelings as he lay in that dismal cell, in the madhouse at Peckham Rye. Certainly Tobias Ragg was as sane as any ordinary Christian need wish to be, when the scoundrel, Sweeney Todd, put him into the coach to take him to Mr. Fogg's establishment; but if by any ingenious process the human intellect can be toppled from its throne, certainly that process must consist in putting a sane person into a lunatic asylum. To the imagination of a boy, too, and that boy one of vivid imagination, as was poor Tobias, a madhouse must be invested with a world of terrors. That enlarged experience which enables persons of more advanced age to shake off much of the unreal, which seemed so strangely to take up its abode in the mind of the young Tobias, had not reached him; and no wonder, therefore, that to him his present situation was one of acute and horrible misery and suffering.

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He lay for a long time in the gloomy dungeon-like cell into which he had been thrust, in a kind of stupor, which might or might not be the actual precursor of insanity, although, certainly, the chances were all in favour of being so. For many hours he neither moved hand nor foot, and as it was a part of the policy of Mr. Fogg to leave well alone, as he said, he never interfered, by any intrusive offers of refreshment, with the quiet or the repose of his patients. Tobias, therefore, if he had chosen to remain as still as an Indian fakir, might have died in one position, without any remonstrances from any one. It would be quite an impossibility to describe the strange visionary thoughts and scenes that passed through the mind of Tobias during this period. It seemed as if his intellect was engulfed in the charmed waters of some whirlpool, and that all the different scenes and actions which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been clear and distinct, were mingled together in inextricable confusion. In the midst of all this, at length, he began to be conscious of one particular impression or feeling, and that was, that some one was singing in a low, soft voice, very near to him. This feeling, strange as it was in such a place, momentarily increased in volume, until at length it began in its intensity to absorb almost every other; and he gradually awakened from the sort of stupor that had come over him. Yes some one was singing. It was a female voice, he was sure of that, and as his mind became more occupied with that one subject of thought, and his perceptive faculties became properly exercised, his intellect altogether assumed a healthier tone. He could not distinguish the words that were sung, but the voice itself was very sweet and musical; and as Tobias listened, he felt as if the fever of his blood was abating, and that healthier thoughts were taking the place of those

disordered fancies that had held sway within the chambers of his brain.

"What sweet sounds!" he said. "Oh! I do hope that singing will go on. I feel happier to hear it; I do so hope it will continue. What sweet music! Oh, mother, mother, if you could but see me now!"

He pressed his hands over his eyes, but he could not stop the gush of tears that came from them, and which would trickle through his fingers. Tobias did not wish to weep; but those tears, after all the horrors of the night, did him a world of good, and he felt wonderfully better after they had been shed. Moreover, the voice kept singing without intermission.

"Who can it be," thought Tobias, "that don't tire with so much of it."

Still the singer continued; but now and then Tobias felt certain that a very wild note or two was mingled with the ordinary melody; and that bred a suspicion in his mind, which gave him a shudder to think of, namely, that the singer was mad.

"It must be so," said he. "No one in their senses could or would continue for so long a period of time such strange snatches of song. Alas! alas! it is some one who is really mad, and confined for life in this dreadful place; for life do I say, am not I too confined for life here? Oh! help! help! help!"

Tobias called out in so loud a tone, that the singer of the sweet strains that had for a time lulled him to composure, heard him, and the strains which had before been redolent of the softest and sweetest melody, suddenly changed to the most terrific shrieks that can be imagined. In vain did Tobias place his hands over his ears, to shut out the horrible sounds. They would not be shut out, but ran, as it were, into every crevice of his brain, nearly driving him distracted by their vehemence. But hoarser tones soon came upon his ears, and he heard the loud, rough voice of a man say--

"What, do you want the whip so early this morning? The whip--do you understand that?"

These words were followed by the lashing of what must have been a heavy carter's whip, and then the shrieks died away in deep groans, every one of which went to the heart of poor Tobias.

"I can never live amid all these horrors," he said. "Oh, why don't you kill me at once? it would be much better, and much more merciful. I can never live long here. Help! help! help!"

When he shouted this word "help," it was certainly not with the most distant idea of getting any help, but it was a word that came at once uppermost to his tongue; and so he called it out with all his might, that he should attract the attention of some one; for the solitude, and the almost total darkness of the place he was in, was beginning to fill him with new dismay. There was a faint light in the cell, which made him know the difference between day and night; but where that faint light

came from he could not tell, for he could see no grating or opening whatever; but yet that was in consequence of his eyes not being fully accustomed to the obscurity of the place; otherwise he would have seen that close up to the roof there was a narrow aperture, certainly not larger than any one could have passed a hand through, although of some four or five feet in length; and from a passage beyond that, there came the dim borrowed light which made darkness visible in Tobias's cell. With a kind of desperation, heedless of what might be the result, Tobias continued to call aloud for help; and after about a quarter of an hour, he heard the sound of a heavy footstep. Some one was coming; yes, surely some one was coming, and he was not to be left to starve to death. Oh, how intently he now listened to every sound, indicative of the near approach of whoever it was who was coming to his prison-house. Now he heard the lock move, and a heavy bar of iron was let down with a clanging sound.

"Help! help!" he cried again, "help! help!" for he feared that whoever it was they might even yet go away again after making so much progress to get at him. The cell door was flung open, and the first intimation that poor Tobias got of the fact of his cries having been heard, consisted in a lash with a whip, which, if it had struck him as fully as it was intended to do, would have done him serious injury.

"So, do you want it already?" said the same voice he had before heard.

"Oh no--mercy! mercy!" said Tobias.

"Oh, that's it now, is it? I tell you what it is, if we have any disturbance here, this is the persuader to silence that we always use: what do you think of that for an argument, eh?"

As he spoke, the man gave the whip a loud smack in the air, and confirmed the truth of the argument, by inducing poor Tobias to absolute silence; indeed the boy trembled so that he could not speak.

"Well, now, my man," added the fellow, "I think we understand each other. What do you want?"

"Oh, let me go," said Tobias, "let me go. I will tell nothing. Say to Mr. Todd that I will do what he pleases, and tell nothing, only let me go out of this dreadful place. Have mercy upon me--I am not at all mad--indeed I am not."

The man closed the door, as he whistled a lively tune.

## CHAPTER XXVI. THE MADHOUSE YARD, AND TOBIAS'S NEW FRIEND.

This sudden retreat of the man was unexpected by Tobias, who at least thought it was the practice to feed people, even if they were confined

to such a place; but the unceremonious departure of the keeper, without so much as mentioning anything about breakfast, began to make Tobias think that the plan by which he was to be got rid of was starvation; and yet that was impossible, for how easy it was to kill him if they felt so disposed.

"Oh, no, no," he repeated to himself, "surely they will not starve me to death."

As he uttered these words, he heard the plaintive singing commence again; and he could not help thinking that it sounded like some requiem for the dead, and that it was a sort of signal that his hours were numbered. Despair again began to take possession of him, and despite the savage threats of the keeper, he would again have loudly called for help, had he not become conscious that there were footsteps close at hand. By dint of listening most intently he heard a number of doors opened and shut, and sometimes when one was opened there was a shriek, and the lashing of the whips, which very soon succeeded in drowning all other noises. It occurred to Tobias, and correctly too, for such was the fact, that the inmates of that most horrible abode were living, like so many wild beasts, in cages fed. Then he thought how strange it was that even for any amount of money human beings could be got to do the work of such an establishment. And by the time Tobias had made this reflection to himself, his own door was once more opened upon its rusty hinges. There was the flash of a light, and then a man came in with a water-can in his hand, to which there was a long spout, and this he placed to the mouth of Tobias, who fearing that if he did not drink then he might be a long time without, swallowed some not over-savoury ditch water, as it seemed to him, which was thus brought to him. A coarse, brown-looking, hard loaf was then thrown at his feet, and the party was about to leave his cell, but he could not forbear speaking, and in a voice of the most supplicating earnestness he said--

"Oh, do not keep me here. Let me go, and I will say nothing of Todd. I will go to sea at once if you will let me out of this place, indeed I will; but I shall really go mad here!"

"Good that, Watson, ain't it?" said Mr. Fogg, who happened to be one of the party.

"Very good, sir. Lord bless you, the cunning of 'em is beyond anything in the world, sir; you'd be surprised at what they say to me sometimes."

"But I'm not mad--indeed I'm not mad!" cried Tobias.

"Oh," said Fogg, "it's a bad case I'm afraid; the strongest proof of insanity in my opinion, Watson, is the constant reiteration of the statement that he is not mad on the part of a lunatic. Don't you think it is so, Mr. Watson?"

"Oh, of course, sir, of course."

"Ah! I thought you would be of that opinion; but I suppose as this is a mere lad, we may do without chaining him up; and, besides, you know that

to-day is inspection day, when we get an old fool of a superannuated physician to make us a visit."

"Yes, sir," said Watson, with a grin, "and a report that all is well conducted."

"Exactly. Who shall we have this time, do you think? I always give a ten guinea fee."

"Why, sir, there's old Dr. Popplejoy, he's 84 years old, they say, and sand blind; he'll take it as a great compliment, he will, and no doubt we can humbug him easily."

"I dare say we may; I'll see to it; and we will have him at twelve o'clock, Watson. You will take care to have everything ready, of course, you know; make all the usual preparations."

Tobias was astonished that before him they chose thus to speak so freely, but despairing as he was, he little knew how completely he was in the power of Mr. Fogg, and how utterly he was shut out from all human sympathy. Tobias said nothing; but he could not help thinking that, however old and stupid the physician whom they mentioned might be, surely there was a hope that he would be able to discover Tobias's perfect sanity. But the wily Mr. Fogg knew perfectly well what he was about, and when he retired to his own room, he wrote the following note to Dr. Popplejoy, who was a retired physician, who had purchased a country house in the neighbourhood. The note will speak for itself, being as fine a specimen of hypocrisy as we can ever expect to lay before our readers--

"The Asylum, Peckham.

"SIR,--Probably you may recognise my name as that of the keeper of a lunatic asylum in this neighbourhood. Consistent with a due regard for the safety of that most unhappy class of the community submitted to my care, I am most anxious, with the blessing of Divine Providence, to ameliorate as far as possible, by kindness, that most shocking of all calamities--insanity. Once a year it is my custom to call in some experienced, able, and enlightened physician to see my patients (I enclose a fee)--a physician who has nothing to do with the establishment, and therefore cannot be biassed. If you, sir, would do me the favour at about twelve o'clock to-day, to make a short visit of inspection, I shall esteem it a great honour, as well as a great favour.

"Believe me to be, sir, with the most profound respect, your most obedient and humble servant,

"O. D. FOGG."

"To Dr. Popplejoy, &c."

This note, as might be expected, brought the old purblind, superannuated Dr. Popplejoy to the asylum, and Mr. Fogg received him in due form, and with great gravity, saying, almost with tears in his eyes--

"My dear sir, the whole aim of my existence now, is to endeavour to soften the rigours of the necessary confinement of the insane, and I wish this inspection of my establishment to be made by you in order that I may thus for a time stand clear with the world--with my own conscience I am, of course, always clear; and if your report be satisfactory about the treatment of the unhappy persons I have here, not the slightest breath of slander can touch me."

"Oh yes, yes," said the old garrulous physician; "I--I--very good--eugh, eugh--I have a slight cough."

"A very slight one, sir. Will you, first of all, take a look at one of the sleeping chambers of the insane?"

The doctor agreed, and Mr. Fogg led him into a very comfortable sleeping-room, which the old gentleman declared was very satisfactory indeed, and when they returned to the apartment into which they had already been, Mr. Fogg said--

"Well then, sir, all we have to do is to bring in the patients, one by one, to you as fast as we can, so as not to occupy more of your valuable time than necessary; and any questions you ask will, no doubt, be answered, and I, being by, can give you the heads of any case that may excite your especial notice."

"Exactly, exactly. I--I--quite correct. Eugh--eugh!"

The old man was placed in a chair of state, reposing on some very comfortable cushions; and take him altogether, he was so pleased with the ten guineas and the flattery of Mr. Fogg--for nobody had given him a fee for the last fifteen years--that he was quite ready to be the foolish tool of the madhouse-keeper in almost any way that he chose to dictate to him. We need not pursue the examination of the various unfortunates who were brought before old Dr. Popplejoy; it will suffice for us if we carry the reader through the examination of Tobias, who is our principal care, without, at the same time, detracting from the genial sympathy we must feel for all who, at that time, were subject to the tender mercies of Mr. Fogg. At about half-past twelve the door of Tobias's cell was opened by Mr. Watson, who, walking in, laid hold of the boy by the collar, and said--

"Hark you, my lad! you are going before a physician, and the less you say the better. I speak to you for your own sake; you can do yourself no good, but you can do yourself a great deal of harm. You know we keep a cart-whip here. Come along."

Tobias said not a word in answer to this piece of altogether gratuitous advice, but he made up his mind that, if the physician was not absolutely deaf, he should hear him. Before, however, the unhappy boy was taken into the room where old Dr. Popplejoy was waiting, he was washed and brushed down generally, so that he presented a much more respectable appearance than he would have done had he been ushered in in his soiled state, as he was taken from the dirty mad-house cell.

"Surely, surely," thought Tobias, "the extent of cool impudence can go no further than this; but I will speak to the physician, if my life should be sacrificed for so doing. Yes, of that I am determined."

In another minute he was in the room, face to face with Mr. Fogg and Dr. Poplejoy.

"What--what?--eugh! eugh!" coughed the old doctor; "a boy, Mr. Fogg, a mere boy. Dear me! I--I--eugh! eugh! eugh! My cough is a little troublesome I think, to-day--eugh! eugh!"

"Yes, sir," said Fogg, with a deep sigh, and making a pretence to dash a tear from his eye; "here you have a mere boy. I am always affected when I look upon him, doctor. We were boys ourselves once, you know, and to think that the divine spark of intelligence has gone out in one so young, is enough to make any feeling heart throb with agony. This lad though, sir, is only a monomaniac. He has a fancy that some one named Sweeney Todd is a murderer, and that he can discover his bad practices. On all other subjects he is sane enough; but upon that, and upon his presumed freedom from mental derangement, he is furious."

"It is false, sir, it is false!" said Tobias, stepping up. "Oh, sir, if you are not one of the creatures of this horrible place, I beg that you will hear me, and let justice be done."

"Oh, yes--I--I--eugh! Of course--I--eugh!"

"Sir, I am not mad, but I am placed here because I have become dangerous to the safety of criminal persons."

"Oh, indeed! Ah--oh--yes."

"I am a poor lad, sir, but I hate wickedness; and because I found out that Sweeney Todd was a murderer, I am placed here."

"You hear him, sir," said Fogg; "just as I said."

"Oh, yes, yes. Who is Sweeney Todd, Mr. Fogg?"

"Oh, sir, there is no such person in the world."

"Ah, I thought as much--I thought as much--a sad case, a very sad case, indeed. Be calm, my little lad, and Mr. Fogg will do all that can be done for you, I'm sure."

"Oh! how can you be so foolish, sir," cried Tobias, "as to be deceived by that man, who is making a mere instrument of you to cover his own villainy? What I say to you is true, and I am not mad!"

"I think, Dr. Poplejoy," said Fogg, with a smile, "it would take rather a cleverer fellow than I am to make a fool of you; but you perceive, sir, that in a little while the boy would get quite furious, that he would. Shall I take him away?"

"Yes, yes--poor fellow!"

"Hear me--oh, hear me," shrieked Tobias. "Sir, on your death-bed you may repent this day's work--I am not mad--Sweeney Todd is a murderer--he is a barber in Fleet-street--I am not mad!"

"It's melancholy, sir, is it not?" said Fogg, as he again made an effort to wipe away a tear from his eyes. "It's very melancholy."

"Oh! very, very."

"Watson, take away poor Tobias Ragg, but take him very gently, and stay with him a little, in his nice comfortable room, and try to soothe him; speak to him of his mother, Watson, and get him round if you can. Alas, poor child! my heart quite bleeds to see him. I am not fit exactly for this life, doctor, I ought to be made of sterner stuff, indeed I ought."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Well," said Mr. Watson, as he saluted poor Tobias with a kick outside the door, "what a deal of good you have done!"

The boy's patience was exhausted; he had borne all that he could bear, and this last insult maddened him. He turned with the quickness of thought, and sprang at Mr. Watson's throat. So sudden was the attack, and so completely unprepared for it was that gentleman, that down he fell in the passage, with such a blow of his head against the stone floor that he was nearly insensible; and, before anybody could get to his assistance, Tobias had so pommelled and clawed his face, that there was scarcely a feature discernible, and one of his eyes seemed to be in fearful jeopardy. The noise of this assault soon brought Mr. Fogg to the spot, as well as old Dr. Popplejoy, and the former tore Tobias from his victim, whom he seemed intent upon murdering.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE CONSULTATION OF COLONEL JEFFERY WITH THE MAGISTRATE.

The advice which his friend had given to Colonel Jeffery was certainly the very best that could have been tendered to him; and, under the whole of these circumstances, it would have been something little short of absolute folly to have ventured into the shop of Sweeney Todd without previously taking every possible precaution to ensure the safety of so doing. Sir Richard was within when they reached his house, and, with the acuteness of a man of business, he at once entered into the affair. As the colonel, who was the spokesman, proceeded, it was evident that the magistrate became deeply interested. Colonel Jeffery concluded by saying--

"You will thus, at all events, perceive that there is great mystery

somewhere."

"And guilt, I should say," replied the magistrate.

"You are of that opinion, Sir Richard?"

"I am, most decidedly."

"Then what would you propose to do? Believe me, I do not ask out of any idle curiosity, but from a firm faith, that what you set about will be accomplished in a satisfactory manner."

"Why, in the first place, I shall certainly go and get shaved at Todd's shop."

"You will venture that?"

"Oh, yes; but do not fancy that I am so headstrong and foolish as to run any unnecessary risks in the matter--I shall do no such thing: you may be assured that I will do all in my power to provide for my own safety; and if I did not think I could do that most effectually, I should not be at all in love with the adventure; but, on the contrary, carefully avoid it to the best of my ability. We have before heard something of Mr. Todd."

"Indeed!--and of a criminal character?"

"Yes; a lady once in the street took a fancy to a pair of shoe-buckles of imitation diamonds that Todd had on, when he was going to some city entertainment; she screamed out, and declared that they had belonged to her husband, who had gone out one morning, from his house in Fetter-lane, to get himself shaved. The case came before me, but the buckles were of too common a kind to enable the lady to persevere in her statement; and Todd, who preserved the most imperturbable coolness throughout the affair, was, of course, discharged."

"But the matter left a suspicion upon your mind?"

"It did; and more than once I have resolved in my own mind what means could be adopted of coming at the truth: other affairs, however, of more immediate urgency have occupied me, but the circumstances you detail revive all my former feelings upon the subject; and I shall now feel that the matter has come before me in a shape to merit immediate attention."

This was gratifying to Colonel Jeffery, because it not only took a great weight off his shoulders, but it led him to think, from the well-known tact of the magistrate, that something certainly would be accomplished, and that very shortly too, towards unravelling the secret that had as yet only appeared to be more complicated and intricate the more it was inquired into. He made the warmest acknowledgments to the magistrate for the courtesy of his reception, and then took his leave. As soon as the magistrate was alone, he rang a small hand-bell that was upon the table, and the summons was answered by a man, to whom he said--

"Is Crotchet here?"

"Yes, your worship."

"Then, tell him I want him at once, will you?"

The messenger retired, but he presently returned, bringing with him about as rough a specimen of humanity as the world could have produced. He was tall and stout, and his face looked as if, by repeated injuries, it had been knocked out of all shape, for the features were most strangely jumbled together indeed, and an obliquity of vision, which rendered it always a matter of doubt who and what he was looking at, by no means added to his personal charms.

"Sit down, Crotchet," said the magistrate, "and listen to me without a word of interruption."

If Mr. Crotchet had no other good quality on earth, he still had that of listening attentively, and he never opened his mouth while the magistrate related to him what had just formed the subject matter of Mr. Jeffery's communication; indeed, Crotchet seemed to be looking out of the window all the while; but then Sir Richard knew the little peculiarities of his visual organs. When he concluded his statement, Sir Richard said--

"Well, Crotchet, what do you think of all that? What does Sweeney Todd do with his customers?"

Mr. Crotchet gave a singular and peculiar kind of grin, as he said, still looking apparently out of the window, although his eyes were really fixed upon the magistrate--

"He \_smugs\_ 'em."

"What?"

"Uses 'em up, yer worship; it's as clear to me as mud in a wine-glass, that it is. Lor' bless you! I've been thinking he did that 'ere sort of thing a deuce of a while, but I didn't like to interfere too soon, you see."

"What do you advise, Crotchet? I know I can trust to your sagacity in such a case."

"Why, your worship, I'll think it over a bit in the course of the day, and let your worship know what I think. It's a awkward job rather, for a wariety of reasons, but howsomdever there's always a something to be done, and if we don't do it, I'll be hung if I know who can, that's all!"

"True, true, you are right there; and, perhaps, before you see me again, you will walk down Fleet-street, and see if you can make any observations that will be of advantage in the matter. It is an affair

which requires great caution indeed."

"Trust me, yer worship: I'll do it, and no mistake. Lor' bless you, it's easy for anybody now to go lounging about Fleet-street, without being taken much notice of; for the fact is, the whole place is agog about the horrid smell as has been for never so long in the old church of St. Dunstan."

"Smell--smell--in St. Dunstan's church! I never heard of that before, Crotchet."

"Oh, Lor' yes, it's enough to pison the devil himself, Sir Richard; and t'other day when the blessed bishop went to \_'firm\_ a lot of people, he as good as told 'em they might all be damned first, afore he 'firm nobody in such a place."

The magistrate was in a deep thought for a few minutes, and then he said suddenly--

"Well, well, Crotchet, you turn the matter over in your mind and see what you can make of it; I will think it over likewise. Do you hear?--mind you are with me at six this evening punctually; I do not intend to let the matter rest, and you may depend, that from this moment I will give it my greatest attention."

"Very good, yer worship; very good indeed; I'll be here, and something seems to strike me uncommon forcible that we shall unearth this fox very soon, yer worship."

"I sincerely hope so."

Mr. Crotchet took his leave, and when he was alone the magistrate rose and paced his apartment for some time with rapid strides, as if he was much agitated by the reflections that were passing through his mind. At length he flung himself into a chair with something like a groan, as he said--

"A horrible idea forces itself upon my consideration--most horrible! most horrible! most horrible! Well, well, we shall see--we shall see. It may not be so: and yet what a hideous probability stares me in the face! I will go down at once to St. Dunstan's and see what they are really about. Yes, yes, I shall not get much sleep I think now, until some of these mysteries are developed. A most horrible idea, truly!"

The magistrate left some directions at home concerning some business calls which he fully expected in the course of the next two hours, and then he put on a plain, sad-coloured cloak and a hat destitute of all ornament, and left his house with a rapid step. He took the most direct route towards St. Dunstan's church, and finding the door of the sacred edifice yielded to the touch, he at once entered it; but he had not advanced many steps before he was met and accosted by the beadle, who said, in a tone of great dignity and authority--

"This ain't Sunday, sir; there ain't no service here to-day."

"I don't suppose there is," replied the magistrate; "but I see you have workmen here. What is it you are about?"

"Well, of all the impudence that ever I came near, this is the worstest--to ask a beadle what he is about; I beg to say, sir, this is quite private, and there's the door."

"Yes, I see it, and you may go out at it just as soon as you think proper."

"Oh, \_convulsions\_! oh, \_convulsions\_! This to a beadle."

"What is all this about?" said a gentlemanly-looking man, stepping forward from a part of the church where several masons were employed in raising some of the huge flag-stones with which it was paved. "What disturbance is this?"

"I believe, Mr. Antrobus, you know me," said the magistrate.

"Oh, Sir Richard, certainly. How do you do?"

"Gracious," said the beadle, "I've put my blessed foot in it. Lor' bless us, sir, how should I know as you was Sir Richard? I begs as you won't think nothing o' what I said. If I had a knowed you, in course I shouldn't have said it, you may depend, Sir Richard--I humbly begs your pardon."

"It's of no consequence--I ought to have announced myself; and you are perfectly justified in keeping strangers out of the church, my friend."

The magistrate walked up the aisle with Mr. Antrobus, who was one of the churchwardens; and as he did so, he said, in a low, confidential tone of voice--

"I have heard some strange reports about a terrible stench in the church. What does it mean? I suppose you know all about it, and what it arises from?"

"Indeed I do not. If you have heard that there is a horrible smell in the church after it has been shut up for some time, and upon the least change in the weather, from dry or wet, or cold or warm, you know as much as we know upon the subject. It is a most serious nuisance, and, in fact, my presence here to-day is to try and make some discovery of the cause of the stench; and you see we are going to work our way into some of the old vaults that have not been opened for some time, with a hope of finding out the cause of this disagreeable odour."

"Have you any objection to my being a spectator?"

"None in the least."

"I thank you. Let us now join the workmen, and I can only now tell you that I feel the strongest possible curiosity to ascertain what can be

the meaning of all this, and shall watch the proceedings with the greatest amount of interest."

"Come along then; I can only say, for my part, that, as an individual, I am glad you are here, and as a magistrate, likewise, it gives me great satisfaction to have you."

## CHAPTER XXVIII. TOBIAS'S ESCAPE FROM MR. FOGG'S ESTABLISHMENT.

The rage into which Mr. Fogg was thrown by the attack which the desperate Tobias had made upon his representative, Mr. Watson, was so great, that, had it not been for the presence of stupid old Dr. Poplejoy in the house, no doubt he would have taken some most exemplary vengeance upon him. As it was, however, Tobias was thrown into his cell with a promise of vengeance as soon as the coast was clear. These were a kind of promises which Mr. Fogg was pretty sure to keep, and when the first impulse of his passion had passed away, poor Tobias, as well indeed he might, gave himself up to despair.

"Now all is over," he said; "I shall be half murdered! Oh, why do they not kill me at once? There would be some mercy in that. Come and murder me at once, you wretches! You villains, murder me at once!"

In his new excitement, he rushed to the door of the cell, and banged at it with his fists, when to his surprise it opened, and he found himself nearly falling into the stone corridor from which the various cell doors opened. It was evident that Mr. Watson thought he had locked him in, for the bolt of the lock was shot back, but had missed its hold--a circumstance probably arising from the state of rage and confusion Mr. Watson was in, as a consequence of Tobias's daring attack upon him. It almost seemed to the boy as if he had already made some advance towards his freedom, when he found himself in the narrow passage beyond his cell door, but his heart for some minutes beat so tumultuously with the throng of blissful associations connected with freedom, that it was quite impossible for him to proceed. A slight noise, however, in another part of the building roused him again, and he felt that it was only now by a great coolness and self-possession, as well as great courage, that he could at all hope to turn to account the fortunate incident which had enabled him, at all events, to make that first step towards liberty.

"Oh, if I could but get out of this dreadful place," he thought; "if I could but once again breathe the pure fresh air of heaven, and see the deep blue sky, I think I should ask for no other blessings."

Never do the charms of nature present themselves to the imagination in more lovely guise than when some one with an imagination full of such beauties, and a mind to appreciate the glories of the world, is shut up from real, actual contemplation. To Tobias now the thought of green fields, sunshine and flowers, was at once rapture and agony.

"I must," he said, "I must--I will be free."

A thorough determination to do anything, we are well convinced, always goes a long way towards its accomplishment; and certainly Tobias now would cheerfully have faced death in any shape, rather than he would again have been condemned to the solitary horrors of the cell, from which he had by such a chance got free. He conjectured the stupid old Dr. Popplejoy had not left the house, by the unusual quiet that reigned in it, and he began to wonder if, while that quiet subsisted, there was the remotest chance of his getting into the garden, and then scaling the wall, and so reaching the open common. While this thought was establishing itself in his mind, and he was thinking that he would pursue the passage in which he was until he saw where it led to, he heard the sound of footsteps, and he shrank back. For a few seconds they appeared as if they were approaching where he was; and he began to dread that the cell would be searched, and his absence discovered, in which case there would be no chance for him but death. Suddenly, however, the approaching footsteps paused, and then he heard a door banged shut. It was still, even now, some minutes before Tobias could bring himself to traverse the passage again, and when he did, it was with a slow and stealthy step. He had not, however, gone above thirty paces, before he heard the indistinct murmur of voices, and being guided by the sound, he paused at a door on his right hand, which he thought must be the one he had heard closed but a few minutes previously. It was from the interior of the room which that was the door of, that the sound of voices came, and as it was a matter of the very first importance to Tobias to ascertain in what part of the house his enemies were, he placed his ear against the panel, and listened attentively. He recognised both the voices: they were those of Watson and Fogg. It was a very doubtful and ticklish situation that poor Tobias was now in, but it was wonderful how, by dint of strong resolution, he had stilled the beating of his heart and the general nervousness of his disposition. There was but a frail door between him and his enemies, and yet he stood profoundly still and listened. Mr. Fogg was speaking.

"You quite understand me, Watson, I think," he said, "as concerns that little viper, Tobias Ragg; he is too cunning, and much too dangerous to live long. He almost staggered old superannuated Popplejoy."

"Oh, confound him!" replied Watson, "and he's quite staggered me."

"Why, certainly your face is rather scratched."

"Yes, the little devil! but it's all in the way of business, that, Mr. Fogg, and you never heard me grumble at such little matters yet; and I'll be bound never will, that's more."

"I give you credit for that, Watson; but between you and I, I think the disease of that boy is of a nature that will carry him off very suddenly."

"I think so too," said Watson, with a chuckle.

"It strikes me forcibly that he will be found dead in his bed some morning, and I should not in the least wonder if that were to-morrow morning: what's your opinion, Watson?"

"Oh, damn it, what's the use of all this round-about nonsense between us? the boy is to die, and there's an end of it, and die he shall during the night--I owe him a personal grudge, of course, now."

"Of course you do--he has disfigured you."

"Has he? Well, I can return the compliment; and I say, Mr. Fogg, my opinion is, that it's very dangerous having these medical inspections you have such a fancy for."

"My dear fellow, it is dangerous, that I know as well as you can tell me, but it is from that danger we gather safety. If anything in the shape of a disturbance should arise about any patient, you don't know of what vast importance a report from such a man as old Dr. Popplejoy might be."

"Well, well, have it your own way. I shall not go near Master Tobias for the whole day, and shall see what starvation and solitude does towards taming him down a bit."

"As you please; but it is time you went your regular rounds."

"Yes, of course."

Tobias heard Watson rise. The crisis was a serious one. His eye fell upon a bolt that was outside the door, and, with the quickness of thought, he shot it into its socket, and then made his way down the passage towards his cell, the door of which he shut close. His next movement was to run to the end of the passage and descend some stairs. A door opposed him, but a push opened it, and he found himself in a small, dimly-lighted room, in one corner of which, upon a heap of straw, lay a woman, apparently sleeping. The noise which Tobias made in entering the cell, for such it was, roused her up, and she said--

"Oh! no, no; not the lash! not the lash! I am quiet. God, how quiet I am, although the heart within is breaking. Have mercy upon me!"

"Have mercy upon me," said Tobias, "and hide me if you can."

"Hide you! hide you! God of Heaven, who are you?"

"A poor victim, who has escaped from one of the cells, and I--"

"Hush!" said the woman; and she made Tobias shrink down in the corner of the cell, cleverly covering him up with the straw, and then lying down herself in such a position that he was completely screened. The precaution was not taken a moment too soon, for, by the time it was completed, Watson had burst open the door of the room which Tobias had bolted, and stood in the narrow passage.

"How the devil," he said, "came that door shut, I wonder?"

"Oh! save me," whispered Tobias.

"Hush! hush! He will only look in," was the answer. "You are safe. I have been only waiting for some one who could assist me, in order to attempt an escape. You must remain here until night, and then I will show you how it may be done. Hush!--he comes." Watson did come, and looked into the cell, muttering an oath, as he said--

"Oh, you have enough bread and water till to-morrow morning, I should say; so you need not expect to see me again till then."

"Oh! we are saved! we shall escape," said the poor creature, after Watson had been gone some minutes.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, boy, I do not know what brought you here, but if you have suffered one-tenth part of the cruelty and oppression that I have suffered, you are indeed to be pitied."

"If we are to stay here," said Tobias, "till night, before making any attempt to escape, it will, perhaps, ease your mind, and beguile the time, if you were to tell me how you came here."

"God knows! it might--it might."

Tobias was very urgent upon the poor creature to tell her story, to beguile the tedium of the time of waiting, and after some amount of persuasion she consented to do so.

"You shall now hear," she said to Tobias, "if you will listen, such a catalogue of wrongs, unredressed and still enduring, that would indeed drive any human being mad; but I have been able to preserve so much of my mental faculties as will enable me to recollect and understand the many acts of cruelty and injustice that I have endured here for many a long and weary day. My persecutions began when I was very young--so young that I could not comprehend their cause, and used to wonder why I should be treated with greater rigour or with greater cruelty than people used to treat those who were really disobedient and wayward children. I was scarcely seven years old when a maiden aunt died; she was the old person whom I remember as having been uniformly kind to me; though I can only remember her indistinctly, yet I know she was kind to me; I know also I used to visit her, and she used to look upon me as her favourite, for I used to sit at her feet upon a stool, watching her as she sat amusing herself by embroidering, silent and motionless sometimes, and then I asked her some questions which she answered. This is the chief feature of my recollection of my aunt: she soon after died, but while she lived, I had no unkindness from anybody; it was only after that that I felt the cruelty and coolness of my family. It appeared that I was a favourite with my aunt above all others, either in our family or any other; she loved me, and promised that when she died, she would leave me provided for, and that I should not be dependent upon any one.

Well, I was, from the day after the funeral, an altered being. I was neglected, and no one paid any attention to me whatsoever; I was thrust about, and nobody appeared to care even if I had the necessaries of life. Such a change I could not understand. I could not believe the evidence of my own senses; I thought it must be something that I did not understand; perhaps my poor aunt's death had caused this distress and alteration in people's demeanour to me. However, I was a child, and though I was quick enough at noting all this, yet I was too young to feel acutely the conduct of my friends. My father and mother were careless of me, and let me run where I would; they cared not when I was hurt, they cared not when I was in danger. Come what would, I was left to take my chance. I recollect one day when I had fallen from the top to the bottom of some stairs and hurt myself very much; but no one comforted me; I was thrust out of the drawing-room, because I cried. I then went to the top of the stairs, where I sat weeping bitterly for some time. At length, an old servant came out of one of the attics, and said--

"Oh! Miss Mary, what has happened to you, that you sit crying so bitterly on the stair head? Come in here!"

"I arose and went into the attic with her, when she set me on a chair, and busied herself with my bruises, and said to me--

"Now, tell me what are you crying about, and why did they turn you out of the drawing-room--tell me now?"

"Ay," said I, 'they turned me out because I cried when I was hurt. I fell all the way down stairs, but they don't mind.'

"No, they do not, and yet in many families they would have taken more care of you than they do here!"

"And why do you think they would have done so?" I inquired.

"Don't you know what good fortune has lately fallen into your lap? I thought you knew all about it."

"I don't know anything, save they are very unkind to me lately."

"They have been very unkind to you, child, and I am sure I don't know why, nor can I tell you why they have not told you of your fortune."

"My fortune," said I; 'what fortune?'

"Why, don't you know that when your poor aunt died you were her favourite?"

"I know my aunt loved me," I said; 'she loved me, and was kind to me; but since she has been dead, nobody cares for me.'

"Well, my child, she has left a will behind her which says that all her fortune shall be yours; when you are old enough you shall have all her fine things; you shall have all her money and her house."

"Indeed!' said I; 'who told you so?'

"Oh, I have heard it from those who were present at the reading of the will, that you are, when you are old enough, to have all. Think what a great lady you will be then! You will have servants of your own.'

"I don't think I shall live till then.'

"Oh yes, you will--or at least I hope so.'

"And if I should not, what will become of all those fine things that you have told me of? Who'll have them?'

"Why, if you do not live till you are of age, your fortune will go to your father and mother, who take all.'

"Then they would sooner I should die than live?'

"What makes you think so?' she inquired.

"Why,' said I, 'they don't care anything for me now, and they will have my fortune if I were dead--so they don't want me.'

"Ah, my child!' said the old woman, 'I have thought of that more than once; and now you can see it. I believe that it will be so. There has many a word been spoken truly enough by a child before now, and I am sure you are right--but do you be a good child, and be careful of yourself, and you will always find that Providence will keep you out of any trouble.'

"I hope so,' I said.

"And be sure you don't say who told you about this.'

"Why not,' I inquired; 'why may I not tell who told me about it?'

"Because,' she replied, 'if it were known that I told you anything about it, as you have not been told by them, they might discharge me, and I should be turned out.'

"I will not do that,' I replied; 'they shall not learn who told me, though I should like to hear them say the same thing.'

"You may hear them do so one of these days,' she replied, 'if you are not impatient: it will come out one of these days--two may know of it.'

"More than my father and mother?'

"Yes, more--several.'

"No more was said then about the matter; but I treasured it up in my mind. I resolved that I would act differently, and not have anything to do with them--that is, I would not be more in their sight than I could

help--I would not be in their sight at all, save at meal times--and when there was any company there I always appeared. I cannot tell why; but I think it was because I sometimes attracted the attention of others, and I hoped to be able to hear something respecting my fortune; and in the end I succeeded in doing so, and then I was satisfied--not that it made any alteration in my conduct, but I felt I was entitled to a fortune. How such an impression became imprinted upon a girl of eight years of age, I know not: but it took hold of me, and I had some kind of notion that I was entitled to more consideration than I was treated to.

"Mother,' said I one day to her.

"Well, Mary, what do you want to tease me about now?"

"Didn't Mrs. Carter the other day say that my aunt left me a fortune?"

"What is the child dreaming about?" said my mother. 'Do you know what you are talking about, child?--you can't comprehend.'

"I don't know, mother, but you said it was so to Mrs. Carter.'

"Well, then, what if I did, child?"

"Why, you must have told the truth or a falsehood.'

"Well, Miss Impudence!--I told the truth, what then?"

"Why, then I am to have a fortune when I grow up, that's all I mean, mother, and then people will take care of me. I shall not be forgotten, but everything will be done for me, and I shall be thought of first.'

"My mother looked at me very hard for a moment or two, and then, as if she was actuated by remorse, she made an attempt to speak, but checked herself, and then anger came to her aid, and she said--

"Upon my word, miss! what thoughts have you taken into your fancy now? I suppose we shall be compelled to be so many servants to you! I am sure you ought to be ashamed of yourself--you ought, indeed!"

"I didn't know I had done wrong,' I said.

"Hold your tongue, will you, or I shall be obliged to flog you!" said my mother, giving me a sound box on the ears that threw me down. 'Now, hold your tongue and go up stairs, and give me no more insolence.'

"I arose and went up stairs, sobbing as if my heart would break. I cannot recollect how many bitter hours I spent there, crying by myself--how many tears I shed upon this matter, and how I compared myself to other children, and how much my situation was worse than theirs by a great deal. They, I thought, had their companions--they had their hours of play. But what companions had I? and what had I in the way of relaxation? What had I to do save to pine over the past, the present, and the future? My infantile thoughts and hours were alike occupied by the sad reflections that belonged to a more mature age than

mine; and yet I was so. Days, weeks, and months passed on--there was no change, and I grew apace; but I was always regarded by my family with dislike, and always neglected. I could not account for it in any other way than they wished me dead. It may appear very dreadful--very dreadful indeed--but what else was I to think? The old servant's words came upon my mind full of their meaning--if I died before I was one-and-twenty, they would have all my aunt's money.

"They wish me to die,' I thought, 'they wish me to die; and I shall die--I am sure I shall die! But they will kill me--they have tried it by neglecting me, and making me sad. What can I do--what can I do?'

"These thoughts were the current matter of my mind, and how often do they recur to my recollection now I am in this dull, dreadful place! I can never forget the past. I am here because I have rights elsewhere, which others can enjoy, and do enjoy. However, that is an old evil. I have thus suffered long. But to return. After a year had gone by--two, I think, must have passed over my head--before I met with anything that was at all calculated to injure me. I must have been near ten years old, when, one evening, I had no sooner got into bed, than I found I had been put into damp--I may say wet sheets. They were so damp that I could not doubt but this was done on purpose. I am sure no negligence ever came to anything so positive and so abominable in all my life. I got out of bed and took them off, and then wrapped myself up in the blankets and slept till morning, without awaking any one. When morning came, I inquired who put the sheets there?

"What do you mean, minx?' said my mother.

"Only that somebody was bad and wicked enough to put positively wet sheets in the bed; it could not have been done through carelessness--it must have been done through sheer wilfulness. I'm quite convinced of that.'

"You will get yourself well thrashed if you talk like that,' said my mother. 'The sheets are not damp; there are none in the house that are damp.'

"These are wet.'

"This reply brought her hand down heavily upon my shoulder, and I was forced upon my knees. I could not help myself, so violent was the blow.

"There,' added my mother, 'take that, and that, and answer me if you dare.'

"As she said this she struck me to the ground, and my head came in violent contact with the table, and I was rendered insensible. How long I continued so I cannot tell. What I first saw when I awoke was the dreariness of one of the attics into which I had been thrust, and thrown upon a small bed without any furniture. I looked around and saw nothing that indicated comfort, and upon looking at my clothes there were traces of blood. This, I had no doubt, came from myself. I was hurt, and upon putting my hand to my head, found that I was much hurt, as my head was

bound up. At that moment the door was opened, and the old servant came in.

"Well, Miss Mary,' she said, 'and so you have come round again? I really began to be afraid you were killed. What a fall you must have had!'

"Fall,' said I; 'who said it was a fall?'

"They told me so.'

"I was struck down.'

"Struck, Miss Mary! Who could strike you? And what did you do to deserve such a severe chastisement? Who did it?'

"I spoke to my mother about the wet sheets.'

"Ah! what a mercy you were not killed! If you had slept in them, your life would not have been worth a farthing. You would have caught cold, and you would have died of inflammation, I am sure of it. If anybody wants to commit murder without being found out, they have only to put them into damp sheets.'

"So I thought, and I took them out.'

"You did quite right--quite right.'

"What have you heard about them?' said I.

"Oh! I only went into the room in which you sleep, and I at once found how damp they were, and how dangerous it was; and I was going to tell your mamma, when I met her, and she told me to hold my tongue, but to go down and take you away, as you had fallen down in a fit, and she could not bear to see you lying there.'

"And she didn't do anything for me?'

"Oh, no, not as I know of, because you were lying on the floor bleeding. I picked you up, and brought you here.'

"And has she not inquired after me since?'

"Not once.'

"And don't know whether I am yet sensible or not?'

"She does not yet know that.'

"Well,' I replied, 'I think they don't care much for me, I think not at all, but the time may come when they will act differently.'

"No, miss, they think, or affect to think, that you have injured them; but that cannot be, because you could not be cunning enough to dispose

your aunt to leave you all, and so deprive them of what they think they are entitled to.'

"I never could have believed half so much.'

"Such, however, is the case.'

"What can I do?'

"Nothing, my dear, but lie still till you get better, and don't say any more; but sleep, if you can sleep, will do you more good than anything else now for an hour or so, so lie down and sleep.'

\* \* \* \* \*

"The old woman left the room, and I endeavoured to compose myself to sleep; but could not do so for some time, my mind being too actively engaged in considering what I had better do, and I determined upon a course of conduct by which I thought to escape much of my present persecution. It was some days, however, before I could put it in practice, and one day I found my father and mother together, and I said to her--

"Mother, why do you not send me to school?'

"You--send you to school! did you mean you, miss?'

"Yes, I meant myself, because other people go to school to learn something, but I have not been sent at all.'

"Are you not contented?'

"I am not,' I answered, 'because other people learn something; but at the same time, I should be more out of your way, since I am more trouble to you, as you complain of me; it would not cost more than living at home.'

"What is the matter with the child?' asked my father.

"I cannot tell,' said my mother.

"The better way will be to take care of her, and confine her to some part of the house, if she does not behave better.'

"The little minx will be very troublesome.'

"Do you think so?'

"Yes, decidedly.'

"Then we must adopt some more active measures, or we shall have to do what we do not wish. I am amused at her asking to be sent to school! Was ever there heard of such wickedness? Well, I could not have believed such ingratitude could have existed in human nature.'

"Go out of the room, you hussy," said my mother; "go out of the room, and don't let me hear a word from you more."

"I left the room terrified at the storm I had raised up against me. I knew not that I had done wrong, and went up crying to my attic alone, and found the old servant, who asked what was the matter. I told her all I had said, and what had been the result, and how I had been abused.

"Why, you should let things take their own course, my dear."

"Yes, but I can learn nothing."

"Never mind; you will have plenty of money when you grow older, and that will cure many defects; people who have money never want for friends."

"But I have them not, and yet I have money."

"Most certainly--most certainly, but you have it not in your power, and you are not old enough to make use of it, if you had it."

"Who has it?" I inquired.

"Your father and mother."

"No more was said at that time, and the old woman left me to myself, and I recollect I long and deeply pondered over this matter, and yet could see no way out of it, and resolved that I would take things as easily as I could; but I feared that I was not likely to have a very quiet life; indeed, active cruelty was exercised against me. They would lock me up in a room a whole day at a time, so that I was debarred the use of my limbs. I was even kept without food, and on every occasion I was knocked about, from one to the other, without remorse--every one took a delight in tormenting me, and in showing me how much they dared do. Of course servants and all would not treat me with neglect and harshness if they did not see it was agreeable to my parents. This was shocking cruelty; but yet I found that this was not all. Many were the little contrivances made and invented to cause me to fall down stairs--to slip--to trip, or do anything that might have ended in some fatal accident, which would have left them at liberty to enjoy my legacy, and no blame would be attached to them for the accident, and I should most likely get blamed for what was done, and from which I had been the sufferer--indeed, I should have been deemed to have suffered justly. On one occasion, after I had been in bed some time, I found it was very damp, and upon examination I found the bed itself had been made quite wet, with the sheets put over it to hide it. This I did not discover until it was too late, for I caught a violent cold, and it took me some weeks to get over it, and yet I escaped eventually, though after some months' illness. I recovered, and it evidently made them angry because I did live. They must have believed me to be very obstinate; they thought me obdurate in the extreme--they called me all the names they could imagine, and treated me with every indignity they could heap upon me. Well, time ran on, and in my twelfth year I obtained the notice of one or two of our

friends, who made some inquiries about me. I always remarked that my parents disliked any one to speak to, or take any notice of me. They did not permit me to say much--they did not like my speaking; and on one occasion, when I made some remark respecting school, she replied--

"Her health is so bad that I have not yet sent her, but shall do so by and by, when she grows stronger.'

"There was a look bent upon me that told me at once what I must expect, if I persisted in my half-formed resolve of contradicting all that had been said. When the visitor went I was well aware of what kind of a life I should have had, if I did not absolutely receive some serious injury. I was terrified, and held my tongue. Soon after that I was seized with violent pains and vomiting. I was very ill, and the servant being at home only, a doctor was sent for, who at once said I had been poisoned, and ordered me to be taken care of. I know how it was done: I had some cake given me--it was left out for me; and that was the only thing I had eaten, and it astonished me, for I had not had such a thing given me for years, and that is why I believe the poison was put in the cake, and I think others thought so too. However, I got over that after a time, though I was a long while before I did so; but at the same time I was very weak, and the surgeon said that had I been a little longer without assistance, or had I not thrown it up, I must have sunk beneath the effects of a violent poison. He advised my parents to take some measures to ascertain who it was that had administered the poison to me; but though they promised compliance, they never troubled themselves about it--but I was for a long time very cautious of what I took, and was in great fear of the food that was given to me. However, nothing more of that character took place, and at length I quite recovered, and began to think in my own mind that I ought to take some active steps in the matter, and that I ought to seek an asylum elsewhere. I was now nearly fifteen years of age, and could well see how inveterate was the dislike with which I was regarded by my family: I thought that they ought to use me better, for I could remember no cause for it. I had given no deadly offence, nor was there any motive why I should be treated thus with neglect and disdain. It was, then, a matter of serious consideration with me, as to whether I should not go and throw myself upon the protection of some friend, and beg their interference in my behalf; but then there was no one whom I felt that would do so much for me--no one from whom I expected so great an act of friendship. It was hardly to be expected from any one that they should interfere between me and my parents; they would have had their first say, and I should have contradicted all they said, and should have appeared in a very bad light indeed. I could not say they had neglected my education--I could not say that, because there I had been careful myself, and I had assiduously striven when alone to remedy this defect, and had actually succeeded; so that, if I were examined, I should have denied my own assertions by contrary facts, which would injure me. Then again, if I were neglected I could not prove any injury, because I had all the means of existence; and all I could say would either be attributed to some evil source, or it was entirely false--but at the same time I felt that I had great cause of complaint, and none of gratitude. I could hold no communion with any one--all alike deserted me, and I knew none who could say aught for me if I requested their good-will. I had serious thoughts of

possessing myself of some money, and then leaving home, and staying away until I had arrived at age; but this I deferred doing, seeing that there were no means, and I could not do more than I then did--that is, to live on without any mischief happening, and wait for a few years more. I contracted an acquaintance with a young man who came to visit my father--he came several times, and paid me more civility and attention than any one else ever did, and I felt that he was the only friend I possessed. It is no wonder I looked upon him as being my best and my only friend. I thought him the best and the handsomest man I ever beheld. This put other thoughts into my head. I did not dress as others did, much less had I the opportunity of becoming possessed of many of those little trinkets that most young women of my age had. But this made no alteration in the good opinion of the young gentleman, who took no notice of that, but made me several pretty presents. These were treasures to me, and I must say I gloated over them, and often, when alone, I have spent hours in admiring them; trifling as they were, they made me happier. I knew now one person who cared for me, and a delightful feeling it was too. I shall never know it again--it is quite impossible. Here, among the dark walls and unwholesome cells, we have no cheering ray of life or hope--all is dreary and cold; a long and horrible punishment takes place, to which there is no end save with life, and in which there is no one mitigating circumstance--all is bad and dark. God help me!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"However, my dream of happiness was soon disturbed. By some means my parents had got an idea of this, and the young man was dismissed the house, and forbidden to come to it again. This he determined to do, and more than once we met, and then in secret I told him all my woes. When he had heard all I said, he expressed the deepest commiseration, and declared I had been most unjustly and harshly treated, and thought that there was not a harder or harsher treatment than that which I had received. He then advised me to leave home.

"Leave home,' I said; 'where shall I fly? I have no friend.'

"Come to me, I will protect you; I will stand between you and all the world; they shall not stir hand or foot to your injury.'

"But I cannot, dare not to do that; if they found me out, they would force me back with all the ignominy and shame that could be felt from having done a bad act; not any pity would they show me.'

"Nor need you; you would be my wife--I mean to make you my wife.'

"You?'

"Yes! I dreamed not of anything else. You shall be my wife; we will hide ourselves, and remain unknown to all until the time shall have arrived when you are of age--when you can claim all your property, and run no risk of being poisoned or killed by any other means.'

"This is a matter,' said I, 'that ought to be considered well before

adopting anything so violent and so sudden.'

"It does; and it is not one that I think will injure by being reflected upon by those who are the principal actors; for my own part my mind is made up, and I am ready to perform my share of the engagement.'

"I resolved to consider the matter well in my own mind, and felt every inclination to do what he proposed, because it took me away from home, and because it would give me one of my own. My parents had become utterly estranged from me: they did not act as parents, they did not act as friends, they had steeled my heart against them; they never could have borne any love to me, I am sure of it, who could have committed such great crimes against me. As the hour drew near, that in which I was likely to become an object of still greater hatred and dislike to them, I thought I was often the subject of their private thoughts, and often when I entered the room my mother and father, and the rest, would suddenly leave off speaking, and look at me, as if to ascertain if I had overheard them say anything. On one occasion I remember very well I heard them conversing in a low tone. The door happened to have opened of itself, the hasp not having been allowed to enter the mortise. I heard my name mentioned: I paused and listened.

"We must soon get rid of her,' said my mother.

"Undoubtedly,' he replied; 'if we do not, we shall have her about our ears: she'll get married, or some infernal thing, and then we shall have to refund.'

"We could prevent that.'

"Not if her husband were to insist upon it, we could not; but the only plan I can now form is, what I told you of already.'

"Putting her into a madhouse?'

"Yes: there, you see, she will be secured, and cannot get away. Besides, those who go there die in a natural way before many years.'

"But she can speak.'

"So she may; but who attends to the ravings of a mad woman? No, no; depend upon it, that is the best plan: send her to a lunatic asylum--a private madhouse. I can obtain all that is requisite in a day or two.'

"Then we will consider that settled?'

"Certainly.'

"In a few days, then?'

"Before next Sunday; because we can enjoy ourselves on that day without any restraint, or without any uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty about us.'

\* \* \* \* \*

"I waited to hear no more: I had heard enough to tell me what I had to expect. I went back to my own room, and having put on my bonnet and shawl I went out to see the individual to whom I have alluded, and saw him. I then informed him of all that had taken place, and heard him exclaim against them in terms of rising indignation.

"Come to me,' he said; 'come to me at once.'

"Not at once.'

"Don't stop a day.'

"Hush!' said I, 'there's no danger; I will come the day after to-morrow; and then I will bid adieu to all these unhappy moments, to all these persecutions; and in three years' time I shall be able to demand my fortune, which will be yours.'

\* \* \* \* \*

"We were to meet the next day but one, early in the morning; there was not, in fact, to be more than thirty hours elapse before I was to leave home--if home I could call it--however, there was no time to be lost. I made up a small bundle and had all in readiness before I went to bed, and placed in security, intending to rise early, and let myself out and leave the house. That, however, was never to happen. While I slept, at a late hour of the night, I was awakened by two men standing by my bedside, who desired me to get up and follow them. I refused, and they pulled me rudely out of bed. I called out for aid, and exclaimed against the barbarity of their proceedings.

"It is useless to listen to her,' said my father, 'you know what a mad woman will say!'

"Ay, we do,' replied the men, 'they are the cunningest devils we ever heard. We have seen enough of them to know that.'

"To make the matter plain, I was seized, gagged, and thrust into a coach, and brought here, where I have remained ever since."

## CHAPTER XXIX. TOBIAS'S RAPID JOURNEY TO LONDON.

There was something extremely touching in the tone, and apparently in the manner in which the poor persecuted one detailed the story of her wrongs, and she had a tribute of a willing tear from Tobias.

"After the generous confidence you have had in me," he said, "I ought to tell you something of myself."

"Do so," she replied, "we are companions in misfortune."

"We are indeed."

Tobias then related to her at large all about Sweeney Todd's villainies, and how at length he, Tobias, had been placed where he was for the purpose of silencing his testimony of the evil and desperate practices of the barber. After that, he related to her what he had overheard about the intention to murder him that very night, and he concluded by saying--

"If you have any plan of escape from this horrible place, let me implore you to tell it to me, and let us put it into practice to-night, and if we fail, death is at any time preferable to continued existence here."

"It is--it is--listen to me."

"I will indeed," said Tobias: "you will say you never had such attention as I will now pay to you."

"You must know, then, that this cell is paved with flag-stones, as you see, and that the wall here at the back forms likewise part of the wall of an old wood-house in the garden, which is never visited."

"Yes, I understand."

"Well, as I have been here so long, I managed to get up one of the flag-stones that forms the flooring here, and to work under the wall with my hands--a slow labour, and one of pain, until I made a regular kind of excavation, one end of which is here, and the other in the wood-house."

"Glorious!" said Tobias. "I see--I see--go on."

"I should have made my escape if I could, but the height of the garden wall has always been the obstacle. I thought of tearing this miserable quilt into strips, and making a sort of rope of it; but then how was I to get it on the wall? you, perhaps will, with your activity and youth, be able to accomplish that."

"Oh, yes, yes! you're right enough there; it is not a wall shall stop me."

They waited until, from a church clock in the vicinity, they heard ten strike, and they began operations. Tobias assisted his new friend to raise the stone in the cell, and there, immediately beneath, appeared the excavation leading to the wood-house, just sufficiently wide for one person to creep through. It did not take long to do that, and Tobias took with him a piece of work, upon which he had been occupied for the last two hours, namely the quilt torn up into long pieces, twisted and tied together, so that it formed a very tolerable rope, which Tobias thought would sustain the weight of his companion. The wood-house was a miserable-looking hole enough, and Tobias at once thought that the door

of it was fastened, but by a little pressure it came open; it had only stuck through the dampness of the woodwork at that low point of the garden. And now they were certainly both of them at liberty, with the exception of surmounting the wall, which rose frowningly before him in all its terrors. There was a fine cool fresh air in the garden, which was indeed most grateful to the senses of Tobias, and he seemed doubly nerved for anything that might be required of him after inhaling that delicious, cool fresh breeze. There grew close to the wall one of those beautiful mountain-ash trees, which bend over into such graceful foliage, and which are so useful in the formation of pretty summer-houses. Tobias saw that if he ascended to the top of this tree there would not be much trouble in getting from there to the wall.

"We shall do it," he said, "we shall succeed."

"Thank God, I hear you say so," replied his companion.

Tobias tied one end of the long rope they had made of the quilt to his waist, so that he might carry it up with him, and yet leave him free use of his hands and feet, and then he commenced ascending the tree. In three minutes he was on the wall. The moon shone sweetly. There was not a tree or house in the vicinity that was not made beautiful now, in some portions of it, by the sweet, soft light that poured down upon them, Tobias could not resist pausing a moment to look around him on the glorious scene; but the voice of her for whom he was bound to do all that was possible, aroused him.

"Oh, Tobias!" she said, "quick, quick--lower the rope; oh, quick!"

"In a moment--in a moment," he cried.

The top of the wall was here and there armed with iron spikes, and some of these formed an excellent grappling place for the torn quilt. In the course of another minute Tobias had his end of it secure.

"Now," he said, "can you climb up by it, do you think? Don't hurry about it. Remember, there is no alarm, and for all we know we have hours to ourselves yet."

"Yes, yes--oh, yes--thank God!" he heard her say.

Tobias was not where he could, by any exertion of strength, render her now the least assistance, and he watched the tightening of the frail support by which she was gradually climbing to the top of the wall with the most intense and painful interest that can be imagined.

"I come--I come," she said, "I am saved."

"Come slowly--for God's sake, do not hurry."

"No, no."

At this moment Tobias heard the frail rope giving way; there was a tearing sound--it broke, and she fell. Lights, too, at that unlucky

moment, flashed from the house, and it was now evident an alarm had been given. What could he do? if two could not be saved he might himself be saved. He turned, and flung his feet over the wall; he hung by his hands as low as he could, and then he dropped the remainder of the distance. He was hurt, but in a moment he sprang to his feet, for he felt that safety could only lie in instant and rapid flight. The terror of pursuit was so strong upon him that he forgot his bruises.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Thank Heaven," exclaimed Tobias, "I am at last free from that horrible place. Oh, if I can but reach London now, I shall be safe; and as for Sweeney Todd, let him beware, for a day of retribution for him cannot be far off."

So saying, Tobias turned his steps towards the city, and at a hard trot, soon left Peckham Rye far behind him as he pursued his route.

### CHAPTER XXX. MRS. LOVETT'S COOK MAKES A DESPERATE ATTEMPT.

There are folks who can and who will bow like reeds to the decrees of evil fortune, and with a patient, ass-like placidity, go on bearing the ruffles of a thankless world without complaining, but Mrs. Lovett's new cook was not one of those. The more destiny seemed to say to him--"Be quiet!" the more he writhed, and wriggled, and fumed, and could not be quiet. The more fate whispered in his ears--"You can do nothing," the more intent he was upon doing something, let it be what it might. And he had a little something, in the shape of a respite too, now, for had he not baked a batch of pies, and sent them up to the devouring fangs of the lawyers' clerks in all their gelatinous, beauty and gushing sweetness, to be devoured. To be sure he had, and therefore having, for a space, obeyed the behests of his task-mistress, he could sit with his head resting upon his hands and think. Thought! What a luxury! Where is the Indian satrap--where the arch Inquisitor--where the grasping, dishonest, scheming employer who can stop a man from thinking?--and as Shakspeare, says of sleep,

"From that sleep, what dreams may come?"

so might he have said of thought,

From that thought what acts may come?

Now we are afraid that, in the first place, the cook, in spite of himself, uttered some expression concerning Mrs. Lovett of neither an evangelical or a polite character, and with these we need not trouble the reader. They acted as a sort of safety-valve to his feelings, and after consigning that fascinating female to a certain warm place, where we may fancy everybody's pie might be cooked on the very shortest

notice, he got a little more calm.

"What shall I do?--what shall I do?"

Such was the rather vague question he asked of himself. Alas! how often are those four simple words linked together, finding but a vain echo in the over-charged heart. What shall I do? Ay, what!--small power had he to do anything, except the quietest thing of all--that one thing which Heaven in its mercy has left for every wretch to do if it so pleases him--to die! But, somehow or another, a man upon the up-hill side of life is apt to think he may do something rather than that, and our cook, although he was about as desperate a cook as the world ever saw, did not like yet to say die. Now, in that curious combination of passions, impulses, and prejudices in the mind of this man it would be a hard case if some scheme of action did not present itself, even in circumstances of the greatest possible seeming depression, and so, after a time, the cook did think of something to do.

"Many of these pies," he said to himself, "are not eaten in the shop, \_ergo\_ they are eaten out of the shop, and possibly at the respective houses of the purchasers--what more feasible mode of disclosing my position, and 'the secrets of my prison-house,' can there be than the enclosing a note in one of Mrs. Lovett's pies?"

After reviewing all the \_pros\_ and \_cons\_ of this scheme, there only appeared a few little difficulties in the way, but, although they were rather serious, they were not insurmountable. In the first place, it was possible enough that the unfortunate pie in which the note might be enclosed might be eaten in the shop, in which event the note might go down the throat of some hungry lawyer's clerk, and it might be handed to Mrs. Lovett, with a "God bless me, ma'am, what's this in the pie?" and then Mrs. Lovett might, by a not very remote possibility, say to herself--"This cook is a scheming, long-headed sort of a cook, and notwithstanding he does his duty by the pies, he shall be sent upon an errand to another and a better world," and in that case the delectable scheme of the note could only end in the total destruction of the unfortunate who conceived it. Objection the second was, that, although nothing is so easy as to say--"Oh, write a note all about it," nothing is so difficult as to write a note about anything without paper, ink, and a pen. The cook rubbed his forehead, and cried--

"D----n it!"

This seemed to have the desired effect, for he at once recollected that he was supplied with a thin piece of paper for the purpose of laying over the pies if the oven should by chance be over heated, and so subject them to an over-browning process.

"Surely," he thought, "I shall be able to make a substitute for a pen, and as for ink, a little coal and water, or--ah, I have it, black from my lights, of course. Ha--ha! How difficulties vanish when a man has thoroughly made up his mind to overcome them. Ha--ha! I write a note--I post it in a pie--some lawyer sends his clerk for a pie, and he gets \_that\_ pie. He opens it and sees the note--he reads it--he flies to a

police-office, and gets a private interview with a magistrate--a couple of Bow-street runners walk down to Bell Yard, and seize Mrs. Lovett--I hear a row in the shop, and cry--'Here I am--I am here--make haste--here I am--here I am!' Ha--ha--ha--ha--ha--ha!"

"Are you mad?"

The cook started to his feet--

"Who spoke--who spoke?"

"I," said Mrs. Lovett, looking through the ingenious little wicket at the top of the door. "What do you mean by that laughing? If you have gone mad, as one cook once did, death will be a relief to you. Only convince me of that fact, and in two hours you sleep the long sleep."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, I am not at all mad."

"Then why did you laugh in such a way that it reached even my ears above?"

"Why, ma'am, are you not a widow?"

"Well?"

"Well then, you could not have possibly looked at me as you ought to have done, or you would have seen that I am anything but a bad looking fellow, and as I am decidedly single, what do you say to taking me for better or for worse? The pie business is a thriving one, and, of course, if I had an interest in it, I should say nothing of affairs down below here."

"Fool!"

"Thank you, madam, for the compliment, but I assure you, the idea of such an arrangement made me laugh, and at all events, provided I do my duty, you don't mind my laughing a little at it?"

Mrs. Lovett disdained any further conversation with the cook, and closed the little wicket. When she was gone he took himself seriously to task for being so foolish as to utter his thoughts aloud, but yet he did not think he had gone so far as to speak loud enough about the plan of putting the letter in a pie for her to hear that.

"Oh, no--no, I am safe enough. It was the laughing that made her come. I am safe as yet!"

Having satisfied himself fully upon this point, he at once set to work to manufacture his note. The paper, as he had said, was ready at hand. To be sure, it was of a thin and flimsy texture, and decidedly brown, but a man in his situation could be hardly supposed to stand upon punctilios. After some trouble he succeeded in making an apology for a pen by the aid of a piece of stick, and he manufactured some very tolerable ink, at least, as good as the soot and water commonly sold in

London for the best "japan," and then he set about writing his note. As we have an opportunity of looking over his shoulder, we give the note verbatim.

"SIR--(OR MADAM)--I am a prisoner beneath the shop of Mrs. Lovett, the pie female, in Bell Yard. I am threatened with death if I attempt to escape from my now enforced employment. Moreover, I am convinced that there is some dreadful secret connected with the pies, which I can hardly trust my imagination to dwell upon, much less here set it down. Pray instantly, upon receipt of this, go to the nearest police-office and procure me immediate aid, or I shall soon be numbered with the dead. In the sacred names of justice and humanity, I charge you to do this."

The cook did not, for fear of accidents, put his name to this epistle. It was sufficient, he thought, that he designated his condition, and pointed out where he was. This note he folded into a close flat shape, and pressed it with his hands, so that it would take up a very small portion of room in a pie, and yet, from its size and nature, if the pie fell into the hands of some gourmand who commenced eating it violently, he could not fail to feel that there was a something in his mouth more indigestible than the delicate mutton or veal and the flaky crust of which Mrs. Lovett's delicacies were composed. Having proceeded thus far, he concluded that the only real risk he ran was, that the pie might be eaten in the shop, and the enclosure, without examination, handed over to Mrs. Lovett merely as a piece of paper which had insinuated itself where it had no right to be. But as no design whatever can be carried out without some risk or another, he was not disposed to give up his, because some contingency of that character was attached to it. The prospect of deliverance from the horrible condition to which he was reduced, now spread over his mind a pleasing calm, and he set about the manufacture of a batch of pies, so as to have it ready for the oven when the bell should ring.--Into one of them he carefully introduced his note. Oh, what an eye he kept upon that individual pie. How often he carefully lifted the upper crust, to have a peep at the little missive which was about to go upon an errand of life or death.--How he tried to picture to his mind's eye the sort of person into whose hands it might fall, and then how he thought he would listen for any sounds during the next few hours, which should be indicative of the arrest of Mrs. Lovett, and the presence of the police in the place. He thought, then, that if his laugh had been sufficiently loud when merely uttered to himself, to reach the ears of Mrs. Lovett, surely his shout to the police would be heard above all other sounds, and at once bring them to his aid. Tingle! tingle! tingle! went a bell. It was the signal for him to get a batch of pies ready for the oven.

"Good," he said, "it is done."

He waited until the signal was given to him to put them in to be cooked, and then, after casting one more look at the pie that contained his note, in went the batch to the hot air of the oven, which came out upon his face like the breath of some giant in a highly febrile state.

"'Tis done," he said. "'Tis done, and I am saved!"

He sat down and covered his face with his hands, while delicious dreamy thoughts of freedom came across his brain. Green fields, trees, meadows and uplands, and the sweet blue sky, all appeared before him in bright and beautiful array.

"Yes," he said. "Yes, I shall see them all once again.--Once again I shall look, perchance, upon the bounding deep blue sea. Once again I shall feel the sun of a happier clime than this fanning my cheek. Oh, liberty, liberty, what a precious boon art thou!"

Tingle! tingle! tingle! He started from his dream of joy. The pies are wanted; Mrs. Lovett knew well enough how long they took in doing, and that by this time they should be ready to be placed upon the ascending trap. Down it came. Open went the oven door, and in another minute the note was in the shop. The cook placed his hand upon his heart to still its tumultuous beating as he listened intently. He could hear the sound of feet above--only dimly though, through that double roof. Once he thought he heard high words, but all died away again, and nothing came of it.--All was profoundly still. The batch of pies surely were sold now, and in a paper bag he told himself his pie, *\_par excellence\_*, had gone perhaps to the chambers of some attorney, who would be rejoiced to have a finger in it; or to some briefless barrister, who would be rejoiced to get his name in the papers, even if it were only connected with a story of a pie. Yes, the dream of freedom still clung to the imagination of the cook, and he waited, with every nerve thrilling with expectation, the result of his plan. One, two, three hours had passed away, and nothing came of the pie or the letter. All was as quiet and as calm as though the malignant fates had determined that there he was to spend his days for ever, and gradually as in a frigid situation the narrow column of mercury in a thermometer will sink, sank his spirits--down--down--down!

"No--no," he said. "No hope. Timidity or incredulity has consigned my letter to the flames, perhaps, or some wide-mouthed, stupid idiot has actually swallowed it. Oh that it had choked him by the way. Oh that it had actually stuck in his throat.--It is over, I have lost hope again. This horrible place will be my charnel-house--my family vault! Curses!--No--no. What is the use of swearing? My despair is past that--far past that--"

"Cook!" said a voice.

He sprang up, and looked to the wicket. There was Mrs. Lovett gazing in at him.

"Cook!"

"Well--well.--Fiend in female shape, what would you with me? Did you not expect to find me dead?"

"Certainly not. Here is a letter for you."

"A--a--letter?"

"Yes. Perhaps it is an answer to the one you sent in the pie, you know."

The unfortunate grasped his head, and gave a yell of despair. The letter--for indeed Mrs. Lovett had one--was dropped upon the ground floor from the opening through which she conversed with her prisoner, and then, without another word, she withdrew from the little orifice, and left him to his meditation.

"Lost!--lost!--lost!" he cried. "All is lost. God, is this enchantment? Or am I mad, and the inmate of some cell in an abode of lunacy, and all this about pies and letters merely the delusion of my overwrought fancy? Is there really a pie--a Mrs. Lovett--a Bell Yard--a letter--a--a--a--damn it, is there such a wretch as I myself, in this vast bustling world, or is all a wild and fathomless delusion?"

He cast himself upon the ground, as though from that moment he gave up all hope and desire to save himself. It seemed as though he could have said--

"Let death come in any shape he may, he will find me an unresisting victim. I have fought with fate, and am, like thousands who have preceded me in such a contest--beaten!"

A kind of stupor came over him, and there he lay for more than two hours; but youth will overcome much, and the mind, like some depressed spring, will, in the spring of life, soon recover its rebound; so it was with the unhappy cook. After a time he rose and looked about him.

"No," he said, "it is no dream. It is no dream!"

He then saw the letter lying upon the ground, which Mrs. Lovett had with such irony cast unto him.

"Surely," he said, "she might have been content to tell me she had discovered my plans, without adding this practical sneer to it."

He lifted the letter from the floor, and found it was addressed "To Mrs. Lovett's Cook, Bell Yard, Temple Bar;" and what made it all the more provoking was, that it seemed to have come regularly through the post, for there were the official seal and blue stamp upon it. Curiosity tempted him to open it, and he read as follows:--

"SIR--Having, in a most delicious pie, received the extraordinary communication which you inserted in it, I take the earliest opportunity of replying to you. The character of a highly respectable and pious woman is not, sir, to be whispered away in a pie by a cook. When the whole bench of bishops were proved, in black and white, to be the greatest thieves and speculators in the known world, it was their character that saved them, for, as people justly enough reasoned, bishops should be pious and just--therefore, a bishop cannot be a thief and a liar! Now, sir, apply this little mandate to Mrs. Lovett, and assure yourself; but no one will believe anything you can allege against a female with so fascinating a smile, and who attends to her religious

duties so regularly. Reflect, young man, on the evil that you have tried to do, and for the future learn to be satisfied with the excellent situation you have. The pie was very good."

I am, you bad young man,  
A Parishioner of St. Dunstan's,  
SWEENEY TODD."

"Now was there ever such a piece of cool rascality as this?" cried the cook, "Sweeney Todd--Todd--Todd. Who the devil is he? This is some scheme of Mrs. Lovett's to drive me mad."

He dashed the letter upon the floor.

"Not another pie will I make! No--no--no. Welcome death--welcome that dissolution which may be my lot, rather than the continued endurance of this terrible imprisonment. Am I, at my time of life, to be made the slave of such a demon in human shape as this woman? Am I to grow old and grey here, a mere pie machine? No--no, death a thousand times rather!"

Tears! yes, bitter scalding tears came to his relief, and he wept abundantly, but those tears were blessed, for as they flowed, the worst bitterness of his heart flowed with them, and he suddenly looked up, saying--

"I am only twenty-four."

There was magic in the sound of those words. They seemed in themselves to contain a volume of philosophy. Only twenty-four. Should he, at that green and unripe age, get rid of hope? Should he, at twenty-four only, lie down and say--"Let me die!" just because things had gone a little adverse, and he was the enforced cook of Mrs. Lovett?

"No--no," he said. "No, I will endure much, and I will hope much. Hitherto, it is true, I have been unsuccessful in what I have attempted for my release, but the diabolical cunning, even of this woman, may fail her at some moment, and I may have my time of revenge. No--no, I need not ask for revenge, justice will do--common justice. I will keep myself alive. Hope shall be my guiding star. They shall not subdue the proud spirit they have succeeded in caging, quite so easily, I will not give up, I live and have youthful blood in my veins, I will not despair. Despair? No--Hence, fiend!--I am as yet only twenty-four. Ha--ha! Only twenty-four."

#### CHAPTER XXXI. SHOWS HOW TOBIAS GOT TO LONDON.

We will now take a peep at Tobias. On--on--on, like the wind, went the poor belated boy from the vicinity of that frightful prison-house at Peckham. Terror was behind him--terror with dishevelled locks was upon

his right hand, and terror shrieking in his ear was upon his left. On--on, he flew like a whirlwind. Alas, poor Tobias, will your young intellects yet stand these trials? We shall see! Through the deep mud of the Surrey roads--past pedestrians--past horsemen, and past coaches flew poor Tobias, on--on. He had but one thought, and that was to place miles and miles of space between him and Mr. Fogg's establishment. The perspiration poured down his face--his knees shook under him--his heart beat as though in some wild pulsation it would burst, but he passed on until he saw afar off the old Bridge of London. The route to Blackfriars he had by some chance avoided. Many, who for the last two miles of Tobias's progress, had seen him, had tried to stop him. They had called after him, but he had heeded them not. Some fast runners had pursued him for a short distance, and then given up the chase in despair. He reached the bridge.

"Stop that boy!" cried a man, "he looks mad!"

"No--no," shrieked Tobias, "I am not mad! I am not mad!"

A man held out his arms to stop him, but Tobias dashed past him like a flash of lightning, and was off again.

"Stop him!" cried twenty voices. "Stop thief!" shouted some who could not conceive that anybody was to be stopped on any other account.

"No, no," gasped Tobias, as he flew onwards--"not mad, not mad!"

[Illustration: The Flight Of Tobias From Peckham Mad-House.]

His feet failed him. He reeled a few more paces like a drunken man, and then fell heavily upon some stone steps, where he lay bathed in perspiration. Blood too gushed from his mouth. A gentleman's horse was standing at the door, and the man came out to mount him at that moment, and he saw the rapidly collecting crowd. With the reins of his steed in his hand, he pushed his way through the mob, saying--

"What is it? what is it?"

"A mad boy, sir," said some. "Only look at him. Did you ever see the like. He looks as if he had run a hundred miles."

"Good God!" cried the gentleman. "It is he! It is he!"

"Who, sir? who, sir?"

"A poor lad that I know, I will take charge of him. My name is Jeffery, I am Colonel Jeffery. A couple of guineas to any strong man who will carry him to the nearest surgeon's. Alas! poor boy, what a state is this to meet him in."

It was quite astonishing the numbers of strong men that there were all of a sudden in the crowd, who were each anxious and willing to earn the colonel's two guineas. There was danger of a fight arising upon the subject, when one man, after knocking down two others and threatening

the remainder, stepped up, and lifting Tobias as though he had been an infant, exclaimed--

"Ale does it! ale does it! Come on, my little 'un."

All gave way before the gigantic proportions of no other than our old friend Big Ben the Beef Eater, who, as chance would have it, was upon the spot, and who, without a thought of the colonel's two guineas, only heard that a poor sick boy had to be carried to the nearest medical man. Tobias could not be in better hands than Ben's, for the latter carried him much more carefully than ever nursemaid carried a child out of sight of its mother.

"Follow me," said Colonel Jeffery, as he saw in the distance a party-coloured lamp, which hung over a door appertaining to a chemist. "Follow, and I will reward you."

"Doesn't want it," said Ben. "It's ale as does it."

"What?"

"Ale does it. Here you is. Come on."

Colonel Jeffery was rather surprised at the droll customer he had picked up in the street, but provided he carried Tobias in safety, which by-the-bye he (the colonel) would not have scrupled to do himself, had he not been encumbered by his horse, it was all one to him, and that he saw Ben was effectually doing. Tobias had shown some slight symptoms of vitality before being lifted from the step of the door close to which he had fallen, but by the time they all reached the chemist's shop, he was in a complete state of insensibility. Of course the usual crowd that collects on such occasions followed them, and during the walk the colonel had time to think, and the result of those thoughts was, that it would be a most desirable thing to keep the knowledge to himself that Tobias was Tobias. He had, in order to awe the mob from any interference with him, announced who he was, but had not announced Tobias. At least if he had uttered his name, he felt certain that it was in an interjectional sort of way, and not calculated to awaken any suspicion.

"I will keep it to myself," he thought, "that Tobias is in my possession, otherwise if such a fact should travel round to Sweeney Todd, there's no saying to what extent it might put that scoundrel upon his guard."

By the time the colonel had arrived at this conclusion the whole party had reached the chemist's, and Big Ben walked in with Tobias, and placed him at once upon the top of a plate-glass counter, which had upon it a large collection of trumpery scent bottles and wonderful specifics for everything, through which Tobias went with a crash.

"There he is!" said Ben--"ale does it."

"Fire! murder! my glass case!" cried the chemist, "Oh, you monster!"

"Ale does it. What do you mean, eh?"

Big Ben backed a pace or two and went head and shoulders through a glass case of similar varieties that was against the wall.

"Gracious bless the beasteses," said Ben, "is your house made of glass? What do you mean by it, eh? A fellow can't turn round here without going through something. You ought to be persecuted according to law, that you ought."

Now this learned chemist had in the glass case against which Big Ben had tumbled a skeleton, which, from the stunning and terrible look it had in his shop, brought him many customers, and it was against this remnant of humanity that Big Ben's head met, after going through the glass as a preparatory step. By some means or another Ben caught his head under the skeleton's ribs, and the consequence was that out he hooked him from the glass case, and the first intimation Ben had of anything unusual, consisted of seeing a pair of bony legs dangling down on each side of him. So unexpected a phenomenon gave Ben what he called a "blessed turn," and out he bounced from the shop, carrying the skeleton for all the world like what is called pick-a-back, for the wires that supplied the place of cartilages held it erect, and so awful a sight surely was never seen in the streets of London as Big Ben with a skeleton upon his back. People fled before--some turned in at shop doors; and an old lady with a large umbrella and a pair of gigantic pattens went clean through a silversmith's window. But we must leave Ben and the skeleton to get on as well as they can en route to the Tower, while we turn our attention to Tobias.

"Are you a surgeon?" cried Colonel Jeffery.

"A--a surgeon? No, I'm only a druggist; but is that any reason why a second Goliath should come into my shop and destroy everything?"

Colonel Jeffery did not wait for anything more, but snatching Tobias from the remnants of the plate glass, he ran to the door with him, and handing him to the first person he saw there, he cried--

"When I am mounted give me the boy."

"Yes, sir."

He sprang upon his horse; Tobias was handed to him like a bale of goods, and laying him comfortably as he could upon the saddle before him, off set the colonel at a good round trot through Finsbury to his own house. Colonel Jeffery had no sort of intention that the chemist should be a sufferer, but in his hurry to be off with Tobias, and speedily get medical advice for him, he forgot to say so, and accordingly there stood the man of physic then fairly bewildered by the events of the last few moments, during which his stock in trade had been materially damaged and a valuable amount of glass broken, to say nothing of the singular and most unexpected abduction of his friend the skeleton.

"Here's a pretty day's work!" he said. "Here's a pretty day's work! More mischief done than enough, and the worst of it is, my wife will hear of it, and then there will be a deal of peace in the house. Oh, dear--oh, dear--was there ever such an unfort--I knew it--"

A good rap upon his head from a pair of bellows wielded by a little meagre-faced woman, that he was big enough to have swallowed, confined his words. While all this was going on, Colonel Jeffery had ridden fast, and passing through Finsbury and up the City-road, had reached his house in the fashionable--but now quite the reverse, as the man says in the play--district of Pentonville.

"This is a prize," thought the colonel, "worth the taking. It will go hard with me but I will extract from this boy all that he knows of Sweeney Todd, and we shall see how far that knowledge will go towards the confirmation of my suspicions regarding him."

He carried Tobias himself to a comfortable bed-room, and immediately sent for a medical practitioner of good repute in the neighbourhood, who happening fortunately to be at home, obeyed the summons immediately. He sent likewise for his friend the captain, whom he knew would be overjoyed to hear of what he would call the capture of Tobias Ragg. The medical man made his appearance first, as being much closer at hand, and the colonel led him to the apartment of the invalid boy, saying to him as he went--

"I know nothing of what is the matter with this lad--I have been very anxious to see him on account of certain information that he possesses, and only found him this morning upon a door step in the street, in the state you see him."

"Is he very ill?"

"I am afraid he is."

The medical man followed the colonel to the room in which poor Tobias lay, and after gazing upon him for a few moments, and opening with his fingers the closed eyelids of Tobias, he shook his head.

"I wish I knew," he said, "what has produced this state. Can you not inform me, sir?"

"Indeed I cannot, but I suspect that the boy's imagination has been cruelly acted upon by a man, whom you will excuse me from naming just at present, but whom I sincerely hope to bring to justice shortly."

"The boy's brain, no doubt, is in a bad condition. I do not take upon myself to say that, as an organ, it is diseased, but fractionally it is damaged. However, we must do the best we can to recover him from this condition of collapse in which he is."

"Can you form any opinion as to his probable recovery?"

"Indeed I cannot, but he is young, and youth is a great thing. The best

that can be done shall be done."

"I thank you. Spare nothing for the lad, and pay him every attention, as though he were a son or a brother of my own; I long to hear him speak, and to convince him that he is really among friends, who are not only willing to protect him, but have likewise the power to do so."

The medical man bowed, as he said--

"May I ask his name, sir?"

He had his tablets in his hand ready to book the name of Tobias, but the colonel was so very much afraid that Sweeney Todd might by some means learn that Tobias was in his house, and so take an alarm, that he would not trust even the medical man, who, no doubt, had no other motive in asking the name than merely to place it in his list of calls.

"Smith," said the colonel.

The medical man gave a short dry sort of cough, as he wrote "Master Smith" upon his tablets, and then promising to return in half an hour, he took his leave. At the expiration of half an hour Tobias was put under a course of treatment. His head was shaved, and a blister clapped upon the back of his neck. The room was darkened, and strict quiet was enjoined.

"As soon as he betrays any signs of consciousness, pray send for me, sir," said the surgeon.

"Certainly."

In the course of the day the captain made his appearance, and Colonel Jeffery detailed to him all that had taken place, only lamenting that, after so happily getting possession of Tobias, he should be in so sorry a condition. The captain expressed a wish to see him, and they both went to the chamber, where a woman had been hired to sit with Tobias, in order to give the first intimation of his stirring. Of course, as it was her duty, and what she was specially hired for, to keep wide awake, she was fast asleep, and snoring loud enough to awaken any one much worse than poor Tobias. But that was to be expected.

"Oh," said the captain, "this is a professional nurse."

"A professional devil!" said the colonel. "How did you know that?"

"By her dropping off so comfortably to sleep, and her utter neglect of her charge. I never knew one that did not do so, and, in good truth, I am inclined to think it is the very best thing they can do, for if they are not asleep they are obnoxiously awake."

The colonel took a pin from his cravat, and rather roughly inserted its point into the fat arm of the nurse. She started up, exclaiming--

"Drat the fleas, can't a mortal sleep in peace for them?"

"Madam," said the colonel, "how much is owing to you for sleeping here a few hours?"

"Lord bless me, sir, is this you? The poor soul has never so much as stirred. How my heart bleeds continually for him, to be sure. Ah, dear me, we are all born like sparks, and keep continually flying upward, as the psalm says."

"How much do I owe you?"

"Here to-day, and gone to-morrow. Bless his innocent face."

The colonel rung the bell, and a strapping footman made his appearance.

"You will see this woman to the door, John," he said, "and pay her for being here about three hours."

"Why, you mangy skin-flint," cried the woman. "What do you--"

She was cut short in her vituperative eloquence by John, who handed her down stairs with such dispatch that a pint bottle of gin rolled out of her pocket and was smashed, filling the house with an odour that was quite unmistakeable.

"What do you propose to do?" said the captain.

"Why, as we have dined, if you have no objection we will sit here and keep this poor benighted one company for awhile. He is better with no one than such as she whom I have dislodged; but before night he shall have a more tender and less professional nurse. You know more of the world, after all, than I do, captain."

## CHAPTER XXII. TOBIAS HAS A MIND DISEASED.

With a bottle of claret upon the table between them, Colonel Jeffery and his old friend sat over the fire in the bed-room devoted to the use of poor Tobias Ragg. Alas! poor boy, kindness and wealth that now surrounded him came late in the day. Before he first crossed the threshold of Sweeney Todd's odious abode, what human heart could have more acutely felt genuine kindness than Tobias's, but his destiny had been an evil one. Guilt has its victims, and Tobias was in all senses one of the victims of Sweeney Todd.

"I am sufficiently, perhaps superstitious, you will call it," said Colonel Jeffery in a low tone of voice, "to think that my meeting with this boy was not altogether accidental."

"Indeed?"

"No. Many things have happened to me during life--although I admit that they may be all accounted for as natural coincidences, curious only at the best but still suggestive of something very different, and make me at times a convert to the belief in an interfering special Providence, and this is one of them."

"It is a dangerous doctrine, my friend."

"Think you so?"

"Yes. It is much better and much safer both for the judgment and imagination to account naturally for all those things which admit of a natural explanation, than to fall back upon a special Providence, and fancy that it is continually interfering with the great and immutable laws that govern the world. I do not--mark me--deny such a thing, but I would not be hasty in asserting it. No man's experience can have been without numerous instances such as you mention."

"Certainly not."

"Then I should say to you, as St. Paul said to the Athenians--'In all things I find you superstitious.' What's that?"

A faint moan had come upon both their ears, and after listening for a few moments another made itself heard, and they fancied, by the direction of the sound, that Tobias's lips must have uttered it. Placing his finger against his mouth to indicate silence, the colonel stepped up to the bedside, and hiding behind the curtains, he said, in the softest and kindest voice he could assume--

"Tobias! Tobias! fear nothing now you are with friends, Tobias; and, above all, you are perfectly free from the power of Sweeney Todd."

"I am not mad! I am not mad!" shouted Tobias with a shrill vehemence that made both the colonel and his friend start.

"Nay, who says you are mad, Tobias? We know you are not mad, my lad. Don't alarm yourself about that, we know you are not mad."

"Mercy! mercy! I will say nothing--nothing. How fiend-like he looks. Oh, Mr. Todd, spare me, and I will go far, far away, and die somewhere else, but do not kill me now, I am yet such--such a boy only, and my poor father is dead--dead--dead!"

"Ring the bell," said Jeffery to his friend, "and tell John to go for Mr. Chisolm, the surgeon. Come--come, Tobias, you still fancy you are under the power of Todd, but it is not so--you are quite safe here."

"Hush! hush! mother--oh, where are you, mother--did you leave me here, mother? Say you took, in a moment of thoughtlessness, the silver candlestick! Is Todd to be a devil, because you were thoughtless once? Hide me from him--hide me--hide! hide! I am not mad. Hark! I hear him--one--two--three--four--five--six steps, and all Todd's. Each one

leaves blood in its track. Look at him now! His face changes--'tis a fox's--a serpent's--hideous--hideous--God--God! I am mad--mad--mad!"

The boy dashed his head from side to side, and would have flung himself from the bed had not Colonel Jeffery advanced and held him.

"Poor fellow," he said, "this is very shocking. Tobias! Tobias!"

"Hush! I hear--poor thing, did they say you was mad too?--Hide me in the straw! There--there--what a strange thing it is for all the air to be so full of blood. Do we breathe blood, and only fancy it air? Hush! not a word--he comes with a serpent's face--oh, tell me why does God let such beings ever riot upon the beautiful earth--one--two--three--four--five--six--Hiss--hiss! Off--off! I am not mad--not mad. Ha! ha! ha!"

An appalling shriek concluded this paroxysm, and for a few moments Tobias was still. The medical man at this time entered the room.

"Oh," he said, "we have roused him up again, have we." Medical men are rather fond of the plural identifying style of talking.

"Yes," said Colonel Jeffery, "but he had better have slept the sleep of death than have awakened to be what he is, poor fellow."

"A little--eh?"

The doctor tapped his forehead.

"Not a little."

"Far away over the sea!" said Tobias, "oh, yes--in any ship, only do not kill me, Mr. Todd--let me go and I will say nothing, I will work and send my poor mother hard-earned gold, and your name shall never pass our lips. Oh, no--no--no, do not say that I am mad. Do you see these tears? I have--I have not cried so since my poor father called me to him and held me in a last embrace of his wasted arms, saying, 'Tobias, my darling, I am going--going far from you. God's blessing be upon you, poor child.' I thought my heart would break then, but it did not, I saw him put from the face of the living into the grave, and I did not quite break my heart then, but it is broken--broken now! Mad! mad! oh, no, not mad--no--no, but the last--but the last. I tell you, sir, that I am--am--am not mad. Why do you look at me, I am not mad--one--two--three--four--five--six. God--God--God! I am mad--mad. Ha! ha! ha! There they come, all the serpents, and Todd is their king. How the shadows fly about--they shrink--I cannot shrink. Help! God! God! God!"

"This is horrible," said Colonel Jeffery.

"It is appalling, from the lips of one so young," said the captain.

The medical man rubbed his hands together as he said--

"Why, a-hem! it certainly is strangely indicative of a considerable amount of mental derangement, but we shall be able, I dare say, to subdue that. I think, if he could be persuaded to swallow a little draught I have here, it would be beneficial, and allay this irritation, which is partly nervous."

"There cannot be much difficulty," said the colonel, "in making him swallow anything, I should think."

"Let us try."

They held Tobias up while the doctor poured the contents of a small phial into his mouth. Nature preferred performing the office of deglutition to choking, and it was taken. The effect of the opiate was rapid, and after some inarticulate moans and vain attempts to spring from the bed, a deep sleep came over poor Tobias.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Chisolm, "I beg to inform you that this is a bad case."

"I feared as much."

"A very bad case. Some very serious shock indeed has been given to the lad's brain, and if he at all recovers from it, he will be a long time doing so. I do not think those violent paroxysms will continue, but they may leave a kind of fatuity behind them which may be exceedingly difficult to grapple with."

"In that case, he will not be able to give me the information I desire, and all I can do is to take care that he is kindly treated somewhere, poor lad. Poor fellow, his has been a hard lot. He evidently has a mind of uncommon sensibility, as is manifest from his ravings."

"Yes, and that makes the case worse. However, we must hope for the best, and I will call again in the morning."

"Will he awake soon?"

"Not for six or eight hours at least, and when he does, it is very unlikely that those paroxysms will again ensue. He will be quiet enough."

"Then it will be scarcely necessary, during that time, to watch him, poor fellow?"

"Not at all. Of course, when he awakens it will be very desirable that some one should be here to speak to him; for, finding himself in a strange place, he will otherwise naturally be terrified."

All this was promised by the colonel, and the medical man left the house, evidently with very slender hopes in his own mind of the recovery of Tobias. The colonel and his friend retired to another room, and then, after a consultation, they agreed that it was highly proper they should inform Sir Richard Blunt of what had taken place, for although poor

Tobias was in no present condition to give any information, yet his capture, if it might be called by such a term, was so important an event that it would be unpardonable to keep it from the magistrate. They accordingly went together to his house, and luckily finding him at home, they at once communicated to him their errand. He listened to them with the most profound attention, and when they had concluded, he said--

"Gentlemen, it will be everything, if this lad recovers sufficiently to be a witness against his rascal of a master, for that is just what we want. However, from the account you give me of him, I am very much afraid the poor fellow's mind is too severely affected."

"That, too, is our fear."

"Well, we must do the best we can, and I should advise that when he awakens some one should be by him with whose voice, as a friendly sound, he will be familiar."

"Who can we get?"

"His poor mother."

"Ah, yes, I will set about that at once."

"Leave it to me," said Sir Richard Blunt, "leave that to me--I know where to find Mrs. Ragg, and what's best to say to her in the case. Let me see, in about four hours from now probably Tobias may be upon the point of recovery."

"Most probably."

"Then, sir, expect me at your house in that time with Mrs. Ragg. I will take care that the old lady's mind is put completely at ease, so that she will aid us in any respect to bring about the recovery of her son, who no doubt has suffered severely from some plan of Todd's to put him out of the way. That seems to me to be the most likely solution to the mystery of his present condition."

"Todd, I am convinced," said Colonel Jeffery, "would stop at no villany."

"Certainly not. My own belief is, that he is so steeped to the lips in crime, that he sees no other mode of covering his misdeeds already done than by the commission of new ones. But his career is nearly at an end, gentlemen."

The colonel and the captain took the rising of the magistrate from his chair as a polite hint that he had something else to do than to gossip with them any longer, and they took their leave, after expressing again to him how much they appreciated his exertions.

"If the mystery of the fate of my unhappy friend," said the colonel, "is ever cleared up, it will be by your exertion, Sir Richard, and he and I, and society at large, will owe to you a heavy debt of gratitude for

unmasking so horrible a villain as Sweeney Todd, for that he is such no one can doubt."

CHAPTER XXXIII.  
JOHANNA WALKS ABROAD IN DISGUISE.

But, amid all the trials, and perplexities, and anxieties that beset the dramatis personæ of our story, who suffered like Johanna? What heart bled as hers bled? What heart heaved with sad emotion as hers heaved? Alas! poor Johanna, let the fate of Mark Ingestrie be what it might, he could not feel the pangs that tore thy gentle heart. Truly might she have said--

"Man's love is of his life a thing apart  
'Tis woman's whole existence,"

for she felt that her joy--her life itself, was bartered for the remembrance of how she had been loved by him whose fate was involved in one of the most painful and most inscrutable of mysteries. Where could she seek for consolation, where for hope? The horizon of her young life seemed ever darkening, and the more she gazed upon it with the fond hope of singing--

"The first faint star of coming joy,"

the more confounded her gentle spirit became by the blackness of despair. It is sad indeed that the young, the good, and the gentle, should be the grand sufferers in this world, but so it is. The exquisite capacity to feel acutely is certain to find ample food for agony. If human nature could wrap itself up in the chill mantle of selfishness, and be perfectly insensible to all human feeling, it might escape, but such cannot be done by those who, like the fine and noble-minded Johanna Oakley, sympathise with all that is beautiful and great in creation. Already the pangs of hope deferred were feeding upon the damask of her cheeks. The lily had usurped the rose, and although still exquisitely beautiful, it was the pale beauty of a statue that she began to show to those who loved her. In the street people would turn to gaze after her with admiration blended with pity. They already looked upon her as half an angel, for already it seemed as though she had shaken off much of her earthly lurements, and was hastening to

"Rejoin the stars."

[Illustration: The Schoolfellows, Johanna And Arabella.]

Let us look at her as she lies weeping upon the breast of her friend Arabella Wilmot. The tears of the two young girls are mingling together, but the one is playing the part of comforter, while the other mourns over much.

"Now, Johanna," sobbed Arabella, "you talk of doing something to save Mark Ingestrie, if he be living, or to bring to justice the man whom you suspect to be his murderer. Let me ask you what you can hope to do, if you give way to such an amount of distress as this?"

"Nothing--nothing."

"And are you really to do nothing? Have you not agreed, Johanna, to make an attempt, in the character of a boy, to find out the secret of Ingestrie's disappearance, and have not I provided for you all that you require to support the character? Courage, courage, courage.--Oh, I could tell you such stories of fine ladies dressing as pages, and following gallant knights to the field of battle, that you would feel as though you could go through anything."

"But the age of chivalry is gone."

"Yes, and why--because folks will not be chivalric. To those who will, the age of chivalry comes back again in all its glory."

"Listen to me, Arabella: if I really thought that Mark was no more, and lost to me for ever, I could lie down and die, leaving to Heaven the punishment of those who have taken his life, but in the midst of all my grief--in the moments of my deepest depression, the thought clings to me, that he lives yet. I do not know how it is, but the thought of Mark Ingestrie dead, is but a vague one, compared to the thought of Mark Ingestrie suffering."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and at times it seems as if a voice whispered to me, that he was yet to be saved, if there existed a heart fair enough and loving enough in its strength to undertake the task. It is for that reason, and not from any romantic love of adventure, or hope of visiting with punishment a bad man, that my imagination clings to the idea of going in boy's apparel to Fleet-street, to watch, and perchance to enter that house to which he last went, and from which, according to all evidence, he never emerged."

"And you are really bold enough?"

"I hope so--I think, if I am not, God will help me."

A sob that followed these words, sufficiently testified how much in need of God's help poor Johanna was, but after a few minutes she succeeded in recovering herself from her emotion, and she said more cheerfully--

"Come, Arabella, we talked of a rehearsal of my part; but I shall be more at ease when I go to act it in reality, and with danger. I shall be able to comport myself well, with only you for a companion, and such chance passengers as the streets of the city may afford for my audience."

"I am glad," said Arabella, "that you keep in this mind. Now come and

dress yourself, and we will go out together. You will be taken for my brother, you know."

In the course of a quarter of an hour, Johanna presented the appearance of as good-looking a lad of about fourteen as the world ever saw, and if she could but have imparted a little more confidence and boyish bustle to her gait and manner, she would have passed muster under the most vigilant scrutiny. But as it was, nothing could be more unlikely than that any one should penetrate her disguise, for what is not suspected, is seldom seen very readily.

"You will do capitally," said Arabella, "I must take your arm, you know. We will not go far."

"Only to Fleet Street."

"Fleet Street. You surely will not go so far as that?"

"Yes, Arabella. Now that I have attired myself in these garments for a special purpose, let me do a something towards the carrying it out. By walking that distance I shall accustom myself to the road; and, moreover, a dreadful kind of fascination drags me to that man's shop."

Arabella, if the truth must be told, shook a little as they, after watching an opportunity, emerged into the street, for although the spirit of romantic adventure had induced her to give the advice to Johanna that she had, her own natural feminine sensibilities shrunk from the carrying of it out. Ashamed, however, of being the first to condemn her own suggestion, she took the arm of Johanna, and those two young creatures were in the tide of human life that ebbs and flows in the great city. The modest walk and gentle demeanour of the seeming young boy won Johanna many a passing glance as she and Arabella proceeded down Ludgate Hill towards Fleet Street, but it was quite clear that no one suspected the disguise which, to do Arabella justice, in its general arrangement was very perfect, and as Johanna wore a cap, which concealed much of the upper part of her face, and into which was gathered all her hair, she might have really deceived those who were the most intimate with her, so that it was no wonder she passed unobserved with mere strangers. In this way, then, they reached Fleet Street without obstruction, and Johanna's heart beat rapidly as they approached the shop of Sweeney Todd.

"It will be imprudent to stop for even a moment at his door or window," said Arabella, "for, remember, you have no opportunity of varying your disguise."

"I will not stop. We will pass rapidly on, but--but it is something to look upon the doorstep over which the shadow of Mark has last passed."

In another moment they were on a level with the shop. Johanna cast a glance at the window, and then shrunk back with affright as she saw, occupying one of the upper panes of glass, the hideous face of Todd. He was not looking at her though, for with an awful squint that revealed all the whites of his eyes--we were going to say, but the dirty yellows

would have been much nearer the truth--he seemed to be observing something up the street.

"Come on--come on," whispered Johanna.

Arabella had not happened to observe this apparition of Todd in the window, and she looked round to see what occasioned Johanna's sudden terror, when a young Temple clerk, who chanced to be a few paces behind them, immediately, with the modesty peculiar to his class, imagined the glance of the blooming girl to be a tribute to his attractions. He kissed the end of a faded glove, and put on what he considered a first-class fascinating aspect.

[Illustration: Johanna's Alarm At The Sight Of Sweeney Todd.]

"Come on--come on," said Arabella now in her turn.

Johanna, of course, thought that Arabella too had caught sight of the hideous and revolting countenance of Sweeney Todd, and so they both hastened on together.

"Don't look back," said Arabella.

"Is he following?"

"Oh, yes--yes."

Johanna thought she meant Todd, while Arabella really meant the Temple gent, but, notwithstanding the mutual mistake, they hurried on, and the clerk taking that as quite sufficient encouragement, pursued them, putting his cravat to rights as he did so, in order that when he came up to them, he should present the most fascinating aspect possible.

"No--no." said Johanna, as she glanced behind. "You must have been mistaken, Arabella. He is not pursuing us."

"Oh, I am so glad."

Arabella looked back, and the Temple gent kissed his dilapidated glove.

"Oh, Johanna," she said, "how could you tell me he was not following, when there he is."

"What, Todd?"

"No. That impertinent ugly puppy with the soiled cravat."

"And you meant him?"

"To be sure."

"Oh, what a relief, I was flying on, fancying that Todd was in pursuit of us, and yet my judgment ought at once to have told me that that could not be the case, knowing nothing of us. How our fears overcome all

reason. Do you know that strange-looking young man?"

"Know him? Not I."

"Well, my darling," said the gent, reaching to within a couple of paces of Arabella, "how do you do to-day?--a-hem! Are you going far? Ain't you afraid that somebody will run away with such a pretty gal as you--'pon soul, you are a charmer."

"Cross," whispered Arabella, and the two young girls at once crossed Fleet Street. It was not then so difficult an operation to get from one side of that thoroughfare to the other as it is now. The gent was by no means disconcerted at this evident wish to get out of his way, but he crossed likewise, and commenced a series of persecution, which such animals call gallantry, and which, to any respectable young female, are specially revolting.

"Now, my dear," he said, "St. Dunstan's is just going to strike the hour, and you will see the clubs hit the bells if you look, and I shall expect a kiss when it's all over."

"You are impertinent," said Johanna.

"Come, that's a good joke--why, you little whipper snapper, I suppose you came out to take care of your sister. Here's a penny to go and buy yourself a cold pie at Mrs. Lovett's. I'll see to your sister while you are gone. Oh, you need not look so wild about it. Did you never hear of a gent talking to a pretty gal in the street?"

"Often," said Johanna, "but I never heard of a gentleman doing so."

"Upon my word, you are as sharp as a needle, so I'll just pull your ears to teach you better manners, you young rascal--come--come, it's no use your kicking."

"Help--help!" cried Arabella.

They were now just opposite the principal entrance to the Temple, and as Arabella cried "help," who should emerge from under the gateway but Ben the Beef Eater. The fact is, that he was on his way to the Tower just previous to the meeting with Colonel Jeffery and Tobias. Arabella, who had twice or thrice seen him at the Oakley's, knew him at once.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "I am Johanna's friend, Miss Wilmot, and this--this gent won't leave me and my cousin here alone."

The gent made an effort to escape, but Ben caught him by the hinder part of his apparel, and held him tight.

"Is this him?"

"Yes--yes."

"Oh dear no--oh dear no, my good sir. It's that fellow there, with the

white hat. There he goes, up Chancery Lane. My dear sir, you are quite mistaken; I wanted to protect the young lady, and as for the lad, bless his heart. I--oh dear, it wasn't me."

Still holding the gent by the first grasp he had taken of him, Ben suddenly crossed the road to where a parish pump stood, at the corner of Bell Yard, and holding him under the spout with one hand, he worked the handle with the other, despite the shrieks and groans of his victim, who in a few moments was rendered so limp and wet, that when Ben let him go, he fell into the sink below the pump, and there lay, until some small boys began pelting him. During the confusion and laughter of the bystanders, Arabella and Johanna rapidly retreated towards the City again, for they thought Ben might insist upon escorting them, and that, in such a case, it was possible enough the disguise of Johanna, good as it was, might not suffice to save her from the knowledge of one so well acquainted with her.

"Let us cross, Arabella," she said. "Let us cross, if it be but for one moment, to hear what the subject of the conversation between Todd and that man is."

"If you wish it, Johanna."

"I do, I do."

They crossed, and once again passed the shop of Todd, when they heard the man say--

"Well, if he has gone he has gone, but I think it is the strangest thing I ever heard of."

"So do I," said Todd.

Without lingering, and so perhaps exciting Todd's attention and suspicion, they could hear no more, but Johanna had heard enough to give the spur to imagination, and when they had again crossed Fleet-street, and were making their way rapidly up Ludgate-hill, she whispered to Arabella--

"Another! another!"

"Another what, Johanna? You terrify me by that tone. Oh, be calm. Be calm, I pray you. Some one will observe your agitation."

"Another victim," continued Johanna. "Another victim--another victim. Did you not hear what the man said? Was it not suggestive of another murder? Oh, Heaven preserve my reason, for each day, each hour, brings to me such accumulating proof of horrors, that I fear I shall go mad."

"Hush! hush! Johanna--Johanna!"

"My poor, poor Mark--"

"Remember that you are in the street, Johanna, and for my sake, I pray

you to be calm. Those tears and that flushed cheek will betray you. Oh, why did I ever advise you to come upon such an enterprise as this? It is my fault, all my fault."

The terror and the self-accusation of Arabella Wilmot did more to bring Johanna to a reasonable state than anything else, and she made an effort to overcome her feelings, saying--

"Forgive me--forgive me, my dear friend--I, only, am to blame. But at the moment I was overcome by the thought that, in the heart of London, such a system of cold-blooded murder--"

She was unable to proceed, and Arabella, holding her arm tightly within her own, said--

"Do not attempt to say another word until we get home. There, in my chamber, you can give free vent to your feelings, but let the danger, as well as the impropriety of doing so in the open street, be present to your mind. Say no more now, I implore you; say no more."

This was prudent advice, and Johanna had sufficient command of herself to take it, for she uttered not one other word until they were both almost breathless with the haste they had made to Arabella's chamber. Then, being no longer under the restraint of locality or circumstances, the tears of Johanna burst forth, and she wept abundantly. Arabella's romantic reading did sometimes, as it would appear, stand her in good stead, and upon this occasion she did not attempt to stem the torrent of grief that was making its way from the eyes of her fair young friend. She told herself that with those tears a load of oppressive grief would be washed from Johanna's spirit, and the result fully justified her prognostications. The tears subsided into sobs, and the sobs to sighs.

"Ah, my dear friend," she said, "how much have you to put up with from me. What a world of trouble I am to you."

"No," said Arabella, "that you are not, Johanna; I am only troubled when I see you overcome with too excessive grief, and then, I confess, my heart is heavy."

"It shall not be so again. Forgive me this once, dear Arabella."

Johanna flung herself into her friend's arms, and while they kissed each other, and Arabella was about commencing a hopeful kind of speech, a servant girl, with open mouth and eyes, looked into the room, transfixed with amazement.

"Well, Miss Bella," she cried at last, "you is fond of boys!"

Arabella started, and so did Johanna.

"Is that you, Susan?"

"Yes, Miss Bella, it is me. Well I never! The idea! I shall never get the better of this here! Only to think of you, Miss Bella, having a boy

at your time of life."

"What do you mean, Susan? How dare you use such language to me? Get you gone!"

"Oh, yes, I'm a-going in course; but if I had anybody in the house, it shouldn't be a little impudent looking boy with no whiskers."

"She must know all," whispered Johanna.

"No, no," said Arabella, "I will not, feeling my innocence, be forced into making a confidant of a servant. Let her go."

"But she will speak."

"Let her speak."

Susan left the room, and went direct to the kitchen, holding up her hands all the way, and giving free expression to her feelings as she did so--

"Well, the idea now, of a little stumpy looking boy, when there's sich a lot of nice young men with whiskers to be had just for the wagging of one's little finger. Only to think of it. Sitting in her lap too, and them a kissing one another like--like--coach horses. Well I never. Now there's Lines's, the cheesemonger's, young man as I has in of a night, he is somebody, and such loves of whiskers I never seed in my born days afore; but I is surprised at Miss Bella, that I is--a shrimp of a boy in her lap! Oh dear, oh dear!"

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

#### MR. FOGG FINDS THAT ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

We feel that we ought not entirely to take leave of that unfortunate, who failed in escaping with Tobias Ragg, from Mr. Fogg's establishment at Peckham, without a passing notice. It will be recollected that Tobias had enough to do to get away himself, and that he was in such a state of mind that it was quite a matter of new mechanical movement of his limbs that enabled him to fly from the madhouse. Horror of the place, and dread of the people who called it theirs, had lighted up the glare of a partial insanity in his brain, and he flew to London, we admit, without casting another thought upon the wretched creature who had fallen in the attempt to free herself from those fiends in human shape who made a frightful speculation in the misery of their fellow creatures. The alarm was already spread in the madhouse, and Mr. Fogg himself arrived at the spot where the poor creature lay stunned and wounded by her fall.

"Watson! Watson!" he cried.

"Here," said that official, as he presented himself.

"Take this carcass up, Watson. I'm afraid Todd's boy is gone."

"Ha! ha!"

"Why do you laugh?"

"Why where's the odds if he has. I tell you what it is, Fogg, I haven't been here so long without knowing what's what. If that boy ever recovers his senses enough to tell a rational tale, I'll eat him. However, I'll soon go and hunt him up. We'll have him again."

"Well, Watson, you give me hopes, for you have upon two different occasions brought back runaways. Bring the woman in and--and, Watson?"

"Aye, aye."

"I think I would put her in No. 10."

"Ho! ho!--No. 10. Then she's booked. Well, well, come on Fogg, come on, it's all one. I suppose the story will be 'An attempt to escape owing to too much indulgence;' and some hints consequent on that, and then brought back to her own warm comfortable bed, where she went asleep so comfortably that we all thought she was as happy as an Emperor, and then--"

"She never woke again," put in Fogg. "But in this case you are wrong, Watson. It is true that twice or thrice I have thought, for the look of the thing, it would be desirable to have an inquest upon somebody, but in this case I will not. The well is not full!"

"Full?"

"No, I say the well is not full, Watson; and it tells no tales."

"It would hold a hundred bodies one upon another yet," said Watson, "and tell no tales. Ha! ha!"

"Good!"

"It is good. She is to go there, is she? well, so be it."

Watson carried the miserable female in his arms to the house.

"By-the-bye, it is a second thought," he said, "about No. 10."

"Yes, yes, there's no occasion. Watson, could you not at once--eh? It is a good hour. Could you not go right through the house, my good Watson, and at once--eh?"

"At once what?"

"Oh, you know. Ha! ha! You are not the dull fellow at comprehending a meaning you would fain make out; but you, Watson--you understand me well

enough, you know you do. We understand each other, and always shall."

"I hope so, but if you want anything done I'll trouble you to speak out. What do you mean by 'couldn't you go through the house at once--eh?'"

"Pho! pho! Put her down the well at once. Humanity calls upon us to do it. Why should she awaken to a sense of her disappointment, Watson? Put her down at once, and she will never awaken at all to a sense of anything."

"Very well. Come on, business is business."

"You--you don't want me?"

"Don't I," said Watson, bending his shaggy brows upon him, and looking extra hideous on account of a large black patch over one eye, which he bore as a relict of his encounter with Tobias. "Don't I? Hark you, Fogg; if you won't come and help me to do it, you shall have it to do by yourself, without me at all."

"Why--why, Watson, Watson. This language--"

"Is nothing new, Fogg."

"Well, well, come on.--Come on--if it must be so, it must.--I--I will hold a lantern for you, of course; and you know, Watson, I make things easy to you, in the shape of salary, and all that sort of thing."

Watson made no reply to all this, but went through the house to the back part of the grounds, carrying with him his insensible burthen, and Fogg followed him, trembling in every limb. The fact was, that he, Fogg, had not for some time had a refresher in the shape of some brandy. The old deserted well to which they were bound was at a distance of about fifty yards from the back of the house; towards it the athletic Watson hastened with speed, closely followed by Fogg, who was truly one of those who did not mind holding a candle to the devil. The walls of that building were high, and it was not likely that any intruder from the outside could see what was going on, so Watson took no precaution.--The well was reached, and Fogg cried to him--

"Now--now--quick about it, lest she recovers."

Another moment and she would have been gone in her insensibility, but as if Fogg's words were prophetic, she did recover, and clinging convulsively to Watson, she shrieked--

"Mercy! mercy! Oh, have mercy upon me! Help! help!"

"Ah, she recovers!" cried Fogg, "I was afraid of that. Throw her in. Throw her in, Watson."

"Confound her!"

"Why don't you throw her in?"

[Illustration: The Murder At The Well By Fogg And Watson.]

"She clings to me like a vice. I cannot--Give me a knife, Fogg. You will find one in my coat pocket--a knife--a knife!"

"Mercy! mercy! Have mercy upon me! No--no--no,--Help! Oh God! God!"

"The knife! The knife, I say!"

"Here, here," cried Fogg, as he hastily took it from Watson's pocket and opened it. "Here! Finish her, and quickly too, Watson!"

The scene that followed is too horrible for description. The hands of the wretched victim were hacked from their hold by Watson, and in the course of another minute, with one last appalling shriek, down she went like a flash of lightning to the bottom of the well.

"Gone!" said Watson.

Another shriek and Fogg, even, stopped his ears, so appalling was that cry, coming as it did so strangely from the bottom of the well.

"Throw something upon her," said Fogg. "Here's a brick--"

"Bah!" cried Watson, "bah! there's no occasion to throw anything on her. She'll soon get sick of such squealing."

Another shriek, mingled with a strange frothy cry, as though some one had managed to utter it under water, arose. The perspiration stood in large drops upon the face of Fogg.--He seized the brick he had spoken of, and cast it into the well. All was still as the grave before it reached the bottom, and then he wiped his face and looked at Watson.

"This is the worst job," he said, "that ever we have had--"

"Not a whit.--Brandy--give me a tumbler of brandy, Fogg. Some of our own particular, for I have something to say to you now, that a better opportunity than this for saying is not likely to occur."

"Come into my room then," said Fogg, "and we can talk quietly.--Do you think--that--that--"

"What?"

"That she is quite dead?"

"What do I care.--Let her crawl out of that, if she can."

With a jerk of his thumb, Watson intimated that the well was the "that" he referred to, and then he followed Fogg into the house, whistling as he went the same lively air with which he had frequently solaced his feelings in the hearing of poor Tobias Ragg. Never had Fogg been in such a state of agitation, except once, and that was long ago, upon the

occasion of his first crime. Then he had trembled as he now trembled, but the

"Dull custom of iniquity"

had effectually blunted soon the keen edge of his conscience, and he had for years carried on a career of infamy without any other feeling than exultation at his success.--Why then did he suffer now? Had the well in the garden ever before received a victim? Was he getting alive to the excellence of youth and beauty?--Oh no--no. Fogg was getting old. He could not stand what he once stood in the way of conscience. When he reached his room--that room in which he had held the conference with Todd, he sank into a chair with a deep groan.

"What's the matter now?" cried Watson, who got insolent in proportion as Fogg's physical powers appeared to be upon the wane.

"Nothing, nothing."

"Nothing?--Well, I never knew anybody look so white with nothing the matter. Come, I want a drop of brandy; where is it?"

"In that cupboard; I want some myself likewise. Get it out, Watson. You will find glasses there."

Watson was not slow in obeying this order. The brandy was duly produced, and, after Fogg had drunk as much as would have produced intoxication in any one not so used to the ardent spirit as himself, he spoke more calmly, for it only acted upon him as a gentle sedative.

"You wished to say something to me, Watson."

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I am tired, completely tired, Fogg."

"Tired? Then why don't you retire to rest at once, Watson? There is, I am sure, nothing to keep you up now; I am going myself in a minute."

"You don't understand me, or you won't, which is much the same thing. I did not mean that I was tired of the day, but I am tired of doing all the work, Fogg, while you--while you--"

"Well--while I--"

"Pocket all the profit. Do you understand that? Now hark you. We will go partners, Fogg, not only in the present and the future, but in the past. I will have half of your hoarded up gains, or--"

"Or what?"

Mr. Watson made a peculiar movement, supposed to indicate the last kick

of a culprit executed at the Old Bailey.

"You mean you will hang yourself," said Fogg. "My dear Watson, pray do so as soon as you think proper. Don't let me hinder you."

"Hark you, Fogg. You may be a fox, but I am a badger. I mean that I will hang you, and this is the way to do it. My wife--"

"Your what?"

"My wife," cried Watson, "has, in writing, the full particulars of all your crimes. She don't live far off, but still far enough to make it a puzzle for you to find her. If she don't see me once in every forty-eight hours, she is to conclude something has happened to me, and then she is to go at once to Bow Street with the statement, and lay it before a magistrate. You understand. Now I have contrived, with what I got from you by fair means as well as by foul, and by robbing the patients besides, to save some money, and if you and I don't agree, Mrs. Watson and I will start for New Zealand, or some such place, but--but, Fogg--"

"Well?"

"We will denounce you before we go."

"And what is to be the end of all this? The law has a long as well as a strong arm, Watson."

"I know it. You would say it might be long enough to strike me."

Fogg nodded.

"Leave me to take care of that. But as you want to know the result of all this, it is just this. I want to have my share, and I will have it. Give me a couple of thousand down, and half for the future."

Fogg was silent for a moment or two, and then he said--

"Too much, Watson, too much. I have not so much."

"Bah! At your banker's now you have exactly £11,267."

Fogg writhed.

"You have been prying. Well, you shall have the two thousand."

"On account."

Fogg writhed again. "I say you shall have so much, Watson, and you shall keep the books, and have your clear half of all future proceeds. Is there anything else you have set your mind upon, because if you have, while we are talking about business, you may as well state it, you know."

"No, there's nothing else--I am satisfied. All I have to add is, that you had better put your head into the fire than attempt to play any tricks with me. You understand?"

"Perfectly."

Watson was not altogether satisfied. He would have been better pleased if Fogg had made more resistance. The easy compliance of such a man with anything that touched his pocket looked suspicious, and filled the mind of Watson with a thousand vague conjectures. Already--aye, even before he left Fogg's room, Watson began to feel the uneasiness of his new position, and to pay dearly for the money he was to have. Even money may be given an exorbitant price for. When he was by himself, as he traversed the passage leading to his own sleeping room, Watson could not forbear looking cautiously around him at times, as though gaunt murder stalked behind him, and he fastened his bed-room door with more than his usual caution. The wish to sleep came not to him, and sitting down upon his bed-side he rested his chin upon his hand and said to himself in a low anxious shrinking kind of whisper--

"What does Fogg mean to do?"

Nor was the recent interview without its after effects upon the mad-house keeper himself. When the door closed upon Watson he shook his clenched hand in the direction he had taken, and muttered curses,

"Not loud, but deep."

"The time will come," he said, "Master Watson, and that quickly too, when I will let you see that I am still the master spirit. You shall be satisfied for the present, but your death-warrant is preparing. You will not live long to triumph over me by threats of what your low cunning can accomplish."

He rose and drank more raw brandy, after which, still muttering maledictions upon Watson, he returned to his bed-room, where, if he did not sleep, and if during the still hours of the night his brain was not too much vexed, he hoped to be able to concoct some scheme which should present him with a prospect of exemplary vengeance upon Watson.

#### CHAPTER XXXV. MRS. LOVETT'S NEW LOVER.

Mrs. Lovett was a woman of luxurious habits. Perhaps the constant savoury hot pie atmosphere in which she dwelt contributed a something to the development of her tastes, but certainly that lady, in dress, jewellery, and men, had her fancies. Did the reader think that she saw anything attractive in the satyr-like visage of Todd, with its eccentricities of vision? Did the reader think that the lawyers' clerks frequenting her shop suited her taste, varying, as all the world knows

that class of bipeds does, between the fat and flabby, and the white and candle looking, if we may be allowed the expression? Ah, no,--Mrs. Lovett's dreams of man had a loftier range, but we must not anticipate. Facts will speak trumpet-tongued for themselves.

It is the hour when lawyers' clerks  
From many a gloomy chamber stalk;  
It is the hour when lovers' vows  
Are heard in every Temple walk.

Mrs. Lovett was behind her counter all alone, but the loneliness continued but for a very brief period, for from Carey-street, with a nervousness of gait highly suggestive of a fear of bailiffs--bailiffs were there in all their glory--comes a--a what shall we say? Truly there are some varieties of the genus homo that defy minute classification, but perhaps this individual who hastened down Bell Yard was the nearest in approximation to what used to be called "a swaggering companion," that can be found. He was a gent upon town--that is to say, according to his own phraseology, he lived upon his wits; and if the reader will substitute dishonesty for wits, he will have a much clearer notion of what the swaggering companion of modern days lived upon. He was tall, burly, forty years of age, and his bloated countenance and sleepy eyes betrayed the effects of a long course of intemperance. He wore mock jewellery of an outrageous size; his attire was flashy and gaudy--his linen ... the less we say about that the better--enormous black whiskers (false) shaded his cheeks, and mangey-looking moustache (real) covered his upper lip--add to all this, such a stock of ignorance and impudence as may be supposed to thoroughly saturate one individual, and the reader has the swaggering companion before him. At a rapid pace he neared Mrs. Lovett's, muttering to himself as he went--

"I wonder if I can gammon her out of a couple of guineas."

Yes, reader, this compound of vulgarity, ignorance, impudence and debauchery was Mrs. Lovett's gentle fancy--her taste--her--her, what shall we say?--her personification of all that a man should be. Do not start; Mrs. Lovett has many imitators, for, without libelling the fairer, better, and more gentle of that sex, who can be such angels as well as such--a-hem!--there are thousands who would be quite smitten with the "swaggering companion." When he reached the shop-window, he placed his nose against it for a moment to reconnoitre who was in the shop, and seeing the fair one alone, he at once crossed the threshold.

"Ah, charmer, how do the fates get on with you?"

"Sir--"

A smile upon the face of Mrs. Lovett was a practical contradiction to the rebuff which her reception of him by words of mouth seemed to carry.

"Oh, you bewitching--a--a--"

The remainder of the sentence was lost in the devouring a pie, which the "swaggering companion" took from the shop counter.

"Really, sir," said Mrs. Lovett--"I wish you would not come here, I am all alone, and--"

"Alone? You beautiful female.--Oh you nice creature.--Allow me."

The "swaggering companion" lifted up that portion of the counter which enabled Mrs. Lovett to pass from one side of it to the other, and as coolly as possible walked into the parlour. Mrs. Lovett followed him, protesting at what she called his impudence. But for all that, a bottle of spirits and some biscuits were procured. The "swaggering companion," however, pushed the biscuits aside, saying--

"Pies for me. Pies for me."

Mrs. Lovett looked at him scrutinisingly as she said--

"And do you really like the pies, or do you only eat them out of compliment to me?"

"Really like them? I tell you what it is; out of compliment to you, of course, I could eat anything, but the pies are delicacies.--Where do you get your veal?"

"Well, if you will have pies you shall, Major Bounce."--That was the name which the "swaggering companion" appended to his disgusting corporeality.

"Certainly, my dear, certainly. As I was saying, I could freely, to compliment you, eat old Tomkins, the tailor, of Fleet Street."

"Really. How do you think he would taste?"

"Tough!"

"Ha! Ha!"

It was an odd laugh that of Mrs. Lovett's. Had she borrowed it from Todd?

"My dear Mrs. L.," said the major, "what made you laugh in that sort of way? Ah, if I could only persuade you to go from L to B--"

"Sir?"

"Now, my charmer, seriously speaking:--Here am I, Major Bounce, a gentleman with immense expectations, ready and willing to wed the most charming woman under the sun, if she will only say 'yes.'"

"Have you any objection to America?"

"America? None in the least.--With you for a companion, America would be a Paradise. A regular garden of, what do you call it, my dear? Only say the word, my darling."

The major's arm was gently insinuated round the lady's waist, and after a few moments she spoke.

"Major Bounce, I--I have made money."

"The devil!--so have I, but the police one day--a-hem!--a-hem!--what a cough I have."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing--nothing--only a joke. You said you had made money, and that put me in mind of what I read in the 'Chronicle' to-day of some coiners, that's all. Ha-ha!"

"When I spoke of making money, I meant in the way of trade, but having made it, I should not like to spend it in London, and be pointed out as the well-known pie-woman."

"Pie-woman! Oh, the wretches--only let--"

"Peace. Hold your tongue, and hear me out. If I marry and retire, it will be far from here--very far indeed."

"Ah, any land, with you." The major absolutely saluted the lady.

"Be quiet. Pray, in what service are you a major?"

"The South American, my love. A much higher service than the British."

"Indeed."

"Lord bless you, yes. If I was now to go to my estates in South America, there would be a jubilee of ten days at the very least, and the people as well as the government would not know how to make enough of me, I can assure you. In fact, I have as much right to take the rank of general as of major, but the natural modesty of a military man, and of myself in particular, steps in and says 'A major be it.'"

"Then you have property?"

"Property--property? I believe you, I have. Lots!"

The major dealt his forehead a slap as he spoke, which might be taken as an indication that that was where his property was situated, and that it consisted of his ignorance and impudence--very good trading capitals in this world for, strange to say, the parties solely possessing such qualifications get on much better than education, probity, and genius can push forward their unhappy victims. Mrs. Lovett was silent for some minutes, during which the major saluted her again. Then, suddenly rising, she said--

"I will give you an answer to-morrow. Go away now. We shall be soon interrupted. If I do consent to be yours, there will be something to do

before we leave England."

"By Jove, only mention it to me, and it is as good as done. By-the-bye, there is something to do before I leave here, and that is, my charmer, to pay you for the pies."

"Oh, no--no."

"Yes, yes--my honour. Touch my honour, even in regard of a pie, and touch my life.--I put two guineas in one end of my purse, to pay my glover in the Strand, and at the other end are some small coins--where the deuce--can--I--have--put--it."

The major made an affectation of feeling in all his pockets for his lost purse, and then, with a serio-comic look, he said--

"By Jove, some rascal has picked my pocket."

"Never mind me," said Mrs. Lovett, "I don't want payment for the pies."

"Well, but--the--the glover. Poor devil, and I promised him his money this morning. For a soldier and a man of honour to break his word is death. What shall I do?--Mrs. L., could you lend me a couple of guineas until I have the happiness of seeing you again?"

"Certainly, major, certainly I can."

The gallant son of Mars pocketed the coins, and after saluting Mrs. Lovett some half score of times--and she, the beast, liked it--he left the shop and went chuckling into the Strand, where in a few minutes he was in a pot-house, from whence he emerged not until he had liquidated one of the guineas. Was Mrs. Lovett taken in by the major? Did she believe his title, or his wealth, and his common honesty? Did she believe in the story of the purse and of the two guineas that were to be paid to the poor glover because he wanted them? No--no--certainly not. But for all that, she admired the major.--He was her beau ideal of a fine man! That was sufficient. Moreover, being what he was--a rogue, cheat, and common swindler--she could exercise, so she thought, a species of control over him which no decent man would put up with, and so in her own mind she had determined to marry the major and fly; but as she said--"There was a little something to be done first." Did that relate to the disposal of Todd? We shall see. If she calculated upon the major putting Sweeney Todd out of the way, she sadly miscalculated; but the wisest heads will blunder. Compared to Todd, the major was indeed a poor creature; but Mrs. Lovett, in the stern courage of her own intellect, could not conceive the possibility of the great, puffy, bloated, fierce Major Bounce being as arrant a coward as ever was kicked. He was so, though, for all that. After he had left her, Mrs. Lovett sat for a long time in a profound reverie, and as it happened that no one came into the shop; the current of her evil thoughts was uninterrupted.

"I have sufficient," she said; "and before it gets too late, I will leave this mode of life. Why did I--tempted by the fiend Todd--undertake

it, but that I might make wealth by it, and so assume a position that my heart panted for. I will not delay until it is too late, or I may lose the enjoyment that I have sacrificed so much to find the means of getting. I live in this world but for the gratification of the senses, and finding that I could not gratify them without abundant means, I fell upon this plan. I--ah--that is he--"

Suddenly the swaggering companion, the redoubtable Major Bounce, rushed past the shop-window, without so much as looking in for a single moment, and made his way towards Carey Street. Mrs. Lovett started up and made her way into the front shop. Major Bounce was out of sight, but from Fleet Street came a poor, draggled, miserable looking woman, making vain efforts at a speed which her weakness prevented her from keeping up.--She called aloud--

"Stop! stop!--only a moment, Flukes! Only a moment, John. Stop!--stop!"

Her strength failed her, and she fell exhausted upon Mrs. Lovett's door-step.

"Heartless!--heartless ever!" she cried. "May the judgment of the Almighty reach him--may he suffer--yes--may he suffer only what I have suffered."

"Who and what are you?" said Mrs. Lovett.

"Poor, and therefore everything that is abject and despicable in London."

"What a truth," said Mrs. Lovett. "What a truth that is. Who would not do even as I do to avoid poverty in a widowed life!--It is too horrible. Amid savages it is nothing, but here it is indeed criminality of the deepest dye. Whom did you call after, woman?"

"My husband."

"Husband. Describe him."

"A sottish-looking man, with moustache. Once seen, he is not easily mistaken--ruffian and villain are stamped by nature upon his face."

Mrs. Lovett winced a little.

"Come in," she said, "I will relieve you for the present. Come in."

The woman by a great effort succeeded in rising and crossing the threshold. Mrs. Lovett gave her a seat, and having presented her with a glass of cordial and a pie, she waited until the poor creature should be sufficiently recovered to speak composedly, and then she said to her with perfect calmness, as though she was by no manner of means personally interested in the matter--

"Now tell me--Is the man with moustache and the braided coat, who passed hastily up Bell Yard a few moments only before you, really your

husband?"

"Yes, madam, that is Flukes--"

"Who?"

"Flukes, madam."

"And pray who and what is Flukes?"

"He was a tailor, and he might have been as respectable a man, and earned as honest and good a living as any one in the trade, but a love of idleness and dissipation undid him."

"Flukes--a tailor?"

"Yes, madam; and now that I am utterly destitute, and in want of the common necessaries of life, if I chance to meet him in the streets and ask him for the merest trifle to relieve my necessities, he flies from me in the manner he has done to-day."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, madam. If we were in a lonely place he would strike me, so that I should, from the injury he would do me, be unable to follow him, but that in the public streets he dare-not do, for he fears some man would interfere and put a stop to his cruelty."

"There, my good woman," said Mrs. Lovett, "there are five shillings for you. Go now, for I expect to be busy very shortly."

With a profusion of thanks, that while they lasted were quite stunning, poor Mrs. Flukes left the pie-shop and hobbled homewards. When she was gone the colour went and came several times upon the face of Mrs. Lovett, and then she repeated to herself--"Flukes--a tailor!"

"Pies ready?" said a voice at the door.

"Not quite."

"How long, mum; we want half a dozen of the muttuns to-day."

"In about ten minutes."

"Thank you, I'll look in again."

"Flukes--a tailor? Indeed!--Flukes--a tailor? Well I ought to have expected something like this. What a glorious thing it is really to care for no one but oneself after all. I shall lose my faith in--in--fine men."

CHAPTER XXXVI.  
TOBIAS'S MOTHER AWAKENS OLD RECOLLECTIONS.

Poor Tobias still remains upon his bed of sickness. The number of hours at the expiration of which the medical man had expected him to recover were nearly gone. In Colonel Jeffery's parlour three persons, besides himself, were assembled. These three were his friend the captain, Sir Richard Blunt, and Mrs. Ragg. The lady was sitting with a not over clean handkerchief at her eyes, and keeping up a perpetual motion with her knee, as though she were nursing some fractious baby, and Mrs. Ragg had been used of late to go out as a monthly nurse occasionally, which, perhaps, accounted for this little peculiarity.

"Now, madam," said the colonel, "you quite understand, I hope, that you are not to mention to any living soul the fact of your son Tobias being with me."

"Oh, dear me, no, sir. Who should I mention it to?"

"That we can't tell," interrupted the captain, "you are simply desired not to tell it."

"I'm sure I don't see anybody once in a week, sir."

"Good God! woman," cried the colonel, "does that mean that when you do see any one you will tell it?"

"Lord love you, sir, it's few people as comes to see you when you are down in the world. I'm sure it's seldom enough a soul taps at my door with a 'Mrs. Ragg, how are you?'"

"Now was there ever such an incorrigible woman as this?"

"If you were to talk to her for a month," said Sir Robert Blunt, "you would not get a direct answer from her. Allow me to try something else--Mrs. Ragg."

"Yes, sir--humbly at your service, sir."

"If you tell any one that Tobias is here, or indeed anywhere within your knowledge, I will apprehend you about a certain candlestick."

"Goodness gracious, deliver us."

"Do you understand that, Mrs. Ragg? You keep silence about Tobias, and I keep silence about the candlestick. You speak about Tobias, and I speak about the candlestick."

Mrs. Ragg shook her head and let fall a torrent of tears, which the magistrate took as sufficient evidence that she did understand him and would act accordingly, so he added--

"Shall we all proceed up stairs? for a great deal will depend upon the

boy's first impression when he awakens--and in this case we should not lose a chance."

In pursuance of this sound advice they all proceeded to poor Tobias's bed-room, and there he lay in that profound repose which the powerful opiate administered to him had had the effect of producing. It did not seem as though he had moved head or foot since they had left him. His face was very pale, and when Mrs. Ragg saw him she burst into tears, exclaiming--

"He is dead--he is dead!"

"No such thing, madam," said Colonel Jeffery. "He only sleeps."

"But, oh deary me, what makes him look so old and so strange now? He was bad enough when I saw him last, poor fellow, but not like this."

"He has received ill-usage from someone, and that is precisely what we want to find out. If you can get from him the particulars of what he has suffered, we will take care those who have made him suffer shall not escape."

"Bless you, gentlemen, what's the use of that if my poor boy is killed?"

There was a good home truth in these words from Mrs. Ragg, although, upon the score of general social policy, they might well be answered. An argument with Mrs. Ragg, however, upon such a subject was not very a-propos. The colonel made her sit down by Tobias's bed-side, and he was then upon the point of remarking to his friend, the captain, that it would be as well, since so many hours had passed, to send for the medical man, when that personage made his appearance.

"Has he awakened?" he asked.

"No--not yet."

"Oh, I see you have a nurse."

"It is his mother. We hope that she, by talking to him familiarly, may produce a good effect, and possibly rid him of that bewilderment of intellect under which he now labours. What think you, sir?"

"That it is a good thought. Let us darken the room as much as possible, as twilight will be most grateful to him upon awakening, which he must do shortly."

The curtains of the window were so arranged that the room was in a state of semi-darkness, and then they all waited with no small anxiety for Tobias to recover from the deep and death-like sleep that had come over him. After about five minutes he moved uneasily and uttered a low moan.

"Speak to him, Mrs. a--a--what's your name?"

"Ragg, sir."

"Aye, Ragg, just speak to him; of course he is well acquainted with your voice, and it may have the effect of greatly rousing him from his lethargic condition."

Poor Mrs. Ragg considered that she had some very extraordinary post to perform, and accordingly she collected to her aid all her learning, which, interrupted by her tears, and now and then by a sob, which she had to gulp down like a large globule of castor oil, had certainly rather a droll effect.

"My dear Tobias--my dear--lie a bed, sluggard, you know--well, I never--Put the kettle on, Polly, and let's all have tea. Tobias, my dear--bless us and save us, are you going to stay in bed all day?"

Another groan from Tobias.

"Well, my dear, perhaps you won't mind getting up and just running towards the corner for a bunch of water cresses? Dear heart alive, there goes the muffin-man like a lamplighter!"

It was by such domestic themes that Mrs. Ragg sought to recall the wandering senses of poor Tobias to a cognizance of the present. But alas! his thoughts were still in the dim and misty land of visions. Suddenly he spoke--

[Illustration: Tobias's Delirium.]

"Hush--hush! There they come!--elephants!--elephants!--on--on--on. Now for the soldiers, and all mad--mad--mad! Hide me in the straw--deep in a world of straw. Hush! He comes. Sing, oh sing again!--and he--he will not suspect."

The surgeon made a sign to Mrs. Ragg to speak again.

"Why, Tobias, my dear, what are you talking about? Do you mean the Elephant and Castle?"

"Call to his remembrance," said the surgeon, "some old scenes."

"Yes, sir, but when one's heart and all that sort of thing is in one's mouth it's very difficult to recollect things oneself. Tobias!"

"Yes--yes. Ha-ha!"

It was a low, plaintive, strange laugh that, that came from the poor boy whose mind had been so overthrown, and it jarred upon the feelings of all who heard it.

"Tobias, do you recollect the little cottage down the lane at Holloway, where we lived, and the cock roaches, and the strange cat, you know, Tobias, that would not go away? Don't you recollect, Tobias, how the coals there were all slates, and how your poor father, as is dead and gone--"

"Yes, I see him now."

Mrs. Ragg gave a faint scream.

"Father!--father!" said Tobias, as he held out his arms, and the big tears rolled down his cheeks. "Father--father, Todd has not got me now. Don't cry so, father. Stand out of the way of the elephants."

"My dear! my dear!" cried Mrs. Ragg, "do you want to break my heart?"

Tobias rose to a sitting position in the bed, and looked his mother in the face--

"Are you, too, mad?" he said. "Are you, too, mad? Did you tell of Todd?"

"Yes, the only way," said Colonel Jeffery, "for people not to be mad, is to tell of Todd."

"Yes--yes."

"And so you, Tobias, will tell us all you know. That is what we want you to do, and then you will be quite happy and comfortable for the remainder of your days, and live with your mother again far from any apprehension from Todd. Do you understand me?"

Tobias opened his mouth several times in an eager, gasping sort of manner, as though he would have said something rapidly, but he could not. He placed his hands upon his brain, and rocked to and fro for a few moments, and then he broke out into the same low, peculiar laugh that had before so strangely affected Colonel Jeffery and the others who were there present in that room. The surgeon shook his head as he said, mournfully--

"It is of no use!"

"Do you really think so?" said the colonel.

"For the present, I am convinced that it is of no use to attempt to recall his wandering senses. Time will do wonders, and he has the one grand element of youth in his favour. That, as well as time, will do wonders. The case is a bad one, and the shock the brain of this lad has received must be a most fearful one."

"Do not," said Sir Richard Blunt, "give up so readily, Mrs. Ragg; I would have you try him again. Speak to him again of his father--that seemed to be the topic that most moved him."

Mrs. Ragg could hardly do so for her tears, but she managed to stammer out--

"Tobias, do you recollect when your father bought you the rabbit, and out of vexation, the creature eat its way out of a willow-work cage in the night? Do you remember your poor father's funeral, Tobias, and how

we went, you and I, my poor boy, to take the last look at the only one who--who--who--"

Mrs. Ragg could get no further.

"Ha--ha--ha!" laughed Tobias, "who told of Todd?"

"Who is this Todd," said the surgeon, "that he continually speaks of, and shudders at the very name of?"

Colonel Jeffery glanced at Sir Richard Blunt, and the latter, who wished the affair by no means to transpire, merely said--

"We are quite as much in the dark as you, sir. It is just what we should like to know, who this Todd is, whose very name seems to hold the imagination of this poor boy in a grasp of iron. I begin to think that nothing more can be done now."

"Nothing, gentlemen, you may depend," said the surgeon. "How old is the lad?"

"Sixteen as never was," replied Mrs. Ragg, "and a hard time I had of it, sir, as you may suppose."

The surgeon did not exactly see how he was called upon to suppose anything of the sort; however he made no further remark to Mrs. Ragg, but continued in conversation for some time with Colonel Jeffery, who informed him that Tobias should remain for a time where he was, so that there should be every possible chance given for his recovery.

"I wish you to continue attending upon him, sir," he added, "for I would spare nothing that medical advice can suggest to restore him. He has, I am convinced, been a great sufferer."

"That is sufficiently clear, sir. You may rely upon my utmost attention."

"Mrs. Ragg," said the colonel, "can you cook?"

"Cook, sir? Lord bless you, sir. I can cook as well as here and there a one, though I say it that oughtn't, and if poor Tobias was but all right, I should not go to be after making myself miserable now about bygones. What's to be cured must be endured--it's a long lane as hasn't a turning. As poor Mr. Ragg often used to say when he was alive--'Grizzling ain't fattening.'"

"I should think it was not. It so happens, Mrs. Ragg, that there is a vacancy in my house for a cook, and if you like to come and take the place, you can look after Tobias as well, you know, for I intend him to remain here for the present. Only remember, you tell this to no one."

"Me, sir! Lord bless you, sir, who do I see?"

The colonel was by no means anxious to convince himself a second time of

the impossibility of bringing Mrs. Ragg to a precise answer, so he changed the subject, and it was finally arranged that without a word to any one upon the subject, that very night Mrs. Ragg was to take up her abode with Tobias. After this had been all arranged, the three gentlemen proceeded to the dining room, and held a consultation.

"Of the guilt of Todd," said the magistrate, "I entertain no doubt, but I own that I am extremely anxious to bring the crime legally home to him."

"Exactly," said the colonel, "and I can only say that every plan you can suggest will be cheerfully acquiesced in by me and my friend here."

The captain signified his assent.

"Be assured, gentlemen," added Sir Richard Blunt, "that something shall be done of a decisive character before many days are past. I have seen the higher powers upon the subject, and have full authority, and you may rest satisfied that I shall not mind running a little personal risk to unravel the mysteries that surround the career of Sweeney Todd. I think one thing may be done conveniently."

"What is that, sir?"

"Why, It seems to be pretty well understood that no one resides in Todd's house but himself, and as now he has no boy--unless he has provided himself with one already--he must go out sometimes and leave the place to itself, and upon one of those occasions an opportunity might be found of thoroughly searching the upper part, at all events, of his house."

"Could that be done with safety?"

"I think so. At all events, I feel inclined to try it. If I do so, and make any discovery, you may depend upon my letting you know without an hour's delay, and I sincerely hope that all that will take place may have the effect of setting your mind at rest regarding your friend, Mr. Ingestrie."

"But not of restoring him to us?"

The magistrate shook his head.

"I think, sir," he said, "that you ought to consider that he has, if any one has, fallen a victim to Sweeney Todd."

"Alas! I fear so."

"All the evidence points that way, and we can only take measures in the best way possible to bring his murderer to justice--that that murderer is Sweeney Todd, I cannot for one moment of time bring myself to doubt."

Sir Richard Blunt shortly afterwards left Colonel Jeffery's house and proceeded to the execution of a plan of proceeding, with the particulars

of which he had not thought proper to entrust to the colonel, and his friend the captain. Long habits of caution had led the magistrate--who was not one of the fancy magistrates of the present day, but a real police officer--active, cool, and determined--to trust no one but himself with his secrets, and so he kept to himself what he meant to do that night. When he was gone, Colonel Jeffery had a long talk with his friend, and the subject gradually turned to Johanna, whom the colonel yet hoped, he said, to be able one day to call his own.

"No one," he remarked, "would be more truly rejoiced than I to restore Mark Ingestrie to her whom he loves, and whose affection for him is of so enduring and remarkable a character, but if, as Sir Richard Blunt supposes, he is really no more, I think Johanna, by being mine, would stand a better chance of recovering her serenity, if not of enjoying all the happiness in this world that she deserves."

"Hope for the best," said the captain, "and recollect what the surgeon said as regarded Tobias, that time works wonders."

#### CHAPTER XXXVII. THE SEARCH AT TODD'S.

The house in Fleet Street, next door to Todd's, was kept by a shoemaker, named Whittle, and in this shoemaker's window was a bill, only put up on the very day of poor Tobias's escape from Peckham, announcing--"An Attic to Let." This was rather an alluring announcement to Sir Richard Blunt. At about half an hour after sunset on the same evening that had witnessed the utter discomfiture of the attempt to restore poor Tobias Ragg to his senses, two men stood in the deep recess of a doorway immediately opposite to the house of Sweeney Todd. These two men were none other than Sir Richard and his esteemed but rather eccentric officer, Mr. Crotchet. After some few moments' silence, Sir Richard spoke, saying--

"Well, Crotchet--what do you think of the affair now?"

"Nothink."

"Nothing? You do not mean that, Crotchet?"

"Says what I means--means what I says, and then leaves it alone."

"But you have some opinion, Crotchet?"

"Had, master--had--"

"Well, Crotchet; I think we can now cross over the way, and endeavour to get possession of the shoemaker's attic, from which we can get into Todd's house."

"And find nothink criminatory."

"You think not; but do you know, Crotchet, I am of opinion that the greatest and cleverest rogues not unfrequently leave themselves open to detection, in some little particular, which they have most strangely and unaccountably neglected. I am not without a hope that we shall find the man, Sweeney Todd, to be one of that class, and if so, we shall not fail to do some good by our visit to the house.--You remain here and watch for his going out, and when he is gone, come over the way and ask for Mr. Smith. Have you seen Fletcher?"

"No, but he will be here presently, and will wait till that 'ere fellow goes away, if so be as he goes out, and then when you and me hears two notes on the key-bugle, it will be time all for us to go for to come to mizzle."

"Very good," said Sir Richard Blunt, and he crossed over to the shoemaker's shop, leaving Crotchet on the watch in the deep doorway.

The fact is, they had been waiting there for some time, in the hope that Todd would go out, but he had not stirred, so that the magistrate thought it would be as well to let Crotchet remain while he secured the shoemaker's attic, with a view to ulterior proceedings. The magistrate was dressed as a respectable, staid clerk, and he walked into the shoemaker's shop with a gravity of gait that was quite imposing.

"You have an attic to let," he said. "Is it furnished?"

"Oh yes, sir, and comfortably too. My missus looks after all that, I can tell you."

"Very well, I want just such a place; for, do you know, since I have left a widower, I like to live in some lively situation, and as all my friends are at Cambridge, and not a soul that I know in London, I don't half fancy going into an out-of-the-way place to live; though, I dare say, for all that, London is safe enough."

"Why, I don't know that," said the shoemaker. "However, you'll be safe enough here, sir, never doubt. The rent is four shillings a week."

"Very good. I think, if you will show it to me, we shall suit each other. The great object with me is to find myself in the house of a respectable man, and one look at you, sir, is quite sufficient to show me that you are one."

This was all highly flattering to the shoemaker, and he was so well pleased to get such a respectable, civil-spoken, middle aged gentleman into his house, that he was prepared, upon half a word to that effect, to come down a whole sixpence a week in the rent, if needs were. Of course, the would-be-lodger was well enough pleased with the attic, and turning to the shoemaker, he handed him four shillings, saying--

"As my friends are all so far off, I ought to give you a week's rent in advance, instead of a reference, and there it is."

After this, who could ask any further questions? The magistrate, just, of his own accord, added that his name was Smith, and that he would stay a short time in his room if the shoemaker could oblige him with a light, which was done accordingly, and when the shoemaker's wife came home--that lady having been out to gossip with no less a personage than Mrs. Lovett--he was quite elated to tell her what a lodger they had, and as he handed her the four shillings, saying "My dear, that will buy you the ribbon at Mrs. Keating's, the mercer, that you had set your mind upon," how could she be other than quite amiable?

"Well, John," she said, "for once in a way, I must say that you have shown great judgment, and if I had been at home myself, I could not have managed better."

This, we are quite sure, our lady readers will agree with us was as much as any married female ought to say. Sir Richard Blunt ascended to the attic, of which he was now, by virtue of a weekly tenancy, lord and master, with a light, and closing the door, he cast his eyes around the apartment. Its appointments were decidedly not luxurious. In one corner a stump-bedstead awakened anything but lively associations, while the miserable little grate, the front of which was decidedly composed of some portions of an old iron hoop from a barrel, did not look redolent of comforts. The rest of the apartments were what the auctioneers call *\_en suite\_*, the said auctioneers having but a dreamy notion of what *\_en suite\_* means. But the appointments or disappointments of his attic were of little consequence to Sir Richard Blunt. It was the window that offered attractions to him. Softly opening it, he looked out, and found that there was a leaden gutter, with only the average amount of filth in it, the drain being, of course, stopped up by a dishclout and a cracked flower-pot, which is perfectly according to custom in London. He saw enough at a glance, however, to convince him that there would be no difficulty whatever in getting to the attic of Todd's house, and that fact once ascertained, he waited with exemplary and placid patience the return of Crotchet. Now, Sweeney Todd was, during much of that day, in what is denominated a brown study. He could not make up his mind in what way he was to make up for the loss of the senses of Tobias. It was with him an equal choice of disagreeables. To have a boy, or not to have a boy, which to do became an anxious question.

"A boy is a spy," muttered Todd to himself--"a spy upon all my actions--a perpetual police-officer in a small way, constantly at my elbow--an alarum continually crying to me 'Todd! Todd! beware!' Curses on them all, and yet what a slave am I to this place without a lad; and, after all, when they do become too troublesome and inquisitive, I can but dispose of them as I have disposed of him."

Todd patrolled his shop for some time, thus communing with himself; but as yet he could not make up his mind which to do.--A boy or not a boy?--that was the question. He remained in this unsatisfactory state of mind until sunset had passed away and the dim twilight was wrapping all things in obscurity. Then, without deciding upon either course, he suddenly, in a very hurried manner, shut up his shop, and closing the outer door carefully, he walked rapidly towards Bell Yard. He was going

to Mrs. Lovett's, whither we shall follow him at a more convenient opportunity, but just now we have Sir Richard Blunt's enterprise to treat of. Todd had no sooner got fairly out of sight, than Mr. Crotchet emerged from the doorway in which he was concealed, and went a few paces down Fleet Street, towards the Temple.--He soon met a man genteelly dressed, who seemed to be sauntering along in an idle fashion.

"All's right, Fletcher," said Crotchet.

"Oh, is it?"

"Yes. Have you got that ere little article with you?"

"The bugle? Oh, yes."

"Mind you blows it then, if you sees Todd come home, and no gammon."

"Trust to me old fellow."

Without another word, Mr. Crotchet crossed over the road, and opened the shop-door of the shoemaker. Now the face of Mr. Crotchet was not the most engaging in the world, and when he looked in upon the shoemaker, that industrious workman felt a momentary pang of alarm, and particularly when Mr. Crotchet, imparting a horrible obliquity to his vision, said--

"How is yer, old un?"

"Sir?" said the shoemaker.

"You couldn't show a fellow the way up to Smith's \_hatic\_, I supposes?"

"Smith--Smith?--Oh, dear me, that's the new lodger. I'll call him down if you wait here."

"No occasion. I'll toddle up, my tulip. He's a relation o' mine, don't you see the likeness atween us?--We was considered the handsomest pair 'o men as was in London at one time, and it sticks to us now, I can tell you."

"If you wish, sir, to go up, instead of having Mr. Smith called down, of course, sir, you can, as you are an old friend. Allow me to light you, sir."

"Not the least occasion. Only tell me where it isn't, and I'll find out where it is, old chap."

"It's the front attic."

"All's right. Don't be sich a hass as to be flaring away arter me, with that ere double dip, I can find my way in \_worserer\_ places than this here. All's right--easy does it."

To the surprise of the shoemaker, his mysterious visitor opened the

little door at the back of the shop, which led to the staircase, and in a moment disappeared up them.

"Upon my life, this Mr. Smith," thought the shoemaker, "seems to have some very strange connexions. He told me he knew nobody in London, and then here comes one of the ugliest fellows, I think, I ever saw in all my life, and claims acquaintance with him. What ought I to do?--Ought I to tell Mrs. W. of it?"

At this moment Mrs. W. made her appearance from the mercer's, with the ribbon that had tickled her feminine fancy--all smiles and sweetness. The heart of the shoemaker died within him, for well he knew what visitation he was likely to come in for, if anything connected with the lodger turned out wrong.

"A-hem! a-hem! Well, my dear, have you got the ribbon?"

"Oh yes, to be sure, and a love it is--"

"Ah!--ah!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, my dove. I was only thinking that it wasn't the ribbon that makes folks look lovely, but the person who wears it. You would look beautiful in any ribbon."

"Why, my dear, that may be very true, but still one ought to look as well as one can, you know, for the credit of one's maker."

"Oh, yes, yes, but I was only thinking--"

"Thinking of what? Bless me, Mr. Wheeler, how mystifying you are to-night, to be sure. What do you mean by this conduct? Was ever a woman so pestered and tormented with a fool of a man, who looks like an owl in an ivy bush for all the world, or a crow peeping into a marrowbone."

"My duck, how can you say so?"

"Duck indeed? Keep your ducks to yourself. Hoity toity. Duck, indeed. You low good-for-nothing--"

"My dear, my dear. I was only thinking, and not in the least wishing to offend."

"But you do offend me, you nasty insinuating, sneering wretch.--What were you thinking about? Tell me this moment."

"Why, that a pretty silver-grey satin mantle would set off your figure so well, that--"

"Oh, John!"

"That, though quarter-day is near at hand, I think you ought to have

one."

"Really, Jackey."

"Yes, my dear."

"What a man you are. Ah, Jackey, after all, though we have, like all people, our little tiffs and wiffs and sniffs--after all, I say it, perhaps, that should not say it, you are a dear, good, obliging--"

"Don't mention it."

"Yes, but--"

"No, don't. By-the-bye, do you know, Susey, that I begin to have my suspicions--mind, I may be wrong, but I begin to have my suspicions, do you know, that our attic lodger is, after all, no better than he should be."

"Gracious!"

"Hush! hush! There has been a man here; so ugly--so--so--squintified, if I may say so, that between you and me and the post, my dear, it's enough to frighten any one to look at him, it is indeed.--But as for the silver-grey satin, don't stint the quality for a sixpence or so."

"The wretch!"

"And take care to have plenty of rich trimming to it."

"The monster!"

"And have something pretty to match it, so that when you go to St. Dunstan's next Sunday, all the folks will ask what fine lady from court has come into the city out of curiosity to see the old church."

"Oh, Jackey."

"That's what I call," muttered Mr. Wheeler, "pouring oil upon the troubled waters." He then spoke aloud, saying--"Now, my dear, it is your judgment and advice I want. What shall we do in this case? for you see--first of all, the new lodger denies knowing a soul, and then, in half an hour, an old acquaintance calls upon him here."

The silver-grey satin--the flattering allusion to the probable opinion of the people in St. Dunstan's Church on the next Sunday--the obscure allusion to a something else to match it, and the appeal to her judgment, all had the effect desired upon Mrs. Wheeler, who, dropping entirely the hectoring tone, fell into her husband's views, and began calmly and dispassionately, without abuse or crimination, to discuss the merits, or rather the probable demerits, of the new lodger.

"I tell you, my dear, my opinion," said the lady. "As for stopping in the house and not knowing who and what he is, I won't."

"Certainly not, my love."

"Then, Mr. W., the only thing to do, is for you and I to go up stairs, and say that as I was out you did not know a Mr. Jones had spoken about the lodging, but that, if he could give a reference in London, we would still have him for a lodger."

"Very well. That will be only civil, and if he says he can't, but must send to Cambridge--"

"Why then, my dear, you must say that he may stay till he writes, and I'll be guided by his looks. If I give you a nudge, so, with my elbow, you may consider that it's pretty right."

"Very well, my dove."

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII. SIR RICHARD PRIES INTO TODD'S SECRETS.

Crotchet soon reached the attic floor of the shoemaker's house, and although in profound darkness, he managed, as he thought, to touch the right door. Tap! tap! went Crotchet's knuckles, and as he did so he followed a habit very general, when the knock is only a matter of ceremony, and opened the door at the same moment. He popped his head into a room where there was a light, and said--

"Here yer is."

A scream was the reply to him, and then Crotchet saw, by the state of affairs there, that he had made a little mistake in the topography of the attic landing. The attic in which he found himself, for he had crossed the threshold, was in the occupation of an elderly gaunt-looking female, who was comforting her toes by keeping them immersed in a pan of water by the side of a little miserable fire, which was feebly pretending to look cheerful in the little grate.

"Lor, mum!" said Crotchet. "Who'd a thought o' seeing of you?"

"Oh, you monster. You base man, what do you want here?"

"Nothink!"

"Be off with you, or else I'll call the \_perlice\_."

"Oh, I'm a going, mum. How do you bring it in, mum, in a general way?"

"Help! Murder!"

"Lord bless us, what a racket. Don't you go for to fancy, mum, that I

comed up these here attic stairs for to see you. Quite the rewerse, mum."

"Then, pray who did you come to see, you big ugly monster you? The other attic is empty. Oh, you base infidel. I believe I knows what men are by this time."

"No doubt on it, mum. Howsomedever this here's the wrong door, I take it. No harm done, mum. I wish you and your toes, mum, a remarkably good evening."

"Crotchet," said a voice.

"Here yer is."

Sir Richard Blunt had been attentively listening for Crotchet, and when he heard the screams of the old lady in the next attic, he opened the door of his apartment, and looked out. He soon discovered what was amiss, and called out accordingly.

"Bless us, who's that?"

"The Emperor o' Russia, mum," said Crotchet. "He's took that 'ere attic next to you, cos he's heard so much o' the London chumbley pots, and he wants to have a good look at them at his leisure."

With these words Mr. Crotchet left the old lady's attic, and closed the door carefully, leaving her, no doubt, in a considerable state of bewilderment. In another moment he was with the magistrate.

"Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "I thought I told you to do this thing as quietly as you possibly could."

"Down as a hammer, sir."

"I think it is anything but down."

"Right as a trivet, sir, with a hextra leg. Lots o' fear, but no danger. Now for it, Sir Richard. What lay is we to go on?"

It certainly never occurred to Sir Richard Blunt to hold any argument with Mr. Crotchet. He had long since found out that he must, if he would avail himself of his services--and for courage and fidelity he was unequalled--put up with his eccentricities; so upon this occasion he said no more about Crotchet's mistake, but, after a few moments' pause, pointing to the attic door, he said--

"Secure it."

"All's right."

Crotchet took a curious little iron instrument from his pocket, and secured it into the wall by the side of the door. It did not take him more than a moment to do so, and then, fully satisfied of the efficacy

of his work, he said--

"Let 'em get over that if they can."

While he was so occupied. Sir Richard Blunt himself had opened the window, and fastened it open securely.

"Now, Crotchet," he said, "look to your pistols."

"All's right, sir."

The magistrate carefully examined the priming of his own arms, and seeing that all was right, he at once emerged from the attic through the window on to the parapet of the house. He might have crept along the gutter just within the parapet, but the gutter aforesaid was not exactly in the most salubrious condition. Indeed, from its filthy state, one might have fancied it to be peculiarly under the direction of the city commissioners of sewers. Crotchet followed Sir Richard closely, and in a moment or two they had traversed a sufficient portion of the parapet to find themselves at the attic window of Todd's house. It would have been next thing to a miracle if they had been seen in their progress, for the roof was very dark coloured, and the night had fairly enough set in, so that if any one had by chance looked up from the street below, they would scarcely have discovered that there was anybody creeping along the parapet. Now there was a slight creaking noise for about half a minute, and then the window of Sweeney Todd's attic swung open.

"Come on," said Sir Richard, and he softly alighted in the apartment. Crotchet followed him, and then the magistrate carefully closed the window again, and left it in such a way, that a touch from within would open it. Then they were in profound darkness, and as it was no part of the policy of Sir Richard Blunt to run any unnecessary risks, he did not move one inch from the place upon which he stood until he had lighted a small hand lantern, which had a powerful reflector and a tin shade, which in a moment could be passed over the glass, so as to hide the light upon an emergency.

"Now, Crotchet," he said, "we shall see where we are."

"\_Reether\_," said Crotchet.

By holding the light some height up, they were able to command a good view of the attic. It was a miserable looking room: the walls were in a state of premature decay, and in several places lumps of mortar had fallen from the ceiling, making a litter of broken plaster upon the floor. It was entirely destitute of furniture, with the exception of an old stump bedstead, upon which there lay what looked like a quantity of old clothes.

"Safe enough," said Sir Richard.

"Stop!" said Crotchet.

"What's the matter?"

"There's something odd on the floor here. Don't you see as the dust has got into a crevice as is bigger nor all the other crevices, and goes right along this ways and then along that ways? Don't you move, sir. I'll be down upon it in a minute."

Mr. Crotchet laid himself down flat upon the floor, and then crept on until he came to that part of the flooring which had excited his suspicions. As soon as he pressed upon it with both his hands it gave way under them plainly, by the elevation of the other end of the three boards of which this trap was composed, proclaiming that it was a moveable portion of the floor, revolving or turning upon one of the joists as a centre.

"Oh dear, how clever!" said Crotchet. "If Mr. Todd goes on a cutting away his joists in this here way he'll bring his blessed old house down with a run some day. How nice and handy, now, if any one was to step upon here--they'd go down into the room below, and perhaps break their blessed legs as they went."

[Illustration: The Secret Trap Discovered In Todd's House.]

"Escape the first for us!" said Sir Richard.

"Oh, lor, yes. Now this here Todd thinks, by putting this here man-trap here, as he has perwided again any accidents; but we ain't them 'ere sort o' birds as is caught by chaff, not we. Why he must have spilted his blessed ceiling down below to make this here sort of a jigamaree concern."

"It's not a bad contrivance though, Crotchet. Its own weight, you see, restores it to its place again, and so there's no trouble with it."

"Oh dear, no. It's a what I calls a self-acting catch-'em-who-can sort o' machine. Yes, Sir Richard, I never did think that 'ere Todd was wery green. He don't know quite so much as we know; but yet he's a rum 'un."

"No doubt of it. Do you think, Crotchet, there is anything else in this attic to beware of?"

"Not likely; when he'd finished this here nice little piece of handywork, I dare say he said to himself--'This will catch 'em,' and so down stairs he toddled, and grinned like a monkey as has swallowed a whole nut by haccident, and gived himself a pain in the side in consekence. 'That'll catch 'em,' says he."

Mr. Crotchet seemed so much amused at the picture he drew to himself of the supposed exultation of Todd, that for some moments he did nothing but laugh. The reader must not suppose, however, that in the circumstances of peril in which they were, he indulged in a regular "Ha! ha!"--quite the contrary. He had a mode of laughing under such circumstances that was entirely his own, and which, while it made no noise, shook his huge frame as though some commotion had taken sudden possession of it, and the most ridiculous part of the process was the

alarming suddenness with which he would become preternaturally serious again. But Sir Richard Blunt knew his peculiarities, and paid no attention to them, unless they very much interfered with business.

"We must not waste time. Come on, Crotchet."

Sir Richard walked to the door of the attic and tried it. It was as fast as though it had been part of the wall itself.

"So--so," he said. "Master Todd has taken some precautions against being surprised from the top of his house. He has nailed up this door as surely as any door was ever nailed up."

"Has he really, though?"

"Yes. Quick, Crotchet. You have your tools about you, I suppose."

"Never fear," said Crotchet. "I'm the \_indiwedal\_ as never forgets nothink, and if I don't have the middle panel out o' this door a'most as soon as look at it, it's only cos it takes more time."

With this philosophical and indisputable remark, Mr. Crotchet stooped down before the door, and taking various exquisitely made tools from his pocket, he began to work at the door. He knocked nearly noiselessly, and it looked like something little short of magic to see how the panel was forced out of the door without any of the hammering and flustering which a carpenter would have made of it.

"All's right," he said. "If we can't creep through here, we are bigger than I think we is."

"That will do. Hush!"

They both listened attentively, for Sir Richard thought he heard a faint noise from the lower part of the house. As, however, five minutes of attentive listening passed away, and no repetition of it occurred, they thought it was only some one of those accidental sounds which will at times be heard in all houses whether occupied or not. Crotchet took the lead by creeping clearly enough through the opening that he had made in the door of the attic, and Sir Richard followed him. They were both, now, at the head of the staircase, and Sir Richard held up the lantern so as to have a good look around him. The walls looked damp and neglected. There were two other doors opening from that landing, but neither of them was fastened, so that they entered the rooms easily. They took care, though, not to go beyond the threshold for fear of accidents, although it was very unlikely that Todd would take the trouble to construct a trap-door in any other attic than the one which was so easily accessible from the parapet.

"Old clothes--old clothes!" said Crotchet. "There seems to be nothing else in these rooms."

"So it would appear," said Sir Richard.

He lifted up some of the topmost of a heap of garments upon the floor, and a cloud of moths flew upwards in confusion.

"There's the toggery," said Mr. Crotchet, "of the \_smugged 'uns\_!"

"You really think so."

"Knows it."

"Well, Crotchet, I don't think from what I know myself that we shall disagree about Todd's guilt. The grand thing is to discover how, and in what way he is guilty."

"Just so. I'm quite sure we have seed all as there is to see up here, so suppose we toddle down stairs now, sir. There's, perhaps, quite a lot o' wonders and natur', and art, down below."

"Stop a bit. Hold the lamp."

Crotchet did so, while Sir Richard took from his pocket a pair of thick linsey-woolsey stockings, and carefully drew them on over his boots, for the purpose of deadening the sound of his footsteps; and then he held the light, while Mr. Crotchet, who was similarly provided with linsey-woolseys, went through the same process. After this, they moved like spectres, so perfectly noiseless were their footsteps upon the stairs. Sir Richard went first, while Crotchet now carried the light, holding it sufficiently high that the magistrate could see the stairs before him very well, as he proceeded. It was quite evident, from the state of those stairs, as regarded undisturbed dust, that they had not been ascended for a considerable time; and indeed, Todd, considering the top of his house as perfectly safe after the precautions he had taken, did not trouble himself to visit it. Our adventurers reached the landing upon the second floor in perfect safety; and after giving a few minutes more to the precautionary measure of listening, they opened the first door that presented itself to the observation, and entered the room. They both paused in astonishment, for such a miscellaneous collection of matters as was in this room, could only have been expected to be met with in the shop of a general dealer. Several chairs and tables were loaded with wearing apparel of all kinds and conditions. The corners of the room were literally crowded with mobs of swords, walking sticks, and umbrellas; while a countless heap of hats lay upon the floor in disorder. You could not have stepped into that room for miscellaneous personal appointments of one sort or another; and Mr. Crotchet and Sir Richard Blunt trod upon the hats as they walked across the floor, from sheer inability to get out of the way.

"Well," said Crotchet, "if so be as shaving should go out of fashion, Todd could set up a clothier's shop, and not want for stock to begin with."

"I can imagine," muttered the magistrate to himself, "what a trouble and anxiety all these things must be to Todd, and woollen goods are so difficult to burn. Crotchet, select some of the swords, and look if there are maker's names upon the blades."

While Crotchet was preparing this order. Sir Richard was making a hasty but sufficiently precise examination of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.  
THE MYSTERIOUS CUPBOARD.

"Here they are," said Crotchet. "Some of these are worth something."

"Get a cane or two, likewise."

"All's right, sir. I tell you what it is, sir. If there's such things as ghosts in the world, I wonder how this Todd can sleep o' nights, for he must have a plaguy lot of 'em about his bed of a night."

"Perhaps he satisfied himself upon that head, Crotchet, before he began his evil practices, for all we know; but let us make our way into another room, for I think we have seen all there is to see in this one."

"Not a doubt of it. It's only a kind of store-room, this, and from the size of it, I should say it ain't the largest on this floor."

Sir Richard walked out of the room on to the landing place. All was perfectly still in the barber's house, and as he had heard nothing of the bugle sound in Fleet-street, he felt quite satisfied that Todd had not returned. It was a great thing, in all his daring exploits in discovering criminals, and successfully ferreting out their haunts, that he (Sir Richard) could thoroughly depend upon his subordinates. He knew they were not only faithful but brave. He knew that, let what might happen, they would never leave him in the lurch. Hence, in the present instance, he felt quite at his ease in the house of Todd, so long as he did not hear the sound of the bugle. Of course, personal danger he did not consider, for he knew he was, if even he had been alone, more than a match for Todd; but what he wanted was, not to overcome Sweeney Todd, but to find out exactly what were his practices. He could, upon the information he already had, have walked into Todd's shop at any time, and have apprehended him, but that would not have answered. What he wanted to do was to

"Pluck out the heart of his mystery,"

and, in order to do that, it was not only necessary that Todd should be at large, but that he should have no hint that such a person as he, Sir Richard Blunt, had his eyes wide open to his actions and manoeuvres. Hence was it that, in this examination of the house, he wished to keep himself so secret, and free from any observation. There were three rooms upon the second floor of Todd's house, and the very next one they met with, was the one immediately beneath the trap in the floor of the attic. A glance at the ceiling enabled them easily to perceive it. This room was larger than the other considerably, and in it were many boxes

and chests, as well as in the centre an immense old-fashioned counting-house desk, with six immense flaps to it, three upon each side, while a brass railing went along the middle.

"Ah!" said Sir Richard, "here will be something worth the examining, I hope."

"Let's take the cupboards first," said Crotchet. "There are two here, and as they are the first we have seen, let's look at 'em, Sir Richard. I never likes to be in a strange room long, without a peep in the cupboard."

"Very well, Crotchet. Look in that one to the left, while I look in this one to the right."

Sir Richard opened a cupboard door to the right of the fire-place in this room, while Crotchet opened one to the left.

"More clothes," said Sir Richard. "What's in yours, Crotchet?"

"Nothing at all. Yet stay. There's a something high up here. I don't know what it is, but I'll try and reach it if I can."

Crotchet went completely into the cupboard, but he had no sooner done so, than Sir Richard Blunt heard a strange crushing sound, and then all was still.

"Hilloa! What's that, Crotchet?"

He hastily stepped to the cupboard. The door had swung close. It was evidently hung upon its hinges in a manner to do so. With his disengaged hand, the magistrate at once pulled it open. Crotchet was gone. The astonishment of Sir Richard Blunt for a moment was excessive. There was the flooring of the cupboard perfectly safe, but no Crotchet. Nothing to his eyes had looked so like a magical disappearance as this, and with the trap in his hand, he stood while any one might have counted twenty, completely motionless and transfixed by astonishment. Starting then from this lethargic condition, he drew a pistol from his pocket, and rushed to the door of the room. At this instant, he heard the bugle sound clearly and distinctly in the street. Before the echo of the sound had died away, the magistrate was upon the landing-place outside the door of the second floor. He listened intently, and heard some one below coughing. It was not the cough of Crotchet. What was he to do? If he did not make a signal to the officers in the street that all was safe, the house would soon be stormed, and, for all he knew, that might ensure the destruction of Crotchet, instead of saving him. For a moment, the resolution to go down the staircase at all hazards and face Todd--for he had no doubt but that he had come home--possessed him, but a moment's reflection turned the scale of thought in another direction. If the officers, not finding him make a signal that he was safe, did attack the house, they would not do so for some minutes. It was their duty not to be precipitate. He leant on the balustrade, and listened with an intentness that was perfectly painful. He heard the cough again from quite the lower part of the house, and then he became aware that some

one was slowly creeping up the stairs. He had placed the slide over the bull's eye of his little lamp, so that all was darkness, but he heard the breathing of the person who was coming up towards him. He shrunk back close to the wall, determined to seize, and with an iron hand, any one who should reach the landing. Suddenly, from quite the lower part of the building, he heard the cough again. The thought, then, that it must be Crotchet who was coming up, impressed itself upon him, but he would not speak. In a few moments some one reached the landing, and stretching out his right arm, Sir Richard caught whoever it was, and said in a whisper--

"Any resistance will cost you your life."

"Crotchet it is," said the new comer.

"Ah, how glad I am it is you!"

"Reether. Hush. The old 'un is below. Ain't I shook a bit. It's a precious good thing as my bones is in the blessed habit o' holding on, one of 'em to the rest and all the rest to one, or else I should have tumbled to bits."

"Hush! hush!"

"Oh, he's a good way off. That 'ere cupboard has got a descending floor with ropes and pullies, so down I went and was rolled out into a room below and up went the bit of flooring again. I was very nearly startled a little."

"Nearly?"

"Reether, but here I is. I got out and crept up stairs as soon as I could, cos, says I, the governor will wonder what the deuce has become of me."

"I did, indeed."

"Just as I thought. Sir Richard, just listen to me! I've got a fancy for Todd."

"A fancy for Todd?"

"Yes, and I want to stay here a few hours--yes, go and let them as is outside know all's right, and leave me here, I think somehow I shall like to be in this crib alone with Todd for an hour or two. You have got other business to see to, you know, so just leave me here; and mind yer, if I don't get here by six in the morning, just consider as he's got the better of me."

"No, Crotchet, I cannot."

"Can't what?"

"Consent to leave you here alone."

"Bother! what's the row, and where's the danger, I should like to know? Who's Todd? Who am I? Gammon!"

Sir Richard shook his head, although Crotchet could not very well see him shake it, and after a pause he added--

"I don't suppose exactly that there is much danger, Crotchet, but, at all events, I don't like it said that I brought you into this place and then left you here."

"Bother!"

"You go and leave me."

"A likely joke that. No, I tell yer what it is, Sir Richard. You knows me and I knows you, so what does it matter what other folks say? Business is business I hope, and don't you believe that I'm going to be such a flat as to throw away my life upon such a fellow as Todd. I think I can do some good by staying here; if I can't I'll come away, but I don't think, in either case, that Todd will see me. If he does I shall, perhaps, be forced to nab him, and that, after all, is the worst that can come of it."

"Well, Crotchet, you shall have your own way."

"Good."

"I will return to the attic as soon as I conveniently can, and, let what will happen to you, remember that you are not deserted."

"I knows it."

"Good bye. Take care of yourself, old friend."

"I means it."

"I should be indeed afflicted if anything were to happen to you."

"Gammon."

Sir Richard left him his own pistols, in addition to the pair which he, Crotchet, always had about him, so that he was certainly well-armed, let what would happen to him in that house of Sweeney Todd's, which had now become something more than a mere object of suspicion to the police. Well, they knew Todd's guilt--it was the mode in which he was guilty only that still remained a mystery. The moment Sir Richard Blunt reached the attic again, he held his arm out at full length from the window, and waved to and fro the little lantern as a signal to the officers in the street that he was safe. This done, he would not return to the room he had hired of the bootmaker, but he resolved to wait about ten minutes longer in case anything should happen in the house below that might sound alarming. After that period of time, he resolved upon leaving for an hour or two, but he, of course, would not do so without apprising his

officers of Crotchet's situation. During the time that had been passed by Crotchet and Sir Richard Blunt in Sweeney Todd's house, the shoemaker and his wife had had an adventure which created in their minds abundance of surprise. It will be recollected that the shoemaker's wife had decided upon what was to be done regarding the new lodger--namely, that under the pretence that a Mr. Jones was a more satisfactory lodger, he was to be asked to be so good as to quit the attic he had so strangely taken. The arrival of Mr. Crotchet with so different a story from that told by Sir Richard Blunt certainly had the effect of engendering many suspicions in the minds of Sir Richard's new landlord and landlady.

"Well, my dear," said the shoemaker, "if you are willing to come up stairs, I will say what you wish to this man, particularly as his pretended friend don't seem to be coming down stairs again."

"Very well, my dear; I'll take the kitchen poker and follow you, and while I am behind you, if I think he is a pleasant man, you know, and we had better let him stay, I will give you a slight poke."

"A-hem! Thank you--yes."

Armed with the poker, the lady of the mansion followed her husband up the staircase, and perhaps we may fairly say that curiosity was as strong a feeling with her as any other in the business. To tell the truth, the shoemaker did not half like the job; but what will a man, who is under proper control at home, not do to keep up the shallow treaty of peace which his compliance produces between him and his better half? Is there anything which a hen-pecked husband dares say he will not do, when the autocrat of his domestic hearth bids him do it? Up--up the long dark staircase they went! Our ancestors, as one of their pieces of wisdom, had a knack of making steep dark staircases; and, to tell the truth, there are many modern architects equally ingenious. At length the attic landing was reached. The shoemaker knew the localities of his house better than to make such a mistake as Crotchet had done; so the old lady, with her feet in the pan of water, was saved such another interruption as had already taken place into her peaceful domains.

"Now, my dear, knock boldly," said the lady of the mansion. "Knock like a man."

"Yes, my love."

The shoemaker tapped at the door with about the energy of a fly. The soft appeal produced no effect whatever, and the lady growing impatient, then poised the poker, and dealt the door a blow which induced her husband to start aside, lest the lodger should open it quickly, and rush out in great wrath. All was profoundly still, however; and then they tried the lock, and found it fast.

"He's gone to bed," said the shoemaker.

"He can't," said the lady, "for there are no sheets on the bed. Besides, they have not both gone to bed. I tell you what it is. There's some mystery in this that I should like to find out. Now, all the keys of all

the attics are alike. Just wait here, and I'll borrow Mrs. Macconikie's."

The shoemaker waited in no small amount of trepidation, while this process of key-borrowing from the old lady who enjoyed a pan of water, took place upon the part of his wife.

## CHAPTER XL. CROTCHET ASTONISHES MR. TODD.

The key was soon procured, but it will be recollected that Crotchet had fastened the door rather too securely for it to be opened by any such ordinary implement as a key, and so disappointment was the portion of the shoemaker's wife.

"Don't you think, my love," said the shoemaker, "that it will be just as well to leave this affair until the morning, before taking any further notice of it?"

"And pray, then, am I to sleep all night, if I don't know the rights of it, I should like to know? Perhaps, if you can tell me that, you are a little wiser than I think you. Marry, come up!"

"Oh, well, I only--"

"You only! Then only don't. That's the only favour I ask of you, sir, is to only don't."

What extraordinary favour this was, the lady did not condescend to explain any more particulars, but it was quite enough for the husband to understand that a storm was brewing, and to become humble and submissive accordingly.

"Well, my dear, I'm sure I only wish you to do just what you like; that's all, my dear, I'm sure."

"Very good."

After this, she made the most vigorous efforts to get into the attic, and if any one had been there--which at that juncture there was not--they might truly have asked "Who's that knocking at the door?" Finding that all her efforts were ineffectual, she took to peeping through the key-hole, but nothing was to be seen; and then, for the first time, the idea struck her that there was something supernatural about the business, and in a few moments this notion gained sufficient strength to engender some lively apprehensions.

"I tell you what," she said to her husband, "if you don't fetch a constable at once, and have the door opened, and see all about, I'm afraid--indeed I'm quite sure--I shall be very ill."

"Oh, dear--oh, dear."

"It's of no use your standing here and saying 'Oh, dear,' like a great stupid as you are--always was and always will be. Go for a constable, at once."

"A constable?"

"Yes, There's Mr. Otton, the beadle of St. Dunstan's, lives opposite, as you well know, and he's a constable. Run over the way and fetch him, this minute."

She began hastily to descend the stairs, and the shoemaker followed her, remonstrating, for the idea of fetching a constable, and making him and his house the talk of the whole neighbourhood, was by no means a proposition that met with his approval. The lady was positive, however, and Mr. Otton, the beadle of St. Dunstan's, was brought from over the way, and the case stated to him at length.

"\_Convulsions!\_" exclaimed Otton, "what can I do?"

"\_Burst\_ open the door," said the lady.

"\_Burst\_ a door open, mum! What is you a thinking on? Why, that's contrary to \_Habus Corpus\_, mum, and all that sort of thing. Convulsions, mum! you mustn't do it. But I tell you what, now, will be the thing."

Here Mr. Otton put his finger to the side of his nose, and looked so cunning that you would hardly have believed it possible.

"What?--what?"

"Why, suppose, mum, we ask Mr. Todd, next door, to give us leave to go up into his attic, and get out at the window and look in at yours, mum?"

"That'll do. Run in--"

"Me!" cried the shoemaker. "Oh, M--Mr. Todd is a strange man--a very strange man--not at all a neighbourly sort of man, and I don't like to go to him.--I won't go, that's flat--unless, my love, you particularly wish it."

"Convulsions!" cried the beadle. "Ain't I a-going with you? Ain't I a constabulary force, I should like to know? Convulsions! What is yer afeard on? Come on. Lor, what's the meaning o' that, I wonders, now; I should just like to take that ere fellow up. Whoever heard of a horn being blowed at such a rate, in the middle o' Fleet-street, afore, unless it was somethin' as consarned the parish? Convulsions! it's contrary to \_Habus Corpus\_, it is. Is me a constabulary force, or is me not?"

This was the bugle sound which warned Sir Richard Blunt and his friend

Crotchet that Sweeney Todd had returned to his shop; and, in fact, while this very conversation was going on at the shoemaker's, Todd had lit the lamp in his shop, and actually opened it for business again, as the evening was by no means very far advanced. Mr. Otton went to the door, and looked about for the audacious bugle player, but he was not to be seen; so he returned to the back parlour of the shoemaker, uttering his favourite expletive of "Convulsions" very frequently.

"Now, if you is ready," he said, "I is; so let's come at once, and speak to Mr. Todd. He may be a strange man, but for all that, he knows, I \_dessay\_, what's proper respect to a \_beetle\_."

With this strange transformation of his own title upon his lips, Mr. Otton stalked on rather majestically, as he thought, to the street, and thence to Todd's shop door, with the shoemaker following him. The gait of the latter expressed reluctance, and there was a dubious expression upon his face, which was quite amusing to behold.

"Really, Mr. Otton," he said, "don't you think, after all, it would be better to leave this affair alone till the morning? We can easily tell my wife, you know, that Mr. Todd won't let us into his attic. That must satisfy her, for what can she say to it?"

"Sir," said the beadle, "when you call in the \_constabullary\_ force, you must do just what they say, or lasteways you acts contrary to \_Habus Corpuses\_. Come on. Convulsions! is we to be brought over the street, and then is we to do nothing to go down to prosperity?"

The beadle uttered these words with such an air of pomposity and importance that the shoemaker, who had a vague idea that \_Habus Corpus\_ was some fearful engine of the law at the command of all its administrators, no longer offered any opposition, but, as meekly as any lamb, followed Mr. Otton into Sweeney Todd's shop. The door yielded to a touch, and Mr. Otton presented his full rubicund countenance to the gaze of Sweeney Todd, who was at the further end of the shop, as though he had just come from the parlour at the back of it, or was just going there. He did not at first see the shoemaker, who was rather obscured by the portly person of the beadle, and Todd's first idea was, the most natural one in the world, namely, that the beadle came upon an emergency to be shaved. Giving him an hideous leer, Todd said--

"A fine night for a clean shave."

"Werry. In course, Mr. T., you is the best judge o' that 'ere, but I does for myself."

As he spoke, Mr. Otton rubbed his chin, to intimate that it was to his shaving himself that he alluded just then.

"Hair cut?" said Todd, giving a snap to the blades of a large pair of scissors, that made Mr. Otton jump again, and nearly induced the shoemaker to run out of the shop into the street.

"No," said the beadle; and taking off his hat, he felt his hair, as

though to satisfy himself that it was all there, just as usual. "No."

Todd looked as though he would have shaved him with extreme pleasure, and advancing a few steps, he added--

"Then what is it that you bring your wieldy carcass here for, you gross lump of stupidity? Ha! ha! ha!"

"What? Convulsions!"

"Pho!--Pho! Can't you take a joke, Mr. Otton? I know you well enough. It's my funny way to call people, whom I admire very much, all the hard names I can think of."

"Is it?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I thought you and all my neighbours knew that well enough. I'm one of the drollest dogs alive. That I am. Won't you sit down?"

"Well, Mr. Todd, a joke may be a joke." The beadle looked very sententious at this discovery. "But you have the oddest way of poking your fun at any one that ever I heard of; but, I comes to you now as a respectable parishioner, to--"

"Oh," said Todd, putting his hands, very deliberately into his pockets, "how much?"

"It ain't anything to pay. It's a mere trifle. I just want to go up to your front attic, and--"

"What?"

"Your front attic, and get out of the window to look into the front attic next door. We won't trouble you if you will oblige us with a candle. That's all."

Todd advanced two steps further towards the beadle and looked peeringly in his face. All the suspicious qualities of his nature rose up in alarm. Every feeling of terror regarding the instability of his position, and the danger by which he was surrounded, rushed upon him. At once he conjectured that danger was approaching him, and that in this covert manner the beadle was intent upon getting into the house, for the purpose of searching it to his detriment. As the footpad sees in each bush an officer, so, in the most trivial circumstances, even the acute intellect of Sweeney Todd saw dangers, and rumours of dangers, which no one but himself could have had the remotest idea of. He glared upon the beadle with positive ferocity, and so much affected was Otton by that lynx-like observation of Sweeney Todd's, that he stepped aside and disclosed that he was not alone. If anything could have confirmed Todd in his suspicions that there was a dead-set at him, it was finding that the beadle was not alone. And yet the shoemaker was well known to him. But what will lull such suspicion as Sweeney Todd had in his mind? Once engendered, it was like the jealousy that--

"Makes the meat it feeds on!"

He advanced, step by step, glaring upon the beadle and upon the shoemaker. Reaching up his hand, he suddenly turned the lamp that hung from the ceiling clear round, so that, in lieu of its principal light falling upon him, it fell upon the faces of those who had paid him so unceremonious a visit.

"Lawks!" said the beadle.

"Excuse us, Mr. Todd," said the shoemaker, "I assure you we only meant--"

"What?" thundered Todd. Then suddenly softening his voice, he added--"You are very welcome here indeed. Pray what do you want?"

"Why, sir," said Otton, "you must know that this gentleman has a lodger."

"A what?"

"A lodger, sir, and so you see that's just the case. You understand that this lodger--lor, Mr. Todd, this is your neighbour the shoemaker, you know. The front attic, you know, and all that sort of thing. After this explanation, I hope you'll lend us a candle at once, Mr. Todd, and let us up to the attic."

Todd shaded his eyes with his hands, and looked yet more earnestly at the beadle.

"Why, Mr. Otton," he said, "indeed you do want a shave."

"A shave?"

"Yes, Mr. Otton, I have a good razor here that will go over your chin like a piece of butter. Only take a seat, sir, and if you, neighbour, will go home comfortably to your own fireside, I will send for you when Mr. Otton is shaved."

"But really," said the beadle, rubbing his chin, "I was shaved this morning, and as I do for myself always, you see, why I don't think I require. Conwulsions! Mr. Todd, why do you look at a man so? Remember the Habus Corpus. That's what we call the paladermius of the British Constitution, you know."

By this time the beadle had satisfied himself that he did not at all require shaving, and turning to the shoemaker, he said--

"Why don't you be shaved?"

"Well, I don't care if I do, and perhaps, in the meantime you, Mr. Otton, will go up to the attic, and take a peep into the next one, and see if my lodger is up or in bed, or what the deuce has become of him."

It's a very odd thing, Mr. Todd, that a man should take one's attic, and then disappear without coming down stairs."

"Disappear without coming down stairs?" said Todd.

"Yes, and my wife says--"

Todd made an impatient gesture.

"Gentlemen, I will look in my attic myself. The fact is, that the flooring is rather out of order, and unless you know exactly where to step you will be apt to fall through a hole into the second floor."

"The deuce you are!" said Otton.

"Yes; so I would not advise either of you to make the attempt. Just remain there, and I'll go at once."

The proposition suited both parties, and Mr. Todd immediately passed through a door at the back of his shop, which he immediately closed behind him again. Instead of going up stairs, however, he slid aside a small opening in the panel of this door, and placed his ear to it. "If people say anything impudent, it is the moment they are free from the company that has held them in check," was one of Sweeney Todd's maxims. His first notion that the beadle and the shoemaker had come covertly to search his house, had given way a little, and he wanted to convince himself of the innocency or the reverse of their intentions, before he put himself to any further trouble.

"I don't like it," said the shoemaker.

"Like what? Convulsions! what don't you like?"

"Intruding upon Mr. Todd. What does he care about my lodgers? It ain't as if he let any of his own house, and had a fellow feeling with us."

"Werry good," said the beadle, "but you send for me, and you ask me what's best, and I tell yer that Habus Corpus, and one thing and another, what I advised was the only thing, that was to get into Mr. Todd's attic, and then get on the parapet and into yours. But if so be as there's holes in Mr. Todd's attic, that will alter the affair, you know."

"Fool--fool!" muttered Todd. "After all, they only come upon their own twaddling affairs, and I was idiot enough to suspect such muddy pated rascals."

In an instant he was in the shop again.

"Nobody there, gentlemen; I have looked into the attic, and there's nobody there."

"Well, I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Todd," said the shoemaker, "for taking so much trouble. I'll go, and rather astonish my wife, I think."

"Convulsions!" said the beadle. "It's an odd thing, but you know, Mr. Todd, \_Habus Corpus\_ must have his way."

## CHAPTER XLI. TODD'S VISION.

When they had left, Todd remained for some minutes in an attitude of thought.

"Is this an accident?" he said, "or is it but the elaboration of some deep design to entrap me. What am I to think?"

Todd was an imaginative man quite. He was just the individual to think, and think over the affair until he made something of it, very different from what it really was, and yet there was some hope that the matter was no more than what it appeared to be, by the character of the parties who had come upon the mission. If anything serious had come to the ears of the authorities, he thought, that surely two such people as the beadle of St. Dunstan's, and his neighbour the shoemaker, would not be employed to unravel such a mystery. He sat down in an arm chair and rested his head upon his hand, and while he was in that attitude the door of his shop opened, and a man in the dress of a carter made his appearance.

"Be this Mister Todd's?"

"Well," said Todd, "what then?"

"Why, then, this be for him like. It's a letter, but larning weren't much i' the fashion in my young days, so I can't read what's on it."

Todd stretched out his hand. An instant examination showed him it bore the Peckham post-mark.

"Ah!" he muttered, "from Fogg. Thank you, my man, that will do. That will do. What do you wait for?"

"Please to remember the carter, your honour!"

Todd looked daggers at him, and slowly handed out twopence, which the man took with a very ill grace.

"What," said Todd, "would you charge me more for carrying a letter than King George the Third does, you extortionate rascal?"

The carter gave a nod.

"Get out with you, or by--"

Todd snatched up a razor, and the carter was off like a shot, for he

really believed, from the awful looks of Todd, that his life was not worth a minute's purchase. Todd opened the letter with great gravity.--It contained the following words:--

"DEAR SIR,"

"The lad, T. R., I grieve to say, is no more. Let us hope he is gone where the weary are at rest, and where there is neither sin nor sorrow.

"I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

"JACOB B. FOGG."

"Humph!" said Todd.

He held the letter in the flame of the lamp until it fell a piece of airy tinder at his feet.

"Humph!" he repeated, and that humph was all that he condescended to say of poor Tobias Ragg, whom the madhouse-keeper had thought proper to say was dead; hoping that Todd might never be undeceived, for the barber was a good customer.

If, however, Tobias should turn up to the confusion of Fogg and of Todd, what could the latter do for the deceit that had been practised upon him?--literally nothing.

"No sooner," said Todd, "does one cloud disappear from my route than another takes its place. What can that story mean about the attic next door? It sounds to my ears strange and portentous. What am I to think of it?"

He rose and paced his shop with rapid strides. At length he paused as though he had come to a determination.

"The want of a boy is troublesome to me," he said. "I must get one, but for the present this must suffice."

He wrote upon a small slip of paper the words--"Gone to the Temple--will return shortly." He then, by the aid of a wafer, affixed this announcement to the upper part of the half-glass door leading into his shop. Locking this door securely on the inside, and starting a couple of bolts into their sockets, he lit a candle and left his shop. With a stealthy, cat-like movement, Todd passed through the room immediately behind his business apartment, and opening another door he made his way towards the staircase. Then he paused a moment. He thought some sound from above had come upon his ears, but he was not quite sure. To suspect, however, was with such a man as Todd to be prepared for the worst, and accordingly he went back to the room behind his shop again, and from a table-drawer he took a knife, such as is used by butchers in their trade, and firmly clutching it in his right hand, while he carried the candle in his left, he once more approached the staircase.

"I do not think," he said, "that for nine years now any mortal footsteps, but my own, have trod upon these stairs or upon the flooring of the rooms above. Woe be to those who may now attempt to do so. Woe, I say, be to them, for their death is at hand."

These words were spoken in a deep hollow voice, that sounded like tones from a sepulchre, as they came from the lips of that man of many crimes. To give Todd his due, he did not seem to shrink from the unknown and dimly appreciated danger that might be up stairs in his house. He was courageous, but it was not the high-souled courage that nerves a man to noble deeds. No, Sweeney Todd's courage was that of hate--hatred to the whole human race, which he considered, with a strange inconsistency, had conspired against him; whereas he had been the one to place an impassable barrier between himself and the amenities of society. He ascended the stairs with great deliberation. When he reached the landing upon the first floor, he cast his eyes suspiciously about him, shading the light as he did so with his hand--that same hand that held the knife, the shadow of which fell upon the wall in frightful proportions.

"All is still," he said. "Is fancy, after all, only playing me such tricks as she might have played me twenty years ago? I thought I was too old for such freaks of the imagination."

Todd did not suspect that there was a second period in his life, when the mental infirmities of his green youth might come back to him, with many superadded horrors accumulated, with a consciousness of guilt. He slowly approached a door and pushed it open, saying as he did so--

"No--no--no. Above all things, I must not be superstitious. If I were so, into what a world of horrors might I not plunge. No--no, I will not people the darkness with horrible phantasies, I will not think that it is possible that men with

"Twenty murders on their heads,"

can revisit this world to drive those who have done them to death with shrieking madness--this world do I say? There is no other. Bah! Priests may talk, and the weak-brained fools who gape at what they do not understand, may believe them, but when man dies--when the electric condition that has imputed to his humanity what is called life, flies, he is indeed

"Dust to dust!"

Ha! ha! I have lived as I will die, fearing nothing and believing nothing."

As he uttered those words--words which found no real echo in his heart, for at the bottom of it lay a trembling belief in, and a dread of the great God that rules all things, and who is manifest in the meanest seeming thing that crawls upon the earth--he entered one of the rooms upon that floor, and glanced uneasily around him. All was still. There were trunks--clothes upon chairs, and a vast amount of miscellaneous property in this room, but nothing in the shape of a human being. Todd's

spirits rose, and he held the long knife more carelessly than he had done.

"Pho! pho!" he said. "I do, indeed, at times make myself the slave of a disturbed fancy. Pho! pho! I will no more listen to vague sounds, meaning nothing; but wrapping myself up in my consciousness of having nothing to fear, I will pursue my course, hideous though it may be."

He turned and took his way towards the landing place of the staircase again. He was now carrying both the light and the knife rather carelessly, and everybody knows that when a candle is held before a person's face, that but little indeed can be seen in the hazy vapour that surrounds it. So it was with Todd. He had got about two paces from the door, when a strange consciousness of something being in his way came over him. He immediately raised his hand--that hand that still carried the knife, to shade the light, and then, horror! horror! He saw standing upon the landing a figure attired in faded apparel, whose face was dabbled in blood, and the stony eyes which were fixed upon the face of Todd, with so awful an expression, that had the barber's heart been made of much more flinty materials than it was, he could not have resisted the terrors of that awful moment. With a shriek that echoed through the house, Todd fell upon the landing. The light rolled from stair to stair until it was finally extinguished, and all was darkness.

[Illustration: Sweeney Todd Astonished By Crotchet, The Bow-Street Officer.]

"Good," said Crotchet, for it was he who had enacted the ghost. "Good! I'm blessed if I didn't think that ere would nail him. These sort o' chaps are always on the look-out for something or another to be frightened at, and you have only to show yourself to put 'em almost out of their seven senses. It was a capital idea that of me to cut my finger a little, and get some blood to smear over my face. It's astonishing what a long way a little drop will go, to be sure. I dare say it makes me look precious rum."

Mr. Crotchet was quite right regarding the appearance which the blood, smeared over his face, gave to him. It made him look perfectly hideous, and any one whose conscience was not--

"With injustice corrupted!"

might well have been excused for a cold chill, and, perchance, even a swoon, like Sweeney Todd's, at his appearance.

"I rather think," added Crotchet, "that's a settler; so I'll just take the liberty, old fellow, of lighting your candle again, and then mizzling, for I don't somehow think much good is to be done in this crib just now."

By the aid of his phosphorus match Crotchet soon succeeded in re-illuminating the candle, which he found on a mat in the passage; but notwithstanding his opinion that he had seen about as much as there was to see in Todd's house, he, when he had the candle alight, thought he

might just as well peep into the parlour immediately behind the shop, before going up-stairs again. The door offered no opposition, for Todd had certainly not expected any one down stairs, and Mr. Crotchet found himself in the parlour about as soon as he had formed the wish to be there. This parlour was perfectly crammed with furniture, and all of the bureau kind, that is to say, large shapeless looking pieces of mahogany, with no end of drawers. Crotchet made an attempt at several before he found one that yielded to his efforts to open it, and that only did so because the hasp into which the lock was shot had given way, and no longer held it close. This drawer was full of watches.

"Humph!" said Crotchet, "Todd ought to know the time of day certainly, and no mistake. Ah, these ere machines, if they had tongues now, I rather think, could tell a tale or two. Howsomedever, I'll pocket some of 'em."

Mr. Crotchet put about a dozen watches in his pocket forthwith, and then he began to think that, as he did not wish to take Mr. Todd just then into custody, it would be just as well if he left the house. Besides, the barber had only fell into a swoon through fright, so that his recovery was a matter that could be calculated upon with something like certainty in a short time.

"It would be a world of pities if he was to find out as the ghost was only me," said Crotchet, "so I'll be off before he comes to himself."

Extinguishing the light, Crotchet wound his way up the staircase again, but when he got to the landing he stopped, and said--

"Bless us! I've not got them canes and swords as Sir Richard wanted me to bring away with me. Well, the watches will answer better than them, for all he wants is to compare 'em with the descriptions of some folks as has been missed by their blessed relations in London, so that's all right. Hilloa!"

This latter ejaculation arose from Crotchet having trodden upon Todd.

"The deuce!" he added, "I thought I had got clear of him."

He paused, and heard Todd utter a deep groan. Mr. Crotchet took this as a signal that he had better be off; and accordingly he ascended the next staircase quickly, and in a very few minutes reached the attic of Todd's house. When there, he quickly made his appearance in the shoemaker's attic, and found that Sir Richard Blunt had left the door of it just upon the latch for him. He was upon the point of passing out of the room, and going down stairs, when he heard a confused sound approaching the attic, and he paused instantly. The sound came nearer and nearer, until Crotchet found that some half dozen people were upon the landing, and all talking together in anxious whispers.

"What the deuce is up now?" he thought.

He approached the door and listened.

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Otton," said a female voice. "It's now getting on for ten o'clock, and I positively can't sleep in my bed unless I know something more about this horrid attic."

"Well, but, mum--"

"Don't speak to me. Here's an attic, and two men go into it. Then all at once there's no men in it; and then all at once, one man comes down and walks out as cool as a cucumber, and says nothing at all; and then we know well enough as there was two men, and only one--"

"But, mum--"

"Don't speak to me, and only one has come down."

"And here's the t'other!" cried Crotchet, suddenly bouncing out of the attic.

The confusion that ensued baffles all description. A grand rush was made into the apartments of the lady who was fond of putting her feet into hot water; and in the midst of the confusion, Crotchet quickly enough went down stairs, and made his escape from the shoemaker's house.

## CHAPTER XLII. THE GREAT SACRIFICE.

While all these things were going on at Sweeney Todd's, in Fleet-street, Mrs. Lovett was not quite idle as regarded her own affairs and feelings. That lady's--what shall we say--certainly not affections, for she had none--passions is a better word--were inconceivably shocked by the discovery she had made of the perfidy of her flaunting and moustachied lover. It will be perceived, by this little affair of Mrs. Lovett's, how strong-minded women have their little weaknesses. The hour of the appointment, which she (Mrs. Lovett) had made with her military-looking beau, came round; and there she sat, looking rather disconsolate.

"Am I never to succeed," she muttered to herself, "in finding one with whom I can make my escape from this sea of horrors that surrounds me? Am I, notwithstanding I have so fully accomplished all I wished to accomplish, by--by"--she shuddered and paused.--"Well, well, the time will come--I must go alone. Let Todd go alone, and let me go alone. Why should he wish to trammel my actions? He cannot surely think, for a moment, that with him I will consent to pass the remainder of my life!"

The scornful curl of the lip, and the indignant toss of the head, which accompanied these words, would have been quite sufficient to convince Todd, had he seen them, of the hopelessness of any such notion.

"No," she added, after a pause, "I shall be alone in the world, or, if I make ties, they shall be made in another country. There it is possible I

may be--oh, no, no--not happy; but I may be powerful, and have cringing slaves about me, who, finding that I am rich, will tell me that I am beautiful, and I shall be able to drink deeply of the intoxicating cup of pleasure, in some land where prudery, or what is called propriety, has not set up its banner as it has in this land of outward virtue. As for Todd--I--I will try to be assured that he is a corpse before I breathe freely; and if I fail in that, I will hope that we shall be thousands of leagues asunder."

A shadow passed the window. Mrs. Lovett started to her feet.

"Ah! who comes? 'Tis he--no--God! 'tis Todd."

For a moment she pressed her hands upon her face, as though she would squeeze out the traces of passion from the muscles, and then her old set smile came back again. Todd entered the shop. For a few moments they looked at each other in silence, and then Todd said--

"Alone?"

"Quite," she replied.

He gave one of his peculiar laughs, and then glided into the parlour behind the shop. Mrs. Lovett followed him.

"News?" he said.

"None."

"Hem! The time is coming."

"The time to leave off this--"

"Yes. The time to quit business, Mrs. Lovett. All goes well--swimmingly. Ha! ha!"

She shuddered as she said--

"Do not laugh."

"Let those laugh who win," replied Todd. "How old are you, Sarah?"

"Old?"

"Yes, or to shape the question perhaps more to a woman's liking, how young are you? Have you yet many years before you in which to enjoy the fruits of our labours? Have you the iron frame which will enable you to say--'I shall revel for years in the soft enjoyments of luxury stolen from a world I hate?' Tell me."

Mrs. Lovett fell into a musing attitude, and Todd thought she was reflecting upon her age; but at length she said--

"I sometimes think I would give half of what is mine if I could forget

how I became possessed of the whole."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Todd. Has no such feeling ever crossed you?"

"Never! I am implacable. Fate made me a barber, but nature made me something else. In the formation of man there is a something that gives weakness to his resolves, and makes him pause upon the verge of enterprise with a shrinking horror. That is what the world calls conscience. It has no hold of me. I have but one feeling towards the human race, and that is hatred. I saw that while they pretended to bow down to God, they had in reality set up another idol in their heart of hearts. Gold! gold! Tell me--how many men there are in this great city who do not worship gold far more sincerely and heartily than they worship Heaven?"

"Few--few."

"Few? None, I say, none. No. The future is a dream--an *\_ignis fatuus\_*--a vapour. The present we can grasp--ha!"

"What is our wealth, Todd?"

"Hundreds of thousands."

He shaded his eyes with his hands, and peered from the parlour into the shop.

"Who is that keeps dodging past the window each moment, and peeping in at every convenient open space in the glass that he can find?"

Mrs. Lovett looked, and then, after an effort, she said--

"Todd, I was going to speak to you of that man."

"Ah!"

"Listen; I suspect him. For some days past he has haunted the shop, and makes endeavours to become acquainted with me. I did not think it sound policy wholly to shun him, but gave him such encouragement as might supply me with opportunities of judging if he were a spy or not."

"Humph!"

"I think him dangerous."

Todd's eyes glistened like burning coals.

"Should he come into your shop to be shaved, Todd--"

"Ha! ha!"

The horrible laugh rang through the place, and Mrs. Lovett's lover, with

the moustache, sprung to the other side of Bell Yard, for the unearthly sound even reached his ears as he was peeping through the window to catch a glimpse of the charming widow.

"You understand me, Todd?"

"Perfectly--perfectly--I shall know him again. Ah, my dear Mrs. Lovett, how dangerous it is to be safe in this world. Even our virtue cannot escape detraction; but we will live in hopes of better times. You and I will show the world, yet, what wealth is."

"Yes--yes."

Todd crept close to her, and was about to place his arm round her waist, but she started from him, exclaiming--

"No--no, Todd--a thousand times no. Have we not before quarrelled upon this point. Do not approach me, or our compact, infernal as it is, is at an end. I have sold my soul to you, but I have not bartered myself."

The expression of Todd's countenance at this juncture was that of an incarnate fiend. He glared at Mrs. Lovett as though with the horrible fascination of his ugliness he would overcome her, and then slowly rising, he said--

"Her soul--ha! She has sold her soul to me--ha! I will call to-morrow."

He left the shop, and as he passed the gent who, by force of his moustache, hoped to win the affections of Mrs. Lovett, he gave him such a look that he terrified him and the gent found himself in the shop before he was aware.

"Bless me, what a horrid looking fellow! I swear by my courage and honour I never saw such a face. Ah, my charmer! Who was that left your charming presence just now?"

"Some one who came for a pie."

"'Pon honour, he's enough to poison all the pies! Oh, you beauty, yo--ou--ou--ou--"

The gallant's mouth was so full of a veal pie that he had stuffed into it that for some few moments he could not produce an intelligible sound. When he had recovered, he walked into the parlour and sat down, saying--

"Now, Mrs. Lovett, here am I, 'pon honour, your humble servant, and stop my breath if I'd say as much to the commander-in-chief. When's the happy day to be?"

"Do you really love me?"

"Do I love you? Do I love fighting? Do I love honour--glory? Do I love eating and drinking? Do I love myself?"

"Ah, Major Bounce, you military men are so gallant."

"'Pon honour we are. General Cavendish used to say to me--'Bounce,' says he, 'if you don't make your fortune by war, which you ought to do, Bounce, 'pon honour, you will make it by love.' 'General,' says I--now I was always ready for a smart answer, Mrs. Lovett--so 'General,' says I, 'the same to you!'"

"Very smart."

"Yes, wasn't it. 'Pon honour it was, and 'pon soul you looks more and more charming every day that I see you."

"Oh you flatterer!"

"No--no. Bar flattering--bar flattering. His Majesty has often said, 'Talk of flattery. Oh dear, Bounce is the man for me. He is right down--straight up--off handed. And no sort of mistake, on--on--on.'"

Another pie converted the oratory of the major into something between a grunt and a sigh.

"But major, I'm afraid that you will regret marrying me. If I convert all I have into money"--the major pricked up his ears--"I could not make of it more than fifty thousand pounds."

The major's eyes opened to the size of pint saucers, as he said--

"Fifty--fift--fif.--Say it again!"

"Fifty thousand pounds."

The major rose and embraced Mrs. Lovett. Tears actually came into his eyes, and gulping down the pie, he cried--

"You have fifty thousand charms. Only let me be your slave, your dog, damme--your dog, Mrs. Lovett, and I shall consider myself the luckiest dog in the world, but not for the money--not for the money. No, as the Marquis of Cleveland once said, 'If you want a thoroughly disinterested man, go to Bounce.'"

"Well, major, since we understand each other so well, there are two little things that I must name as my conditions."

"Name 'em--name 'em. Do you want me to bring you the king's eye-tooth, or her majesty's wig and snuff-box--only say the word."

"One is, that I will leave England. I have a private reason for so doing."

"Damme, so have I. That is a-hem! If you have a reason, that is a reason to me, you know."

"Exactly. In some other capital of Europe we may spend our money and

enjoy all the delights of existence. Do you speak French?"

"Ah-hem! Oh, of course. I never tried particularly, but as Lord North said to the Duke of Bridgewater, 'Bounce is the man if you want anything done of an out-of-the-way character.'"

"Very well, then. My next condition is, that you shave off your moustache."

"What?"

"Shave off your moustache; I have the greatest possible aversion to moustache, therefore I make that a positive condition without which I shall say no more to you."

"My charmer, do you think I hesitate? If you were to say to me, 'Bounce, off with your head,' in a moment it would roll at your feet."

"Go, then, to Mr. Todd's, the barber, in Fleet-street, and have them taken off at once, and then come back to me, for I declare I won't speak another word to you while you have them on."

"But, dear creature--"

Mrs. Lovett shook her head.

"'Pon honour!"

She shook her head again.

"I'll go at once then, 'pon soul, and have 'em taken off. I'll be back in a jiffy, Mrs. Lovett. Oh, you duck, I adore you. Confound the cash! It's you I knuckle under to. Man doats on Venus, and I love Lovett. Bye, bye; I'll get it done and soon be back. Fifty thousand--fifty--fif.--Oh, lor' why Flukes, your fortune is made at last."

These last words did not reach the ear of Mrs. Lovett. That lady threw herself into a chair, where the gallant major had left her.

"Another!" she said. "Another! Why did he try to deceive me? The fool, to pitch upon me, of all persons, to make his victim. I must have found him out, and poisoned him, if I had married him. It is better that Todd should take vengeance for me, and then the time shall come when he shall fall. Yes, so soon as I can, by cajollery or scheming, get sufficient of the plunder into my own hands, Todd's hours are numbered."

After this, Mrs. Lovett fell into a train of musing, and her face assumed an expression so different from that with which she was wont to welcome her customers in the shop, that not one of them would have known her. But we must look at Todd. It was upon his return home from several calls, the last of which had been this recent visit to Mrs. Lovett, that he had heard the noise in his house, which had terminated in his going up stairs, and being so terrified by Crotchet. It will be recollected that he fell insensible upon the staircase, and that Crotchet took that

opportunity of making good his retreat. How long he lay there, he, Todd, had no means of knowing, for all was profound darkness upon the staircase, but his first sensation consisted of a tingling in his feet and hands, similar to the sensation which is properly called "your limbs going to sleep." Then a knocking noise came upon his sense of hearing.

"What's that? Where am I?" he cried. "No--no. Don't hang me. Where's Mrs. Lovett? Hang her. She is guilty!"

Knock!--knock!--knock!

"Hush! hush! What is it? Who wants me? Good God--no--no. There is no good God for me!"

Knock! knock! knock! came again with increased violence at the door of the shop below.

#### CHAPTER XLIII. AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

Todd scrambled to his feet. He held his head in his hand.

"What does it all mean? What does it all mean?"

Knock! knock! knock!

Todd's senses were slowly returning to him. He began to recollect events at first confusedly, and then the proper order of their occurrence--how he had come home, and then heard a noise, and gone up stairs and seen--what? There he paused in his catalogue of events. What had he seen?"

Knock! knock! knock!

"Curses!" he muttered. "Who can that be hammering with such devilish perseverance at my door? By all that's horrible they shall pay dearly for thus disturbing me. Who can it be? Not any one to arrest me? No--no! They would not knock so long. An enforced entrance long before this would have brought them to me. What did I see? What did I see? What did I see? Dare I give it a name?"

He slowly descended the stairs, and reaching the shop, he peeped through a place in the door which he had made for such a purpose. There stood the hero of the moustachios knocking away with all his might to get the behests of Mrs. Lovett obeyed. Todd suddenly flung open the door, and in fell Major Bounce, alias Flukes.

"The devil! What do you want?"

"Pon honour. Damn it. Is this the way to treat a military man?"

Todd turned to the side of the shop, and hastily put on a wig--by an adroit movement of his fingers, he pulled his cravat sufficiently out from his neck to be able to bury his chin in it, and when he turned to the mock major, the latter had no suspicion that he looked upon the same person who had so alarmed him by a look, in Bell Yard.

"Shaved or dressed sir?" said Todd.

"Confound you. Why did you open the door so quick?"

"Thought you knocked, sir."

"I did, but stop my breath, if you haven't given me an ugly fall. But no matter. None but the brave deserve the fair. You perceive I am a military man?"

"Oh, yes, sir, anybody may see that by your martial air."

"A-hem! You are right. Well then, Mr. Barber, I want my moustache shaved off. It's a fancy of a lady. One of the most charming of her sex. One with a fifty thousand pound charm. 'Pon my valour, she has. Ah! I am a lucky dog. Thirty-eight--handsome as Apollo, and beloved by the fairest of the fair."

"Life is a jolly thing,  
Life is a jolly thing,  
While I drink deep and go frolicking,  
Fair maids, wives, and widows,  
Fair maids, wives, and widows  
Doat on the youth that goes frolicking."

"Ha! ha! ha! Life's a bumper. Upon my valour, Mr. Barber, I feel like a young colt, that I do."

"Really, sir. You don't say so?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Ha! ha! All's right. All's right. Now, Mr. What's-your-name. Off with the moustache. It's only in the cause of the fair that I would condescend to part with them, that's a fact, but when a lady's in the case--upon my valour, you are an ugly fellow."

"You don't say so," replied Todd, as he made a most hideous contortion. "Most people think me so fascinating that they stay with me."

"Ha! ha! A good joke."

Major Bounce--we may as well still call the poor wretch Major Bounce--placed his hat upon a chair, and his sword upon the top of it.

"Pray, sir, be seated," said Todd.

"Ah! Damme, is this seat a fixture?"

"Yes, sir, it's in the proper light, you see, sir."

"Oh, very well--I--pluff, pluff--puff, puff! Confound you, what have you filled my mouth with soap-suds for?"

"Quite an accident, sir. Quite an accident, for which I humbly beg your pardon, I assure you, sir. If you keep your mouth shut, and your eyes open, you will get on amazingly. Have you seen the paper to-day, sir?"

"No!"

"Sorry for that, sir. A very odd case, sir--a little on one side--a most remarkable case, I may say. A gentleman, sir, went into a barber's shop, and--"

"Eh!--puff! sleush! puff! Am I to be poisoned by your soap-suds? Upon my valour, I shall have to make an example of you to all barbers."

"You opened your mouth at the wrong time, sir."

"The wrong devil. Don't keep me here all night."

"Certainly not, sir. But as I was saying about this curious case in the paper. A military gentleman went into a barber's shop to be shaved."

"Well. The devil--pluff, pluff! Good God! Am I to endure all this?"

"Certainly not, sir. I'll show you the paper itself. You must know, sir, that the paragraph is headed 'Mysterious disappearance of a gentleman.'"

"Damn it, what do I care about it? Get on with the shaving."

"Certainly, sir."

Todd gave a horrible scrape to Major Bounce's face with a blunt razor.

"Quite easy, sir?"

"Easy? Good gracious, do you want to skin me?"

"Oh, dear no, sir. What an idea. To skin a military gentleman. Certainly not, sir. I see you require one of my best keen razors--one of the Magnum Bonums. Ha! ha!"

"Eh? What was that?"

"Only me giving a slight smile, sir."

"The deuce it was. Don't do it again, then, that's all; and get your keen razor at once, and make an end of the business."

"I will--make an end of the business. Sit still, sir. I'll be back in a moment."

Todd went into the parlour.

"£50,000!" muttered Major Bounce. "I am a happy fellow. At last, after so many ups and downs, I light upon my feet. A charming widow!--and she wishes to leave England. How lucky. I wish the very same thing. £50,000!--50,000 charms!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Good God! what's that?" said a man, who was passing Todd's window, in Fleet-street. "What a horrid shriek. Did you hear it, mum?"

"Oh dear, yes," said a woman. "I'm all of a tremble."

"It came from the barber's shop, here. Let's go in, and ask if anything is the matter?"

The man and woman crossed Todd's threshold, and opened the shop door. A glance showed them that a man's face was at a small opening of the parlour door. \_The shaving chair was empty.\_

"What's the matter?" said the man.

"With whom?" said Todd.

"Well, I don't know, but I thought somebody cried out."

Todd crept along the floor until he came close to the man, and then he said--

"My friend, have you anything to do?"

"Yes, thank God."

"Then, go and do it; and the next time you hear me cry out with the stomach-ache, ask yourself if it is your business to come in and ask me any questions about it. As for you, ma'am, unless you want to be shaved, I don't know, for the life of me, what you do here."

"Well, we only thought--"

Todd gave a hideous howl, which so terrified both the intruders, that they left the shop in a moment. His countenance then assumed that awful satanic expression which it sometimes bore, and he stood for the space of about five minutes in deep thought. Starting then suddenly, he took up the sword and hat of Major Bounce, and was in the act of putting both into a cupboard, when a smothered cry met his ears. Todd unsheathed the sword, and after fastening his shop door, he went into the parlour. He was absent about ten minutes, and when he returned he had not the sword, but he hastily washed his hands.

"Done!" he said.

Scratch! scratch! scratch! came something at his door, and Todd bent

forward in an attitude of listening. Scratch!--scratch!--scratch!--His face turned ghastly pale, and his knees knocked together as he whispered to himself--

"What is that?--what is that?"

Todd was getting superstitious. Since his adventure with Mr. Crotchet, his nerves had been out of order, notwithstanding the exertions he had made to control himself, and to convince his judgment that it was all a matter of imagination. Yet now, somehow or another, although there was no visible connection between the two things, he could not help mentally connecting this scratching at the door with the vision on the staircase. It is strange how the fancy will play such tricks, but it is no less strange than true that she does so, yoking together matters most dissimilar, and leading the judgment into strange disorder.

Scratch!--scratch!--scratch!

"What--what is it?" gasped Todd.

But time works wonders, and after the first shock to his nerves, the barber began to think that some one must be playing him a trick, and, for all he knew, it might be the very man whom he had snubbed so for interfering with him, or it might be some boy--the boys would at times tease Sweeney Todd. This supposition gathered strength each moment.

"It is a trick--a trick," he said. "I will be revenged!"

He took a thick stick from a corner, and stealthily approached the door. The odd scratching noise continued, and he again paused for a few moments to listen to it.

"A boy--a boy," he growled. "It is one of the infernal boys."

Opening the door a little way with great quickness, Todd aimed a blow through the opening. There was a short angry bark, and his old enemy, the dog that had belonged to the mariner, thrust in his head, and glared at Todd.

"Help!--help! Murder!" cried Todd. "The dog again!"

He made a vain effort to shut the door; but Hector was too strong for him, and, as he had got his head in, he seemed to be determined to force in his whole body, which he fully succeeded in doing. Todd dropped the stick, and rushed into the back-parlour for safety, from whence, through a small square of glass near the top of the door, he glared at the proceedings of his four-footed foe. The dog went direct to the cupboard from which he had taken his master's hat, and, opening the door, he dragged out an assemblage of miscellaneous property, as though he hoped to find among it some other vestige of the dear master he had lost. When, however, after tossing the things about, he found that they were all strange to him, he gave a melancholy howl. Hector then appeared to be considering what he should do next, and, after a few moments' consideration, he made a general survey of the shop, and finally ended

by leaping into the shaving-chair, where he sat and commenced such a series of melancholy howls, that Todd was nearly driven out of his mind at the conviction that the whole street must be soon in a state of alarm. Oh! how glad he would have been to have shot Hector; but then, although he had pistols in the parlour, he might miss him, and send the bullet into Fleet-street through his own window, and, perchance, hit somebody, and that would be a trouble. The report, too, would bring a crowd round his shop, and the old story of him and the accusing dog--for had not that dog accused him?--would be brought up again. But yet something must be done.

"Am I to be a prisoner here," said Todd, "while that infernal dog sits in the shaving chair, howling?"

Now and then, for the space of about half-a-minute, the dog would be quiet, but then the prolonged howl that he would give plainly showed that he had only been gathering breath to give it. Todd got desperate.

"I must and will shoot him," he said.

Going to a sideboard he opened a drawer, and took from it a large double-barrelled pistol. He looked carefully at the priming, and satisfying himself that all was right, he crept again to the parlour door.

"I must and will shoot him at any risk," he said. "This infernal dog will be else the bane and torment of my life. I thought I had been successful in poisoning the brute as he suddenly disappeared from my door, but he has been preserved by some sort of miracle on purpose to torment me."

Howl went the dog again. Sweeney Todd took a capital aim with the pistol. To be sure his nerves were not quite in such good order as they sometimes were, but then the distance was so short that how could he miss such an object as a Newfoundland dog?

"I have him--I have him," he muttered. "Ha! ha! I have him!"

He pulled the trigger of the pistol--snap went the lock, and the powder in the pan flashed up in Todd's face, but that was all. Before he could utter even an oath the shop door was opened, and a man's voice cried--

"Hasn't nobody seen nothing of never a great dog nowheres? Oh, there you is, my tulip. Come to your father, you rogue you. So you guved me the slip at last did you, you willain!"

#### CHAPTER XLIV. TODD AND THE SILVERSMITH.

[Illustration: Sweeney Todd Re-Visited By The Dog Of One Of His

Victims.]

Hector whined a kind of recognition of this man, but he did not move from the chair in Todd's shop upon which he had seated himself.

"Come, old fellow," said the man, "you don't want to be shaved, do you?"

Hector gave a short bark, but he wagged his tail as much as to intimate--"Mind, I am not at all angry with you." And indeed it was quite evident, from the manner of the dog to this man, that there was a good understanding between them.

"Come now, Pison," said the man, "don't be making a fool of yourself here any more. You ain't on friendly terms here, my tulip."

"Hilloa!" cried Todd.

The man gave a start, and Hector uttered an angry growl.

"Hilloa! Who are you?"

"Why, I'm the ostler at the 'Bullfinch!' \_opposite\_."

"Is that your dog?"

"Why in a manner o' speaking, for want of a better master, he's got me."

The ostler, by dint of shading his eyes with his hands, and looking very intently, at last saw Todd, and then he added--

"Oh, it's you, master, is it?"

"Take away that animal directly," cried Todd. "Take him away. I hate dogs. Curses on both you and him; how came he here?"

"Ah, Pison, Pison, why did you come here, you good for nothink feller you? You ought to have knowed better. Didn't I always say to you--leastways, since I've had you--didn't I say to you--'Don't you go over the way, for that ere barber is your natural enemy, Pison,' and yet here yer is."

As he spoke, the ostler embraced Hector, who was not at all backward in returning the caress, although in the midst of it he turned his head in the direction of the back-parlour, and gave a furious bark at Todd.

"There is some mystery at the bottom of all this," muttered Todd; and then raising his voice, he added--"How did you come by the dog?"

"Why, I'll tell you, master. For a matter of two days, you know, he stuck at your door with a hat as belonged--"

"Well, well!"

"Yes, his master, folks said, was murdered."

"Ha! ha!"

"Eh? Oh, Lord, what was that?"

"Only me; I laughed at the idea of anybody being murdered in Fleet Street, that was all."

"Oh, ah! It don't seem very likely. Well, as I was a saying, arter you had finished off his master--"

"I?"

"Oh, I begs your pardon! Only, you see, the dog would have it that you had, and so folks say so as natural as possible; but, howsomdever, I comed by and seed this here dog in the agonies o' conwulsions all along o' pison. Now where I come from, the old man--that's my father as was--had lots o' dogs, and consekewently I knowed somethink about them ere creturs; so I takes up this one and carries him on my back over the way to the stables, and there I cures him and makes a pet of him, and I called him Pison, cos, you see, as he had been pisoned. Lor, sir, you should only have seed him, when he was a getting a little better, how he used to look at me and try to say--'Bill, don't I love you neither!' It's affection--that it is, blow me!"

Todd gave an angry snarl of derision.

"I tell you what it is, my man," he said; "if you will hang that dog, I will give you a guinea."

"Hang Pison? No, old 'un, I'd much rather hang you for half that ere money. Come along, my daffydowndilly. Don't you stay here any more. Why, I do believe it was you as pisoned him, you old bloak."

The ostler seized Hector, or Pison, as he had fresh christened him, round the neck, and fairly dragged him away out of the shop. To be sure, if Hector had resisted, the ostler, with all the power of resistance he possessed, it would indeed have been no easy matter to remove him; but it was wonderful to see how nicely the grateful creature graduated his struggles, so that they fell short of doing the smallest hurt to his preserver, and yet showed how much he wished to remain as a terror and a reproach to Sweeney Todd. When they were both fairly gone, Todd emerged from his parlour again, and the horrible oaths and imprecations he uttered will not bear transcription. With eager haste he again bundled into the cupboard all the things that the dog had dragged out of it, and then stamping his foot, he said--

"Am I, after defeating the vigilance of heaven only knows who, and for so long preserving myself from almost suspicion, to live in dread of a dog? Am I to be tormented with the thought that that fiend of an animal is opposite to me, and ready at any moment to fly over here and chase me out of my own shop. Confound it! I cannot and will not put up with such a state of things. Oh, if I could but get one fair blow at him. Only one fair blow!"

As he spoke he took up a hammer that was in a corner of the shop, and made a swinging movement with it through the air. Some one at that moment opened the shop door, and narrowly escaped a blow upon the head, that would have finished their mortal career.

"Hilloa! Are you mad?"

"Mad!" said Todd.

"Yes: do you knock folks' brains out when they come to be shaved?"

"Mine's a sedentary employment," said Todd, "and when I am alone, I like exercise to open my chest. That's all. Ain't it rather late to be shaved? I was just about to shut up."

"Why it is rather late, Mr. Todd; but the fact is, I am going to York by the early coach from the Bullfinch Inn, opposite, and I want a shave before I get upon my journey, as I shan't have an opportunity you see, again, for some time."

"Very well, sir."

"Come in, Charley."

Todd started.

"What's that?" he said. He felt afraid that it was the dog again, under some new name. Truly, conscience was beginning to make a coward of Sweeney Todd, although he denied to himself the possession of such an article. Charley came in the shape of a little boy, of about eight years of age.

"Now you sit down, and don't do any mischief," said the father, "while I get Mr. Todd to shave me. I am a late customer indeed. You see the coach goes in two hours, and as I have got to call the last thing upon Alderman Stantons, I thought I would be shaved first, and my little lad here would come with me."

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Todd; "I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Brown, the silversmith."

"Yes--yes. The alderman gave me some jewels, worth about three thousand pounds, to re-set, and though they are not done, I really don't like to have them at home while I take such a journey, so I want to lodge them with him again until I come back."

Todd lathered away at Mr. Brown's chin, as he said with an air of innocence--

"Can you carry so many jewels about with you, sir?"

"So many? Aye, ten times as many. Why they are all in a little narrow case, that would not hold a pair of razors."

"Indeed!"

Todd began the shaving.

"And so this is your little boy? A sharp lad, no doubt."

"Tolerable."

"The whiskers as they are, sir?"

"Oh, yes--yes."

"I suppose you never trust him out alone in the streets?"

"Oh, yes; often."

"Is it possible. Well, now, I should hardly have thought it. What a sweet child he looks, and such a nice complexion, too. It's quite a pleasure to see him. I was considered myself a very fine child a good while ago."

Todd took care to lift the razor judiciously, so as to give Mr. Brown opportunities of replying; and the silversmith said--

"Oh, yes; he's a nice little fellow. He's got his mother's complexion."

"And he shan't lose it," said Todd, "if there's any virtue in \_pearlometrical savonia\_."

"In what?"

"Oh, that's the name I give to a soap that preserves the complexion in all its purity. I have only a small parcel of it, so I don't sell it, but I give it away now and then, to my lady customers. Excuse me for one moment."

"Oh, certainly."

Todd opened a glass case, and took out two pieces of soap, of a yellowish tint.

"There, Charley," he said as he handed them to the little fellow.

"There's a piece for you, and a piece for mamma."

"Really you are very kind, Mr. Todd," said Brown.

"Oh, don't mention it. Run home at once, Charley, with them, and by the time you get back your father will be--finished. Run along."

"I won't," said Charley.

"Ah, come--come," said his father.

"I won't go, and I don't like soap."

"And why don't you like soap, my little man?" said Todd, as he recommenced operations upon the silversmith's face.

"Because I don't like to be washed at all, it scrubs so, and I don't like you, either, you are so dreadfully ugly--that I don't."

Todd smiled blandly.

"Now, Charley," said his father, "I am very angry with you. You are a very bad boy indeed. Why don't you do as Mr. Todd tells you?"

"Because I won't."

"Bless him," said Todd, "bless his heart. But don't you think, Mr. B.--here Todd's voice sank to a whisper--"don't you think that it's rather injudicious to encourage this obstinacy--if one may call it such--thus early in life? It may, you know, grow upon the dear little fellow."

"You are right, Mr. Todd; and I know that he is spoiled; but I have a more than ordinary affection for him, since, under most critical circumstances, once I saved his life. From that time, I confess that I have been weak enough to allow him too much of his own way. Thank you, Mr. Todd. A very clean comfortable shave indeed."

Mr. Brown rose from his chair and approached the little boy.

"Charley, my dear," he said; "you will save papa's life some day, won't you?"

"Yes," said Charley.

The father kissed him; as he added--

"How affected I feel to-night. I suppose it's the thought of the long journey I am going."

"No doubt," said Todd.

"Good night, Mr. Todd. Come along, Charley."

"Won't you give me a kiss, you darling, before you go?" said Todd.

"No, ugly, I won't."

"Oh, Charley--Charley, your behaviour to Mr. Todd is really anything but right. You are a very bad boy to-night. Come along."

Away they went, and Todd stood stopping the lately-used razor upon his hand, as he glared upon them, and muttered--

"Jewels worth three thousand pounds! And so you saved the child's life,

did you? By all that's devilish he has returned the obligation."

He went to the door and looked after the retreating figures of the silversmith and his child. He saw with what tender care the father lifted the little one over the road-way, and again he muttered--

"Three thousand pounds gone!--gone, when it was almost within my grasp. All this is new. I used not to be the sport of such accidents and adverse circumstances. Time was, when by the seeming irresistible force of my will, I could bend circumstances to my purposes, but now I am the sport of dogs and children. What is the meaning of it all? Is my ancient cunning deserting me? Is my brain no longer active and full of daring?"

He crept back into his shop again. The hour was now getting late, and after sitting for some time in silent musing he rose, and without a word, commenced closing his establishment for the night.

"I must have another boy," he said, as he put up the last shutter and secured it in its place. "I must have another boy. This state of things will not do. I must certainly have another boy. Tobias Ragg would have suited me very well, if he had not been so--so--what shall I call it, confoundedly imaginative. But he is dead--dead! that is a comfort. He is dead, and I must have another boy."

Bang! went Sweeney Todd's shop door. The beautiful moon climbed over the house-tops in old Fleet Street. The clock of St. Dunstan's struck the hour of eleven. The streets began to be thin of pedestrians, and the din of carriages had almost entirely ceased. London then, although it was so not long ago, presented a very different aspect at the hour of eleven to what it does now. The old hackney-coaches had not been ousted from the streets by the cabs and the omnibuses, and the bustle of the city was indeed but a faint echo then, of what it is now. Time changes all things.

#### CHAPTER XLV. JOHANNA'S NEW SITUATION.

"Johanna, attend to me," said Mrs. Oakley, upon the morning after these events.

"Well, mother?"

"Your father is an idiot."

"Mother, mother! I dissent from the opinion, and if it were true, it comes with the worst possible grace from you, but I am sick at heart. I pray you to spare me reproaches or angry words, mother."

"Haity taity, one must not speak next, I suppose. Some people fancy that other people know nothing, but there is such a thing as overhearing what

some people say to other people."

Johanna had not the most remote notion of what her mother meant, but Mrs. Oakley's tongue was like many pieces of machinery, that when once set in motion are not without considerable trouble brought to a standstill again, so on she went.

"Of course. I now know quite well why the godly man who would have made you a chosen vessel was refused. It was all owing to that scamp, Mark Ingestrie."

"Mother!"

"Marry come up! you need not look at me in such a way. We don't all of us see with the same eyes. A scamp he is, and a scamp he will be."

"Mother, he whom you so name is with his God. Mention him no more. The wild ocean rolls over his body--his soul is in heaven. Speak not irreverently of one whose sole crime was that he loved me. Oh, mother, mother, you--"

Johanna could say no more, she burst into tears.

"Well," said Mrs. Oakley, "if he is dead, pray what hinders you from listening to the chosen vessel, I should like to know?"

"Do not. Oh do not, mother, say any more to me--I cannot, dare not trust myself to speak to you upon such a subject."

"What is this?" said Mr. Oakley, stepping into the room. "Johanna in tears! What has happened?"

[Illustration: Mr. Oakley Defends Johanna From The Violence Of Her Mother.]

"Father--dear father!"

"And Mr. O.," cried Mrs. Oakley, "what business is it of yours, I should like to know? Be so good, sir, as to attend to your spectacles, and such like rubbish, and not to interfere with my daughter."

"Dear me!--ain't she my daughter likewise?"

"Oh yes, Mr. O.! Go on with your base, vile, wretched, contemptible, unmanly insinuations. Do go on, pray--I like it. Oh, you odious wretch! You spectacle-making monster!"

"Do not," cried Johanna, who saw the heightened colour of her father's cheek. "Oh, do not let me be the unhappy cause of any quarrelling. Father! father!"

"Hush, my dear, don't you say another word. Cousin Ben is coming to take a little bit of lunch with us to-day."

"I know it," cried Mrs. Oakley, clapping her hands together with a vengeance that made Oakley jump again. "I know it. Oh, you wretch. You couldn't have put on such airs if your bully had not been coming; I thought the last time he came here was enough for him. Aye, and for you too, Mr. O."

"It was nearly too much," said the spectacle-maker, shaking his head.

"Tow row, row, row, row!" cried Big Ben, popping his head into the parlour, "what do you all bring it in now? Wilful murder with the chill off or what? Ah, mother Oakley, what's the price of vinegar now, wholesale--pluck does it. Here you is. Ha, ha! Aint we a united family. Couldn't stay away from you, Mother Oakley, no more nor I could from that ere laughing hyena we has in the Tower."

"Eugh!--wretch!"

"Sit down, Ben," said Mr. Oakley. "I am glad to see you, and I am quite sure Johanna is."

"Oh, yes, yes."

"That's it," said Ben. "It's on Johanna's account I came. Now, little one, just tell me--"

Johanna had just time to place her finger upon her lips, unobserved by any one, and shake her head at Ben.

"Ah--hem! How are you, eh?" he said, turning the conversation. "Come, Mother O., stir your old stumps and be alive, will you? I have come to lunch with your lord and master, so bustle--bustle."

Mrs. Oakley rose, and placing her hands upon her hips, she looked at Ben, as she said--

"You great, horrid, man-mountain of a wretch. I only wonder you ain't afraid, after the proper punishment you had on the occasion of your last visit, to show your horrid face here again?"

"You \_deludes\_ to the physicking, I suppose, mum. Lor bless you, it did us no end of good; but, howsomever, we provide agin wice in animals when we knows on it aforehand, do you see. Oh, there you is."

A boy howled out from the shop--"Did a gentleman order two gallons of half-and-half here, please?"

"All's right," said Ben. "Now, Mother O., the only thing I'll trouble you for, is a knife and fork. As for the rest of the combustibles, here they is."

Ben took from one capacious pocket a huge parcel, containing about six pounds of boiled beef, and from the other he took as much ham.

"Hold hard!" he cried to the boy who brought the beer. "Take this

half-crown, my lad, and get three quartern loaves."

"But, Ben," said old Mr. Oakley, "I really had no intention, when I asked you to come to lunch this morning, of making you provide it yourself. We have, or we ought to have, plenty of everything in the house."

"Old birds," said Ben, "isn't to be caught twice. A fellow, arter he has burnt his fingers, is afeard o' playing with the fire. No, Mrs. O., you gave us a benefit last time, and I ain't a-going to try my luck again. All's right--pitch into the grub. How is the chosen vessel, Mother O.? All right, eh?"

Mrs. Oakley waited until Ben had made an immense sandwich of ham and beef; and then in an instant, before he was aware of what she was about, she caught it up, and slapped it in his face with a vengeance that was quite staggering.

"Easy does it," said Ben.

"Take that, you great, fat elephant."

"Go it--go it."

Mrs. Oakley bounced out of the room. Johanna looked her sorrow; and Mr. Oakley rose from his chair, but Ben made him sit down again, saying--

"Easy does it--easy does it. Never mind her, cousin Oakley. She must have her way sometimes. Let her kick and be off. There's no harm done--not a bit. Lord bless you. I'm used to all sorts of cantankerous animals."

Mr. Oakley shook his head.

"Forget it, father," said Johanna.

"I only wish, my dear, I could forget many things; and yet there are so many others, that I want to remember, mixed up with them, that I don't know how I should manage to separate them one from the other."

"You couldn't do it," said Ben. "Here's luck in a bag, and shake it out as you want it."

This sentiment was uttered while Ben's head was deep in the recesses of the two-gallon can of beer, so that it had a peculiar solemn and sonorous effect with it. After drinking about a quart, Ben withdrew the can, and drew a long breath.

"Has he brought yours?" he said.

"What?--who?"

"Why the other two gallons for you and Johanna."

"Good gracious, Ben, you don't mean that?"

"Don't I, though. Oh, here he is. All's right. Now, my lad, get the little pint jug, with the silver top to it, and if we don't mull a drop, I'm a sinner. Now, you'll see if Mrs. O. don't come round quite handsome."

Ben, by the aid of some sugar, succeeded in making a very palatable drink, and just as the steam began to salute the nostrils of old Oakley and himself, the door of the parlour was opened, and who should heedlessly step into the room but the pious Mr. Lupin himself. Mr. Lupin was so transfixed by finding Ben there, that for a moment or two he could not gather strength to retreat; and during that brief period, Ben had shifted his chair, until he got quite behind the reverend gentleman, who, when he did step back, in consequence fell into Ben's lap.

"What do yer mean?" cried Ben, in a voice of thunder.

"Oh, murder--murder! Have mercy upon me! I only looked in as I was passing, to ask how all the family was."

"Yes," said Mr. Oakley, "and because you, no doubt, heard I was going to Tottenham, to Judge Merivale's, to fit him with a pair of spectacles."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Let me go, sir."

"I don't want you," said Ben; "but as you are here, let's make an end of all differences, and have a pint together."

"A pint?"

"Yes, to be sure. By the look of your nose, I should say it knows pretty well what a pint is."

"Oh, dear--man is sinful alway. I bear no malice, and if the truly right-minded and pious Mrs. Oakley was only here, we might drink down all differences, Mr. a--a--"

"Ben."

"Mr. Ben. Thank you, sir."

"Oh, Mr. Lupin," cried Mrs. Oakley, at this moment bursting into the parlour. "Is it possible that you can give your mind in this way to the Philistines? Is not this backsliding?"

"Let us hope for the best, sister," said Mr. Lupin, with an evangelical twang. "Let us hope for the best. If people will drink, they had much better drink with the saints, who may take some favourable opportunity of converting them, than with sinners."

"Sit down, mum," said Ben, "and let's bury all animosities in the can. Easy does it. Don't you go, Johanna."

"Yes, but, Ben, I--"

"Now don't."

Ben saw by the direction of Johanna's eyes, that the Rev. gentleman was resting one of his red raw-looking hands upon her arm, and, situated as she was, she could not get out of his way but by rising.

"Sit still," said Ben. "Easy does it."

Lifting up the can, then, he pretended to drink out of it, and then brought it with such a thundering crack upon Mr. Lupin's head, that it quite staggered him.

"Paws off," said Ben. "Just attend to that ere gentle hint, old friend."

Mr. Lupin sat down with a groan.

"Now, mum," said Ben, who all the while had held fast the stone mug of mulled porter. "Now, mum, here's some hot, that don't suit me so well as the cold, perhaps you and Mr. Lupin will take that, while I cuts a few more sandwiches."

He placed the jug before Mr. Lupin, who thereupon left off rubbing his head, and said--

"I'm sure it would be highly unchristian of me to bear any malice, so, with the Lord's leave, I will even partake of some of this worldly liquor, called mulled porter."

Now while Mr. Lupin drank the savoury stream from the jug, it assailed the senses of Mrs. Oakley, and when the porter was placed before her, she raised it to her lips, saying--

"If folks are civil to me, I'm civil to them, only I don't like my godly friends to be ill-treated. I'm sure nobody knows what I have gone through for my family, and nobody thinks what a mother and wife I have been. What would have become of Oakley if it hadn't been for me, is a question I often ask myself in the middle of the night?"

"She's a wonderful woman," sighed Lupin.

"Oh, uncommon," said Ben.

"Let me go," whispered Johanna to Ben.

"No, no! Wait for the fun."

"What fun?"

"Oh, you'll see. You don't know what a trouble it has cost me, to be sure. Only wait a bit, there's a duck, do."

Johanna did not like to say she would not, so she shrunk back in her

chair in no small curiosity, to know what was about to happen. Mrs. Oakley lifted the jug to her lips and drunk deep. The aroma of the liquor must have been peculiarly grateful to the palate of Mrs. Oakley, for she certainly kept the jug at her mouth for a length of time, that, to judge by the look of impatience upon the countenance of Mr. Lupin, was something outrageous.

"Sister!" he said. "Mind your breath."

Down came the jug, and Mrs. Oakley, when she could draw breath, gasped--

"Very good indeed. A dash of allspice would make it delicious."

"Oh, sister," cried Lupin as he grasped the jug, that was gently pushed towards him by Ben after Mrs. Oakley had set it down. "Oh, sister, don't give your mind to carnal things, I beg of you. Why, she's drunk it all."

Mr. Lupin peered into the jug. He shut the right eye and looked in with the left, and then he shut the left eye and looked in with the right, and then he moved the jug about until the silver lid came down with a clap, that nearly snapped his nose off.

"What's the matter?" said Ben.

"I--I--don't exactly--" Mr. Lupin raised the lid again and again, and peered into the jug in something of the fashion which popular belief supposes a crow to look into a marrow bone.

At length he turned the jug upside down, and struck the bottom of it with his pious knuckles. A huge toad fell sprawling upon the table. Mrs. Oakley gave a shriek, and rushed into the yard. Mr. Lupin gave a groan, and flew into the street, and the party in the parlour could hear them in a state of horrible sickness.

"Easy does it," said Ben, "it's only a piece of wood shaped like a toad and painted, that's all. Now I'm easy. I owed 'em one."

## CHAPTER XLVI. TOBIAS'S HEART IS TOUCHED.

Tobias is no worse all this time. But is he better? Has the godlike spirit of reason come back to the mind-benighted boy? Has that pure and gentle spirit recovered from its fearful thralldom, and once again opened its eyes to the world and the knowledge of the past? We shall see. Accompany us, reader, once again to the house of Colonel Jeffery. You will not regret looking upon the pale face of poor Tobias again. The room is darkened, for the sun is shining brightly, and an almond tree in the front garden is not sufficiently umbrageous in its uncongenial soil to keep the bright rays from resting too strongly upon the face of the boy. There he lies! His eyes are closed, and the long lashes--for

Tobias, poor fellow, was a pretty boy--hung upon his cheek, held down by the moisture of a tear. The face is pale, oh, so pale and thin, and the one arm and hand that lies outside the coverlet of the bed, show the blue veins through the thin transparent skin. And all this is the work of Sweeney Todd. Well, well! heaven is patient! In the room is everything that can conduce to the comfort of the slumbering boy. Colonel Jeffery has kept his word. And now that we have taken a look at Tobias, tread gently on tip-toe, reader, and come with us down stairs to the back drawing-room, where Colonel Jeffery, his friend Captain Rathbone, the surgeon, and Mrs. Ragg are assembled. Mrs. Ragg is "crying her eyes out," as the saying is.

"Sit down, Mrs. Ragg," said the colonel, "sit down and compose yourself. Come, now, there is no good done by this immoderate grief."

"But I can't help it."

"You can control it. Sit down."

"But I oughtn't to sit down. I'm the cook, you know, sir."

"Well, well; never mind that, if you are my cook. If I ask you to be seated, you may waive all ceremony. We want to ask you a few questions, Mrs. Ragg."

Upon this Tobias's mother did sit down, but it was upon the extreme edge of a chair, so that the slightest touch to it in the world would have knocked it from under her, and down she would have gone on to the floor.

"I'm sure, gentlemen, I'll answer anything I know, and more too, with all the pleasure in life, for, as I often said to poor Mr. Ragg, who is dead and gone, and buried accordingly in St. Martin's, as he naturally might, and a long illness he had, and what with one thing and--"

"Yes! yes! we know all that. Just attend to us for one moment, if you please, and do not speak until you thoroughly understand the nature of the question we are about to put to you."

"Certainly not, sir. Why should I speak, for as I often and often said, when--"

"Hush, hush!"

Mrs. Ragg was silent at last, and then the surgeon spoke to her calmly and deliberately, for he much wished her clearly to understand what he was saying to her.

"Mrs. Ragg, we still think that the faculties of your son Tobias are not permanently injured, and that they are only suffering from a frightful shock."

"Yes, sir, they is frightfully shook."

"Hush! We think that if anything that greatly interested him could be

brought to bear upon the small amount of perception that remains to him he would recover. Do you now know of anything that might exercise a strong influence over him?"

"Lord bless you--no, sir."

"How old is he?"

"Fifteen, sir, and you would hardly believe what a time of it I had with Tobias. All the neighbours said--'Well, if Mrs. Ragg gets over this, she's a woman of ten thousand;' and Mrs. Whistlesides, as lived next door, and had twins herself, owned she never--"

"Good God, will you be quiet, madam?"

"Quiet, sir? I'm sure I haven't said two words since I've been in the blessed room. I appeal to the \_kernel\_."

"Well! well! it appears then, Mrs. Ragg, you can think of nothing that is at all likely to aid us in this plan of awakening, by some strong impression, the dormant faculties of Tobias?"

"No, gentlemen, no! I only wish I could, poor boy; and there's somebody else wasting away for grief about him; poor little thing, when she heard that Tobias was mad, I'm sure I thought she'd have broke her heart, for if Tobias ever loved anybody in all the world, it was little Minna Gray. Ah! it's affecting to think how such children love each other, ain't it, sir? Lord bless you, the sound of her footstep was enough for him, and his eyes would get like two stars, as he'd clap his hands together, and cry--'Ah! that's dear Minna.' That was before he went to Mr. Todd's, poor fellow."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir, oh, you haven't an idea."

"I think I have. Who is this Minna Gray, who so enthralled his boyish fancy?"

"Why, she's widow Gray's only child, and they live in Milford Lane, close to the Temple, you see, and even Tobias used to go with me to drink tea with Mrs. Gray, as we was both \_bequeathed\_ women in a world of trouble."

"You were what?"

"Bequeathed."

"Bereaved you mean, I suppose, Mrs. Ragg; but how could you tell me that you knew of no means of moving Tobias's feelings. This Minna Gray, if he really loves her, is the very thing."

"Lor, sir. What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that if you can get this Minna Gray here, the possibility is that it will be the recovery of Tobias. At all events, it is the only chance of that kind that presents itself. If that fails, we must only trust to time. How old is this girl?"

"About fourteen, sir, and though I say it--"

"Well, well. Do you now, as a woman of the world, Mrs. Ragg, think that she has an affection for poor Tobias?"

"Do I think? Lor bless you, sir, she doats on the ground he walks on, that she does--poor young thing. Hasn't she grizzled a bit. It puts me in mind of--"

"Yes, yes. Of course it does. Now, Mrs. Ragg, you understand it is an object with our friend the colonel here, that no one but yourself should know that Tobias is here. Could you get this young girl to come to tea, for instance, with you, without telling her what else she is wanted for?"

"Dear me, yes, sir; for, as I used to say to Mr. Ragg, who is dead and gone, and buried in St. Martin's--"

"Exactly. Now go and get her by all means, and when she comes here we will speak to her, but above all things be careful what you say."

"I think Mrs. Ragg is already aware," said Colonel Jeffery, "that her son's safety, as well as her own, depends upon her discretion in keeping his whereabouts a profound secret. We will instruct this young girl when she comes here."

Colonel Jeffery, when he heard that the medical man was of opinion that the experiment of awakening the feelings of Tobias, by bringing Minna Gray, was worth trying, at once acquiesced, and urged upon Mrs. Ragg to go and see Minna. After many more speeches, about as much to the purpose as those which we have already formed, Mrs. Ragg got herself dressed and went upon her errand. She was instructed to say that she had found herself unequal to being a laundress in the Temple, and so had thought it was better to return to her own original occupation of cook in a gentleman's family, and that, as she had the liberty to do so, she wished Minna Gray to come and take tea with her. Thus forewarned of the part she was to play, Mrs. Ragg started upon her mission, in which we need not follow her, for the result of it is all that we particularly care about, and that consisted in her bringing Minna in great triumph to the colonel's house. Colonel Jeffery, and Captain Rathbone, who was staying to dine with him, saw the young girl as she came up the garden path. She was one of those small, delicately beautiful young creatures, who seem specially made to love and be loved. Her light auburn hair hung in dancing curls down her fair cheeks, and her beautifully shaped lips and pearly teeth were of themselves features that imparted much loveliness to her countenance. She had, too, about her face all the charm of childish beauty, which bespoke her so young as to have lost little of that springtide grace, which, alas! is so fleeting. Add to all this a manner so timid, so gentle, and so retiring, that she seemed to

be an inhabitant of some quieter world than this, and you have Minna Gray, who had crept into the boyish heart of poor Tobias, before your eyes.

"What a gentle quiet looking little creature," said the captain.

"She is indeed; and what a contrast!"

"Between her and Mrs. Ragg, you mean? It does indeed look like an elephant escorting a fawn. But Mrs. Ragg has her good qualities."

"She has, and they are numerous. She is honest and candid as the day, and almost the only fault that can be laid to her charge is her garrulity."

"How do you mean to proceed?"

"Why, Rathbone, I mean to condescend to do what, under any other circumstances, would be most unjustifiable--that is, listen to the conversation of Mrs. Ragg with Minna Gray; I do so with the concurrence of the old lady, who is to lead her to speak of Tobias, and it is solely for the purpose of judging if she really loves the boy, and making a proper report to the surgeon, that I do so."

"You are right enough, Jeffery; the end in this case, at all events, sanctifies the means, however defective such a system of philosophy may be as a general thing. May I likewise be an auditor?"

"I was going to ask you to so far oblige me, for I shall then have the advantage of your opinion; so you will do me a favour."

There was a small pantry called a butler's pantry close to the kitchen, into which Mrs. Ragg had taken Minna Gray. A door opened from this pantry into the kitchen, and another on to the landing at the foot of the kitchen stairs. Now Mrs. Ragg was to take care that the door opening to the kitchen should be just ajar, and the colonel and his friend could get into the pantry by the other mode of entrance. Colonel Jeffery was a gentleman in the fullest sense of the term, and he kept no useless bloated menials about him, so the butler's pantry had no butler to interfere with him, the colonel, in his own house. In the course of a few minutes Jeffery and Rathbone were in the pantry, from whence they could both see and hear what passed in the kitchen. To be sure there was a certain air of restraint about Mrs. Ragg at the thought that her master was listening to what passed, and that lady had a propensity to use hard words, of the meaning of which she was in the most delightful state of ignorance; but as it was to Minna Gray's conversation that the colonel wanted to listen, these little peculiarities of Mrs. Ragg upon the occasion did not much matter. Of course, Minna thought she had no other auditors than her old friend. Mrs. Ragg was quite busy over the tea.

"Well, my dear," she said to Minna, "this is a world we live in."

Mrs. Ragg, no doubt, intended this as a discursive sort of remark that

might open any conversation very well, and lead to anything, and she was not disappointed, for it seemed to give to the young girl courage to utter that which was struggling to her lips.

"Mrs.--Mrs. Ragg," she began, hesitatingly.

"Yes. My dear, let me fill your cup."

"Thank you; but I was going to say--"

"A little more sugar?"

"No, no. But I cannot place a morsel in my lips, Mrs. Ragg, or think or speak to you of anything else, until you have told me if you have heard any news of poor--poor--"

"Tobias?"

"Yes--yes--yes!"

Minna Gray placed her two little hands upon her face and burst into tears. Mrs. Ragg made a snuffling sort of noise that, no doubt, was highly sympathetic, and after a pause of a few moments' duration, Minna gathered courage to speak again.

"You know, Mrs. Ragg, the last you told me of him was that--that Mr. Todd had said he was mad, you know, and then you went to fetch somebody, and when you came back he was gone; and Mr. Todd told you the next day that poor Tobias ran off at great speed and disappeared. Has anything been heard of him since?"

"Ah, my dear, alas! alas!"

"Why do you cry alas?--Have you any more sad news to tell me?"

"He was my only son--and all the world and his wife, as the saying is, can't tell how much I loved him."

Minna Gray clasped her hands, and, while the tears coursed down her young fair cheeks, she said--

"And I, too, loved him!"

"I always thought you did, my dear, and I'm sure, if you had been an angel out of Heaven, my poor boy could not have thought more of you than he did. There was nothing that you said or did that was not excellent. He loved the ground you walked on; and a little old worsted mitten, that you left at our place once, he used to wear round his neck, and kiss it when he thought no one was nigh, and say--'This was my Minna's!'"

The young girl let her head rest upon her hands, and sobbed convulsively.

"Lost--lost!" she said, "and poor, kind, good Tobias is lost!"

"No, my dear, it's a long lane that hasn't a turning. Pluck up your courage, and your courage will pluck up you. Keep sixpence in one pocket, and hope in another. When things are at the worst they mend. You can't get further down in a well than the bottom."

Minna sobbed on.

"And so, my dear," added Mrs. Ragg, "I do know something more of Tobias."

The young girl looked up.

"He lives!--he lives!"

"Lor a mussy, don't lay hold of a body so. Of course he lives, and, what's more, the doctor says that you ought to see him--he's up stairs."

"Here?--here?"

"Yes, to be sure. That's why I brought you to tea."

Minna Gray took a fit of trembling, and then, making great efforts to compose herself, she said--

"Tell me all--tell me all!"

"Well, my dear, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and so here I am, cook in as good a place as mortal woman would wish to have. I can't tell you all the rights of the story, because I don't know it. But certainly Tobias is up stairs in bed like a gentleman, only they say as his brains is--is something or another that makes him not understand anything or anybody, and so you see the doctor says if you speak to him, who knows but what he may come to himself?"

With an intuitive tact that belongs to some minds, and which Minna Gray, despite the many disadvantages of her social position, possessed in an eminent degree, she understood at once the whole affair. Tobias was suffering from some aberration of intellect, which the voice and the presence of one whom he loved fondly might dissipate. Would she shrink from the trial?--would her delicacy take the alarm and overcome her great desire to recover Tobias? Oh, no; she loved him with a love that far outstripped all smaller feelings, and, if ever there was a time when that love took complete possession of her heart, it was at this affecting moment, when she was told that her voice might have the magic power of calling back to him the wandering reason that harshness and ill-usage had for a time toppled from its throne.

"Take me to him!" she cried--"take me to him! If all that is wanted to recover him be the voice of affection, he will soon be as he was once to us."

"Well, my dear, take your tea, and I'll go and speak to the \_kernel\_."

It was now time for Colonel Jeffery and his friend, the captain, to retire from the pantry, where we need not say that they had been pleased and affected listeners to what had passed between Mrs. Ragg and the fair and intelligent Minna Gray, who, in beauty and intelligence, far exceeded their utmost expectations.

CHAPTER XLVII.  
TOBIAS RECOVERS HIS INTELLECT.

In the course of a quarter of an hour the surgeon was sent for, and then Mrs. Ragg tapped at the drawing-room door, to give the colonel an account of the success of her mission; but he at once said to her--

"We know all, Mrs. Ragg. We merely wish to see Tobias first, so that the medical gentleman may see exactly his condition, and then if you will bring Minna Gray here I will speak to her, and, I hope, put her quite at her ease as regards what she has to do."

"Certainly, sir, certainly. Hold fast, and good comes at last."

The surgeon and the two gentlemen went to Tobias's chamber, and there they found him in the same lethargic condition that, with only occasional interruptions, he had continued in since he had been in the colonel's house. These interruptions consisted in moaning appeals for mercy, and at times the name of Todd would pass his lips, in accents which showed what a name of terror it was to him. The surgeon placed his hand upon Tobias's head.

"Tobias!" he said, "Tobias!"

A deep sigh was his answer.

"Tobias! Tobias!"

"Oh, God! God!" cried Tobias, feebly. "Spare me--I will tell nothing. Oh, spare me, Mr. Todd.--Repent now. There, there--the blood! What a crowd of dead men. Dead--dead--dead--all dead!"

"No better?" said the colonel.

"Not a bit. On the contrary, the longer he remains in this condition, the less chance there will be of his recovery. I shall lose hope, if this last experiment produces no good results. Let us go and speak to the young girl."

They all descended to the drawing-room, and Minna Gray was summoned. Colonel Jeffery took her kindly by the hand and led her to a seat, and then he said to her--

"Now, Miss Gray, remember that all here are friends to you and to

Tobias, and that we all feel deeply for him and for you. You are very young, both of you, but that is no reason on earth why you should not love each other."

Minna looked up at him through her tears, as she said--

"Is he very--very ill?"

"He is indeed. We suspect--indeed, I may say we know, that his mind has received so severe a shock that, for a time, it is deranged; but we hope that, as that derangement, you understand, has not arisen from any disease, pleasant and agreeable impressions may restore him. What we want you to do is to speak to him as you, no doubt, have been in the habit of doing in happier times."

"Yes, yes, sir."

"I think you know exactly what we mean?"

"I do, sir--indeed I do."

"Oh, bless you, sir, she understands," said Mrs. Ragg. "A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, you know, gentlemen. Handsome is as handsome does--as I used to say to the late Mr. Ragg, who is naturally dead and gone, and accordingly buried in St. Martin's--"

"You can tell us that another time, madam," said the surgeon. "At present, you see we are rather busy. Now, Miss Gray, if you will have the goodness to come with me, we will see what can be done for our young friend above stairs."

Poor Minna Gray! How her colour went and came like the sunlight of an April day, as she accompanied the three gentlemen and Mrs. Ragg up stairs to Tobias's chamber. How she trembled when they reached the landing; and what a faintness came over her when the door was opened, and she saw that dimly-lighted room.

"Courage," whispered Colonel Jeffery to her. "This is a holy errand you are upon."

"Yes, yes."

"Cut your coat according to your cloth," said Mrs. Ragg, who, provided she thought of a proverb, was not very particular with regard to its applicability to the circumstances under which she uttered it. "Keep your feet to the length of your sheet."

"Pray, madam," said the surgeon, who seemed to have quite a horror of Mrs. Ragg. "Pray, madam, oblige me by being silent."

"A still tongue makes a wise head."

"Good God, colonel! will you speak to her?"

"Hush, Mrs. Ragg!" said Colonel Jeffery. "Hush! You will perhaps be the means of spoiling this important effort for the recovery of your son if you are not perfectly quiet."

Thus admonished, Mrs. Ragg shrank into the background a little, and the colonel went to the window and let in a little more light. The surgeon conducted Minna Gray to the bed-side, and she looked upon the boy who had won her childish heart through a world of tears.

"It is--it is--Tobias!"

"Is he much altered?"

"Oh, yes; much--much. He--he used to look so happy. His--his face was like a piece of sunshine!"

She sank upon a chair that was by the bed-side, and sobbed.

"This will never do," said the surgeon.

"Wait--oh, wait a little," she whispered. "Only wait a little.--I shall be better soon."

The surgeon nodded; and then stepping back to the colonel and the captain, he said--

"This burst of grief must have its way, or it will mar all. We must have patience."

They all hid themselves behind the folds of the bed furniture, and Mrs. Ragg sat down in an obscure corner of the room, working her knee up and down, as though she were nursing an imaginary baby. Gradually the sobs of Minna Gray subsided, until all was still. She then gently took one of the thin wasted hands of poor Tobias in her own, and looked at it. Oh, how changed it was. She then bent over him, and looked in his face. What permeative lines of care were there, battling with rounded muscles of early youth! Then she summoned all her courage to speak. She placed her lips close to his ear, and in the soft sweet accents that had long before sank deep into his heart, she said--

"Tobias!--my Tobias!"

The boy started.

"Dear Tobias, it is I. Minna!"

He opened his eyes, which had been closed and seemingly cemented by tears.

"Tobias! Tobias, dear!"

A smile--a heavenly smile. It was the first that had played upon his lips since he set foot in the shop of Sweeney Todd, now broke like a sunbeam over his face.

"I am mad--mad!" he said, gently, "or that is the voice of my Minna."

"It is your Minna. It is--it is, Tobias; look at me."

He rose up in the bed--he cast one glance at the well-known and dearly remembered face, and then, with a gasping sob of joy, he clasped her in his arms.

"It's done," said the surgeon.

"Thank God!" said Colonel Jeffery.

Mrs. Ragg drew her breath so hard through her nose that she made a noise like some wild animal in the agonies of suffocation.

"You really know me, Tobias?"

"Know you, dear? Oh, why should I not know you, Minna? God bless you!"

"May He bless you, Tobias."

They wept together; Minna forgot that there was anybody in the world but herself and Tobias, and parting the long straggling masses of his hair from before his face, she kissed him.

"For my sake, Tobias, now you will take care of yourself, and recover quickly."

"Dear--dear Minna."

He seemed never tired of holding her hands and kissing them. Suddenly the surgeon stepped forward with a small vial in his hand.

"Now, Tobias," he said, "you are much better, but you must take this."

The look of surprise and consternation with which Tobias regarded him was beyond description. Then he glanced at the bedstead and the rich hangings, and he said--

"Oh, Minna, what is all this? Where am I? Is it a dream?"

"Give it to him," said the surgeon, handing the vial to Minna. She placed the neck of it to his lips.

"Drink, Tobias."

Had it been deadly poison she had offered him, Tobias would have taken it. The vial was drained. He looked in her face again with a smile.

"If this is indeed a dream, my Minna, may I never awaken--dear--dear--one--I--I--"

[Illustration: Tobias Restored To His Senses By Minna's Assistance.]

He fell back upon the pillow. The smile still lingered upon his face, but the narcotic which the surgeon had had administered to him had produced its effect, and the enfeebled Tobias fell into deep sleep. Minna Gray looked rather alarmed at this sudden falling off of Tobias from waking to sleeping, but the surgeon quieted her fears.

"All is right," he said. "He will awaken in some hours wonderfully refreshed, and I have the pleasure of now predicting his perfect cure."

"You do not know," said Colonel Jeffery, "what pleasure that assurance gives me."

"And me," said the captain.

Minna looked all that she thought, but she could not speak, and Mrs. Ragg, still kept up the mysterious noise she produced by hard breathing with her mouth close shut.

"Now, madam," said the surgeon to her, "our young friend must be left alone for some hours. It is now six o'clock, and I do not expect he will awaken until twelve. When he does so, I am very much mistaken if you do not all of you find him perfectly restored and composed, although very weak."

"I will take care to be at hand," said the colonel. "Miss Gray, perhaps you will call and see how he is to-morrow, and all I can say is, that you will be quite welcome to my house whenever you think proper, but let me impress upon you one thing."

"What is it, sir?"

"The absolute necessity of your keeping Tobias's place of abode and anything concerning him a most profound secret."

"I will do so."

"If you do not, you will not only endanger the cause of justice, but in all probability his life, for he has an enemy with great resources, and of the most unscrupulous disposition in the use of them: I say this much to you, because the least indiscretion might be fatal."

"I will guard the secret, sir, as I would guard his life."

"That will do--now come down stairs, and let us have a glass of wine to drink to the speedy restoration to perfect health of Tobias. Come, Rathbone, what do you think? Shall we be one too many yet for Todd?"

"I begin to think we shall."

"I feel certain of it. So soon as we see that Tobias is sufficiently well to make any statement, it will be necessary to send for Sir Richard Blunt."

"Certainly."

"And then I hope and trust that we shall get at something that will elucidate the mystery that is still attached to the fate of poor Thornhill."

"Ah, I fear he is gone!"

"Dead?"

"Yes. That fatal string of pearls has heralded him to death, I fear; but, perhaps we shall hear a something concerning that yet from Tobias."

They all sat down in the drawing-room, and with tearful pleasure Minna Gray drank a glass of wine to the health of Tobias, after which Mrs. Ragg saw her home again to Milford Lane, and no doubt all the road from this colonel's house to there did not want for a prolific subject of conversation. How happy Minna felt when she put up to Heaven her simple prayer that night, previous to seeking repose.

#### CHAPTER XLVIII. JOHANNA MAKES A NEW CONFIDANT.

We left the spectacle-maker and his family rather in a state of confusion. Big Ben the Beef-eater had had his revenge upon both Mrs. Oakley and the Saint, and it was a revenge that really did them no harm, so that in that respect it had turned out well. The Rev. Josiah Lupin did not return to the house, but Mrs. Oakley, in a terrible state of prostration from the effects of the sickness that had come over her, staggered again into the parlour. She looked at Mr. Oakley, as she said--

"If you were half a man you would take the life of that villain for treating me in the way he has; I have no doubt but he meant to take the life of the pious Mr. Lupin, and so add him to the list of martyrs."

"My dear," said the spectacle-maker, "if Mr. Lupin intrudes himself into my house, and any friend of mine turns him out, I am very much obliged to him."

"Perhaps you would be equally obliged to this monster, whom you call your friend, if he would turn me out?"

Mr. Oakley shook his head as he said--

"My dear, there are some burthens which can be got rid of, and some that must be borne."

"Come--come, Mother Oakley," said Ben. "Don't bear malice. You played me a trick the last time I came here, and now I have played you one. That's

all. It wasn't in human nature not to do it, so don't bear malice."

Mrs. Oakley, if she had been in a condition to do so, no doubt would have carried on the war with Big Ben, but she decidedly was not, and after a shudder or two, which looked as though she thought the toad was beginning again to oppress her, she rose to leave the room.

"Mother," said Johanna, "it was not a real toad."

"But you are!" said Mrs. Oakley, sharply. "You have no more feeling for your mother than as if she were a brickbat."

Feeling now that at all events she had had the last word at somebody, Mrs. Oakley made a precipitate retreat, and sought the consolations and solitude of her own chamber. Mr. Oakley was about to make some speech, which he prefaced with a sigh, when some one coming into the shop called his attention, and he left Johanna and Big Ben the Beef-eater together in the parlour. The moment they were alone, Ben began shaking his head and making some very mysterious signs, which completely mystified Johanna. Indeed she began to be afraid that Ben's intellects were not quite right, although an ordinary observer might have very well supposed there was something the matter with his nether garments, for he pointed to them repeatedly, and shook his head at Johanna.

"What is the matter, cousin?" she said.

"Oh, dear!--oh, dear!--oh--oh--oh!"

"Are you ill?"

"No, but I only wonder as you ain't. Didn't I see you in Fleet-street with these here on?--oh!--oh!--not these here exactly, but another pair. These would be a trifle too large for you. Oh, dear-a-me! my heart bled all for to see such a young and delicate little puss as you a taking to wear the thingamies so soon."

Johanna now began to understand what Ben meant, namely, that he had seen her in Fleet-street disguised in male attire, with her young friend Arabella Wilmot.

"Oh, Ben," she said, "you must not think ill of me on that account."

"But--but," said Ben, rather hesitatingly, as if he were only putting a doubtful proposition, "wasn't it rather unusual?"

"Yes, Ben, but there were reasons why I put on such garments. Surely it was better to do so than--than--to--"

"Than to go without any?" said Ben.

"No--no, I did not say that--I mean it was better for me to forget a little of that maiden delicacy which--which--than to let him--"

She burst into tears.

"Holloa!" cried Ben, as he immediately folded her in an immense embrace, that went very near to smothering her. "Don't you cry, and you may wear what you like, and I'll come and help you to put 'em on. Come, come, there's a nice little dear, don't you cry. Lord bless you! you know how fond I am of you, and always was since you was a little tottering thing, and couldn't say my name right. Don't you cry. You shall wear 'em as often as you like, and I'll go behind you in the street, and if anybody only so much as says half a word to you, I'll be down upon 'em. Fetch 'em now and put 'em on, my dear."

Johanna must have laughed if her life had depended upon her gravity, for all that Ben said upon the subject was uttered in the sheer simplicity of a kind heart, and well she knew that in his rough way he doated on her, and thought there was not such another being in the whole world as she. And yet he looked upon her as a child, and the imperceptible flight of time had made no difference in Ben's ideas concerning Johanna. She was still to him the sweet little child he had so often dandled upon his knee, and brought fruit and sweetmeats to, when such things were great treasures. After a few moments he let her go, and Johanna was able to draw breath again.

"Ben," she said, "I will tell you all."

"All what?"

"How I came to put on--the--the--"

"Oh, these here--very good. Cut on, and let's know all the particulars. I suppose you felt cold, my dear, eh?"

"No--no."

"No? Well then, tell it quick, for I was always a mortal bad hand at guessing. Your father is fitting an old gentleman with a pair of spectacles, and he seems hard to please, so we shall have lots of time. Go on."

"Your good opinion is of such moment to me," said Johanna, "for I have very few to love me; now that you have seen me in such a disguise, I should feel unhappy if I did not tell why I wore it."

Ben lent the most attentive ear to what she said, and then Johanna briefly and distinctly told him all the story of Mark Ingestrie, and how he had, as she thought, mysteriously disappeared at the barber's shop in Fleet-street. It will be seen that she still clung to the idea that the Thornhill of the arrived ship was no other than her lover. Ben heard her all out with the most fixed attention. His mouth and eyes gradually opened wider and wider as she proceeded, partly from wonder at the whole affair, and partly from intense admiration at the way in which she told it, which he thought was better than any book he had ever read. When she had concluded, Ben again folded her in his arms, and she had to struggle terribly to get away.

"My dear child," he said, "you are a prodigy. Why, there's not an animal as ever I knew comes near you; and so the poor fellow had his throat cut in the barber's for his string of pearls?"

"I fear he was murdered."

"Not a doubt of it."

"You really think so, Ben?"

The tone of agony with which this question was put to him, and the look of utter desolation which accompanied it, alarmed Ben, and he hastily said--

"Come, come, I didn't mean that. No doubt something has happened; but it will be all right some day or another, you may depend. Oh, dear!--oh, dear! The idea of your going to watch the barber with some boy's clothes on!"

"Tell me what I can do, for my heart and brain are nearly distracted by my sufferings?"

Ben looked all round the room, and then up at the ceiling, as though he had a hope and expectation of finding some startling suggestion written legibly before his eyes somewhere. At length he spoke, saying--

"I tell you what, Johanna, my dear, whatever you do, don't you put on them things again. You leave it all to me."

"But what will you do?--what can you do, Ben?"

"Well, I don't know exactly; but I'll let you know when it's done."

"But do not run into any danger for my sake."

"Danger? danger? I should like to see the barber that would interfere with me. No, my dear, no; I'm too well used to all sorts of animals for that. I'll see what I can do, and let you know all about it to-morrow, and in the meantime, you stick to the petticoats, and don't be putting on those thingamies again. You leave it to me--will you now?"

"Until to-morrow?"

"Yes, I'll be here to-morrow about this time, my dear, and I hope I shall have some news for you. Well, I declare, it's just like a book, it is. You are quite a prodigy."

Ben would have treated Johanna to another of the suffocating embraces, but she contrived to elude him; and, as by this time the old gentleman in the shop was suited with a pair of spectacles, Mr. Oakley returned to the parlour. Johanna placed her finger upon her lips as an indication to Ben that he was to say nothing to her father of what had passed between them, for, although Mr. Oakley knew generally the story of his daughter's attachment to Mark Ingestrie, as the reader is aware, he knew

nothing of the expedition to Fleet-street in disguise. Ben, feeling that he had now an important secret to keep, shut his mouth hard, for fear it should escape, and looked so mysterious, that any one more sharp-sighted than the old spectacle-maker must have guessed that something very unusual was the matter. Mr. Oakley, however, had no suspicions; but as this state of things was very irksome to Ben, he soon rose to take his leave.

"I shall look in again to-morrow," he said, "Cousin Oakley."

"We shall be glad to see you," said Mr. Oakley.

"Yes," added Johanna, who felt it incumbent upon her to say so

[Truncated]