

CHAPTER LIV
Todd's Announcement

"Yes," said Todd, as he commenced stropping the razor upon his hand as though nothing at all was the matter. "I do anything in an honest and religious sort of way for a living in these bad times."

"Oh, very well. A gentleman is ill in bed and wants his peruke properly dressed, as he has an important visit to make. Can you come to his house?"

"Yes, of course. But can't the peruke be brought here, sir?"

"Yes. But he wants a shave as well, and although he can go in a sedan chair to pay his visit, he is too ill to come to your shop."

Todd looked a little suspicious, but only a little, and then he said —

"It's an awkward thing that I have no boy at present, but I must get one — I must get one, and in the meantime, when I am called out I have no resource but to shut up my shop."

At this moment a stout man came in, saying —

"Shaved — oh, you are busy. I can wait, Mr. Todd — I can wait," and down he sat.

Todd looked at the newcomer with a strange sort of scowl, as he said —

"My friend, have not I seen you here before, or somewhere else?"

"Very likely," said the man.

"Humph, I am busy and cannot shave you just now, as I have to go out with this gentleman."

"Very well, I can wait here and amuse myself until you come back."

Todd fairly staggered for a moment, and then he said —

"Wait here — in my shop — and amuse yourself until I come back? No, sir, I don't suffer any one. But it don't matter. Ha! Ha! Come in, I am ready to attend you. But stop, are you in a very great hurry for two minutes, sir?"

"Oh, dear no, not for two minutes."

"Then it will only just take me that time to polish off this gentleman; and if, you will give the address I am to come to, I will be with you almost as soon, sir, as you can get home, I assure you."

“Oh, dear no,” cried the stranger, who had come in to be shaved, suddenly starting up, “I really could not think of such a thing. I will call again.”

“It’s only in Norfolk Street,” said the applicant for the dressing of the artificial hair, “and two minutes can’t make any difference to my friend, at all.”

“Do you think,” said the other, “that I would really interrupt business in this way? No, may I perish if I would do anything so unhandsome — not I. I will look in again, Mr. Todd, you may depend, when you are not going out. I shall be passing again, I know, in the course of the day. Pray attend to this gentleman’s orders, I beg of you.”

So saying, the shaving customer bounced out of the shop without another word; and as he crossed the threshold, he gave a wink to Crotchet, who was close at hand, and when that gentleman followed him, he said —

“Crotchet, Todd very nearly got me into a line. He was going out with the person we saw go to the shop, but I got away, or else, as he said, he would have polished me off.”

“Not a doubt of it, in this here world, Foster,” said Crotchet. “Ah, he’s a rum ’un, he is. We haven’t come across sich a one as he for one while, and it will be a jolly lot o’ Sundays afore we meets with sich another.”

“It will, indeed. Is Fletcher keeping an eye on the shop?”

“Oh, yes, right as a trivet. He’s there, and so is Godfrey.”

While this brief conversation was going on between the officers who had been left to watch Sweeney Todd’s shop, that individual himself accompanied the customer, whom he had been conversing with, to Norfolk Street, Strand. The well-dressed personage stopped at a good looking house, and said —

“Mr. Mundel only lodges here for the present. His state of mind, in consequence of a heavy loss he has sustained, would not permit him to stay in his own house at Kensington.”

“Mr. Mundel?” said Todd.

“Yes. That is the gentleman you are to shave and dress.”

“May I presume to ask, sir, what he is?”

“Oh, he is a — a — kind of merchant, you understand, and makes what use of his money he thinks proper.”

“The same!” gasped Todd.

The door of the house was opened, and there was no retreat, although, at the moment, Todd felt as though he would much rather not shave and dress the man of whom he had procured the £8,000 upon the string of pearls; but to show any hesitation now might beget enquiry and enquiry might be awkward, so summoning all his natural audacity to his aid, Todd followed his guide into the house. He was a little puzzled to know who this person could be, until a woman made her appearance from one of the rooms upon the ground floor, and cried —

“There now, go out, do. We don’t want you any more; you have got your pocket money, so be off with you, and don’t let me see your face again till night.”

“No, my dear,” said the well-dressed personage. “Certainly not. This is the barber.”

“Good God, Blisset, do you think I am blind, that I can’t see the barber. Will you go? The captain is waiting for me to pour out his coffee, and attend to his other concerns, which nobody knows better than you, and yet you will be perpetually in the way.”

“No, my dear. I — I only —”

“Hoity toity, are we going to have a disturbance, Mr. B? Recollect, sir, that I dress you well and give you money, and expect you to make yourself agreeable while I attend to the gentlemen lodgers, so be off with you; I’m sure, of all the troublesome husbands for a woman to have, you are about the worst, for you have neither the spirit to act like a man, nor the sense to keep out of the way.”

“Ha!” said Todd.

Both the lodging house keeper and his wife started at the odd sound.

“What was that?” said the woman.

“Only me, madam,” said Todd, “I laughed slightly at that bluebottle walking on the ceiling, that’s all.”

“What a laugh,” said Blisset, as he left the house; and then the lady of the mansion turning to Todd, said —

“You are to attend to Mr. Mundel, poor man. You will find him in the front room on the second floor, poor man.”

“Is he ill, madam?”

“Oh, I don’t know, I rather think he’s grizzling about some of his money, that’s all, but it don’t matter one way or the other. They say he is as rich as a Jew, and I’ll take good care he pays enough here.”

“Mrs. B — Mrs. B,” cried a voice from the parlour.

“Yes, captain, I’m coming. — I’m coming, captain.”

The lady bounced into the breakfast parlour and closed the door, leaving Todd to find his way up stairs as he best could. After a hideous chuckle at the thought of Mr. Blisset’s singular position in society, he commenced ascending the stairs. He accomplished the first flight without meeting with any one, but upon the second he encountered a servant girl with a pail, and Todd gave her such a hideous glance, accompanied by such a frightful contortion of his visage, that down went the pail, and the girl flew up stairs again, and locked herself in one of the attics. Without waiting to ascertain what effect the descent of the pail might have upon the nerves of the captain and the landlady, Todd pursued his course to the room whither he had been directed, and tapped at the door.

“Come in,” said a meek, tremulous voice. “Come in.”

Todd opened the door, and stood in the presence of the man over whose long tried skill and habitual cunning he had obtained such a triumph in the affair of the pearls at Mundel Villa. John Mundel now, though, was far from looking like the John Mundel of the villa. He sat by the fire, wrapped up in a flannel dressing gown, with a beard of portentous length. His cheeks had fallen in. His brow was corrugated by premature wrinkles, and the corners of his mouth were drawn down as though a look of mental distress had become quite a thing of habit with him now.

“Who are you?” he growled out, as Todd came into the room, and with a show of carefulness closed the door after him. “Who are you, eh?”

“Come to shave you, sir, and dress your hair.”

“Ah!” cried Mundel, as he gave a start. “Where have I heard that voice before? Why does it put me in mind of my loss? My £8,000! My money — my money. Am I to lose another £8,000? That will make £16,000. Oh, dear. Oh, dear. Oh dear! Who are you? Speak, friend. Who are you?”

“Only a barber, sir,” said Todd, “come to shave you, and dress your hair. Ain’t you well, sir? Shall I call again?”

“No — no — no! My losses distracts me. Only the barber? Ah, yes to be sure — only the barber. I must go to court, and ask for the duke of something. Good God, yes! I will see all the dukes, until I find out my duke. He who had my £8,000, and has left me so poor and so wretched. Oh, dear! Oh, dear, my money — my hard-earned money. Oh, gracious, if I were to lose another £8,000, I should go mad — mad — mad!”

“Shall I begin, sir?” said Todd.

“Begin? Begin what? Oh, yes, my hair; and I must be shaved too, or they won’t let me in at all. I will have the pearls or my money. I will see all the dukes, and pounce upon *my* duke. Oh, yes, I will have the pearls or the money.”

“Pearls, sir?” said Todd, as he began to arrange the shaving apparatus he had brought with him. “Did you say pearls?”

“Bah! What do you know about pearls, who, I dare say, never saw one. Bah! You — a poor beggarly barber. But I will have them back, or my money. I will raise London, but I will find them. I will see the queen herself, and know what duke she gave the pearls to, and then I will find him and have my money.”

“Now, sir. A little this way.”

“Oh, dear — oh, dear! What do you charge?”

“Anything you please, sir. When I come to a gentleman, I always leave it to his generosity to pay me what he pleases.”

“Ah! More expense. More expense. That means that I am to pay for the service done me, and something else besides for the sake of a compliment upon my liberality. But I ain’t liberal. I won’t be generous. Where’s my money, my pearls; and now to go to all sorts of expense to go to court, and see dukes. Oh, the devil. Eh? Eh?”

“Sir?”

“Stop. What an odd thing. Why, you are very — very — ”

“Very what, sir?” said Todd, making a hideous face.

“Like the duke, or my fancy leads me astray. Wait a bit. Don’t move.”

Mundel placed his hands over his eyes for a moment, and then suddenly withdrawing them he looked at Todd again.

“Yes, you are like the duke. How came you to be like a duke, the villain. Oh, if I could but see my pearls.”

“What duke, sir?”

“I would give £500 — no, I mean £100, that is £50, to know what duke,” screamed Mundel with vehemence. Then suddenly lapsing into quietness, he added — “Shave me. Shave me, I will go to court, and St. James’s shall ring again with the story of my pearls. Lost! Lost! Lost! Did he abscond from his wife with them, or was he murdered? I wonder? I wonder? — £8,000 gone all at once. I might have borne such a loss by degrees, but damn it — ”

“Really, sir, if you will go on talking about pearls and dukes, the shaving brush will go into your mouth, and there’s no such thing as avoiding it.”

“Confound you. Go on. Shave me and have done with it. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!”

John Mundel now contented himself by uttering drawn sighs, with now and then the accompaniment of a hideous groan, while Todd lathered his face with great affected care. The sighs and the groans both, however, ceased soon, and Todd became aware that the eyes of John Mundel were fixed upon him with a steady stare. No doubt, the usurer was recalling bit by bit to his memory the features of the sham duke, and comparing them with Todd's. To be sure, upon the occasion of his visit to Mundel Villa, Todd had taken every precaution to disguise his features; but then it must be admitted that the features of the barber were rather peculiar, and that John Mundel was professionally a more than ordinary keen observer, and thus it was that, as Todd lathered away, he became more and more impressed by the fact that there was a startling resemblance between Todd and the nobleman who had borrowed £8,000 upon the string of pearls.

"What's your name?" he said.

"Todd."

"Humph! A well-to-do man?"

"Poor as Job."

"How very like you are to a great man. Do you ever go to court? I think — I am sure I have seen you somewhere."

"Very likely," said Todd, "for I often go there."

"What, to court?"

"Nay, sir, not to court, but somewhere. Will you have the whiskers left just as they are, or taken off entirely, sir?"

Tap! Tap, came at the chamber door, and a boy peeped in, saying —

"Please, sir, the tailor has brought the things."

CHAPTER LV
The Murder of the Usurer

“Come in! Come in! More expense. More losses. As if an honest man, who only does what he can with his own, could not come to the court with a hope of meeting with a civil reception, unless he were decked out like a buffoon. Come in. Well, who are you?”

“Augustus Snipes, sir, at your service. Brought home the clothes, sir. The full dress suit you were so good as to order to be ready today, sir.”

“Oh, you are a tailor?”

“Oh, dear no, sir. We are not tailors nowadays. We are artists.”

“Curse you, whatever you are. I don’t care. Some artist I’m afraid has done me out of £8,000. Oh, dear. Put down the things. What do they come to?”

“Eighteen pounds ten shillings and threepence, sir.”

John Mundel gave a deep groan, and the tailor brushed past Todd to place the clothes upon a side table. As he returned he caught sight of Todd’s face, and in an instant his face lighting up, he cried —

“Ah! How do? How do?”

“Eh!” said Todd.

“How did the Pompadour coloured coat and the velvet smalls do, eh? — Fit well? Lord, what a rum start for a barber to have a suit of clothes fit for a duke.”

“Duke!” cried Mundel.

Todd lifted one of his huge feet and gave the “artist” a kick that sent him sprawling to the door of the room.

“That,” he said, “will teach you to make game of a poor man with a large family, you scoundrel. What, you won’t go, won’t you? The — ”

The artist shot out at the door like lightning, and flew down the stairs as though the devil himself was at his heels. Todd carefully closed the door again, and fastened it by a little bolt that was upon it. A strange expression was upon the countenance of John Mundel. His face looked perfectly convulsed, and he slowly rose from his chair. Todd placed one of his huge hands upon his breast and pushed him back again.

“What’s the matter?” said Todd.

“He — he — knows you.”

“Well.”

“The Pompadour coloured coat! Ah, I recollect the Pompadour coloured coat, too. I thought I knew your face. There was a something, too, about your voice that haunted me like the remembrance of a dream. You — you — are —”

“What?”

“Help — help! Tell me if I be mad, or if you are a duke in the disguise of a barber, or a barber in the likeness of a duke. Ah, that Pompadour coloured coat, it sticks — sticks in my throat.”

“I wish it did,” growled Todd. “What do you mean, Mr. Mundel? — Pray express yourself. What do you mean by those incoherent expressions?”

“Are you human?”

“Dear me, I hope so. Really, sir, you look quite wild.”

“Stop — stop — let me think — the face — the voice — the Pompadour coat — the costume fit for a duke. It must be so. — Man or devil, I will grapple with you, for you have got my pearls and my money. My £8,000 — my gold that I have lived, that I have toiled for — that I have schemed, and cheated to keep up — that I have shut my eyes to all sights for — and my heart to all tender emotions. You have my money, and I will denounce you!”

“Stop,” said Todd.

The usurer paused in what he was saying, but he still glared at Todd fiercely, and his eyes protruded from their orbits, while the muscles of his mouth worked as though he were still trying to utter audible sounds, but by some power was denied the capacity to utter them.

“You say you have lost pearls?”

“Yes — yes. — Orient pearls.”

Todd dived his hand into the breast of his apparel and produced the string of pearls. He held them before the ravished and dazzled eyes of John Mundel, as he said —

“Were they like these?”

With a cry of joy Mundel grasped at the pearls. Tears of gratified avarice gushed from his eyes.

“My own — my own pearls — my beautiful pearls! — Oh, blessed chance — my pearls back again. Ha! Ha! Ha!”

“Ha!” echoed Todd, as he stepped behind the chair on which John Mundel was sitting.

With his left hand he took one vigorous grasp of the remaining hair upon the head of the usurer, and forced his back against the chair. In another instant there was a sickening gushing sound. Todd, with the razor he held in his right hand, had nearly cut John Mundel’s head off. Then he held him still by the hair. Gasp — gasp — gasp — bubble — gasp — bubble. — Ah! Ah! Ah! — Goggle — goggle. A slight convulsive movement of the lashes, and the eyes set, and became opaquely dim. The warm blood still bubbled, but John Mundell was dead. Todd picked up the pearls and carefully replaced them in his bosom again.

“How many strange events,” he said, “hang upon these baubles. Ah, it’s only one more — a dirty job rather — but business is business!”

He stood in the room as silent as a statue, and listened intently. Not the slightest sound indicative of the proximity of any one came upon his ears. He felt quite convinced that the deed of blood had been done in perfect secrecy. But then there he was. — Who but he could be accused? There he stood, the self-convicted murderer. Had he not done the deed with the weapon of his handicraft that he had brought to the house? How was Todd to escape the seeming inevitable cold-blooded murder? We shall see. Huddled up in the chair, was the dead body. Mundell had not fallen out of the capacious easy seat in which he sat when he breathed his last. The blood rolled to the floor, where it lay in a steaming mass. Todd was careful — very careful not to tread in it, and he looked down his garments to see if there were any telltale spots of gore; but standing behind the chair to do the deed, as he had done, he had been saved from anything of the sort. There he stood, externally spotless, like many a seeming and smirking sinner in this world — but oh, how black and stained within!

“Humph!” said Todd; “John Mundel was half distracted by a heavy loss. He was ill, and his mind was evidently affected. He could not even shave himself. Oh, it is quite evident that John Mundell, unable to bear his miseries, real or ideal, any longer, in a fit of partial insanity, cut his throat. Yes, that will do.”

Todd still kept the razor in his grasp. What is he going to do? — Murder again the murdered? — Is he afraid that a man,

“With twenty murders on his head!”

will jostle him from his perilous pinnacle of guilty safety? — No. He takes one of the clammy dead hands in his own — he clasps the half rigid fingers over the handle of the razor, and then he holds them until, in the course of a minute or so, they have assumed the grasp he wishes, and the razor, with which he, Todd,

did the deed of blood, is held listlessly, but most significantly, in the hand of the dead.



The Murder of the Usurer.

“That will do,” said Todd.

The door is reached and unfastened, and the barber slips out of the room. He closes the door again upon the fetid hot aroma of the blood that is there, fresh from the veins of a human being like himself — no — no — not like himself. — No one can be like Sweeney Todd. He is a being of his own species — distinct, alone, an incarnation of evil! Todd was in no particular hurry to descend the stairs. He gained the passage with tolerable deliberation, and then he heard voices in the parlour.

“What a man you are!” said Mrs. Blisset.

“Ah, my dear, I am indeed. Who would not be a man for your sake? As for Mr. Blisset, I don’t think him worth attention.”

“Nor I,” said the lady, snapping her fingers, “I don’t value him that. The poor mean-spirited wretch — he’s not to be compared to you, captain.”

“I should think not, my love. Have you got any change in your pocket?”

“Yes. I — I — think I have about seven shillings or so.”

“That will do. Much obliged to you, madam — I mean, my dear Mrs. B. Ah, if you would but smother Blisset, so that I might have the joy of making you Mrs. Captain Coggan, what a happy man I should be.”

Todd tapped at the door.

“What was that?” cried the captain in evident alarm; “Is it Blisset?”

“No, captain — oh, no; I should like to see him interrupt me, indeed. A pretty thing that I cannot do what I like in the house I keep. Come in.”

Todd just opened the door far enough to introduce his hideous head; and having done so, stared at the pair with such a selection of frightful physiognomical changes, that they both sat transfixed with horror. At length Todd broke the silence by saying —

“He’s frightfully nervous.”

“What? — what? — who?” gasped the captain.

“What?” repeated Mrs. Blisset.

“What’s his name, upstairs, that I was sent for to shave just now.”

“What, Mr. Mundel. Ah, poor man, he has been in a very nervous state ever since he has been here. He continually talks of a heavy loss he has had.”

“Yes,” said Todd, “I suppose he means you to pay me.”

“Me?”

“Yes, ma’am. He says he is too nervous and excited for me to shave him just now, but he has borrowed a razor from me and says he will shave himself in the course of an hour or so, and send it back to me.”

“Oh, very well. Your money will be sent with the razor, no doubt; for although Mr. Mundell is so continually talking of his losses, they tell me he is as rich as a Jew.”

“Thank you, ma’am. Good morning; good morning, sir.”

The captain cast a supercilious glance upon Todd, but did not deign to make the remotest reply to the mock civility with which he was bidden good morning. No one stands so much upon his dignity, as he whose title to any at all is exceedingly doubtful. The female heart, however, is mollified by devotion, and Mrs. Blisset returned the adieu of Todd. When he got into the passage, he uttered one of his extraordinary laughs, and then opening the street door, he let himself out. Todd by no means hurried back to Fleet Street, but as he walked along he now and then shrugged his shoulders and shook his huge hands, which, to those acquainted with his peculiarities, would have been sufficient indications of the fact that he was enjoying himself greatly. At length he spoke —

“So — so — what a Providence we have, after all, watching over us. The moment I am in any real danger as regards the string of pearls, up starts some

circumstance that enables me to ward it off. Well, well, some day I almost think I shall turn religious and build a church, and endow it. Ha!”

Todd was so tickled at the idea of his building a church and endowing it, that he stopped at the corner of Milford Lane, to enjoy an unusual amount of laughter; as he did so he saw no other than Mrs. Ragg, slowly coming towards him.

“Ah,” he said, “Tobias’s mother. The mother of the Tobias that was! — I will avoid her.”

He darted on, and was through Temple Bar before Mrs. Ragg could make up her mind which way to run, for run she fully intended to do, when she saw Todd standing at the corner of Milford Lane. But she had no occasion for hurrying from him, as he walked in the direction of his shop as speedily as possible. Although he was perfectly satisfied with the clever manner he had ridded himself of the usurer, who probably might have been a source of annoyance to him, and who might eventually have been the means of bringing him to justice, he thought that he might be losing opportunities of making more victims for the accumulation of his ill-gotten wealth.

CHAPTER LVI

Sir Richard Blunt's Progress

We will now return, and see with what zeal Sir Richard Blunt and his active cooperators are at work, and how that persevering gentleman has taken the cause of humanity in hand, with a determined will to bring the atrocious criminals to a just tribunal. Sir Richard and his men continued to pass and repass Todd's window, and one or other had an eye upon the door, so that it was almost impossible for any one to go in without the officers seeing them; and as some one of the officers followed each customer into the shop, under some pretence, and did not return till the strangers had been shaved, it was impossible that he could continue his murderous trade. The barouet, however, could not continue to remain long in the vicinity of Todd's shop without exciting the suspicions of that crafty demon in human form. Todd seemed very ill at ease, and his eye was more frequently at the hole which commanded a view of everything within range of his window, and in spite of the various guises the officers assumed, he seemed to take a more close survey of their features than he had done when they had first visited his shop. It was rarely that his customers came in pairs, otherwise it would have continually prevented his schemes; but now none came alone, each one had his companion or attendant. One morning, almost as soon as the barber had opened his shutters, a seafaring man entered his shop in haste, and throwing himself on a chair, requested to be shaved immediately. He appeared to have but lately returned from India, or some other hot climate, for his features were well bronzed, and from his general aspect and conversation, he appeared to be a man of superior station in life. However, in this manner, the barber reasoned and came to the conclusion that he should have a good morning's work if none of his tormentors came to avert his intentions.

"A fine morning, sir," said Todd.

"Very," said the stranger; "but make haste and accomplish your task; I have a payment to make to a merchant in the city this morning by nine o'clock, and it is now more than half past eight."

"I will polish you off in no time," said the barber, with a grin; "then you can proceed and transact your business in good time. Sit a little nearer this way, sir, the chair will only stand firmly in one position, and it is exceedingly uncomfortable for gentlemen to remain, even for a few moments, on an unsteady chair."

Todd adjusted the chair, by dint of what appeared to the stranger to be a deal of unnecessary trouble, and he said —

"You seem remarkably anxious to put the chair in what you call a comfortable position, but we sailors are rather rough, therefore you need not make so much fuss about my comfort for so short a time, but proceed with the business."

Todd seemed rather disconcerted at the stranger's remarks, and could not understand whether his words were uttered by chance, or imported more than Todd liked.

"It is a maxim of mine, sir," said Todd, "to make everybody that comes to my shop as comfortable as possible during the short time they remain with me. One half inch further this way, sir, and you will be in a better position."

As he spoke he drew the chair to the spot he wished it, which circumstance seemed to please him, for he looked around him, and indulged in one of those hideous grins he executed just when he was on the point of committing some diabolical act. The gurgling noise he made in his throat caused the seaman to give a sudden start, which Todd perceiving, said —

"Did you hear the noise my poor old cat made, sir? she often does so when strangers come in, sir."

"It did not sound much like a cat; but if I had an animal that made such a demoniacal noise, I should soon send her to rest. Every one to their taste, though; I suppose you term the noise, that almost startled me, agreeable."

"Yes, sir," said the barber; "I like to hear her, because I think she is enjoying herself; and you know men and beasts require a something to stimulate the system."

By this time the lather was over the seaman's face. He could not speak, except at the imminent risk of swallowing a considerable quantity of the soap that Todd had covered his face with. The barber seemed dexterously to ply a razor on the seaman's face, which caused him to make wry faces, indicating that the operation was painful; the grimaces grew more fantastic to the beholder, but evidently less able to be withstood by the person operated upon.

"Good God, barber," he at length ejaculated, "why the devil don't you keep better materials? — I cannot stand this. The razor you are attempting to shave me with has not been ground, I should think, for a twelvemonth. Get another and finish me off, as you term it, in no time."

"Exactly, sir — I will get one more suited to your beard, and will return in one minute, when you will be polished off to my satisfaction."

He entered the little parlour at the back of the shop, but previously he took the precaution of putting his eye to the hole that gave a sight into the street; turning round, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he went in search of the superior razor he spoke of. A low grating sound, like that of a ragged cord commencing the moving of pullies, was to be heard, when Sir Richard Blunt threw the door open, and took a seat in the shop near where the stranger was sitting. He was so disguised that Todd could not recognise him as the same person that had been in his shop so many times before. The barber's face was

purple with rage and disappointment; but he restrained it by an immense effort, and spoke to Sir Richard in a tolerably calm tone —

“Hair cut, sir, or shaved, sir? I shall not be long before I have finished this gentleman off — perhaps you would like to call in again in a few minutes?”

“Thank you; I am not in a particular hurry, and being rather tired I will rest myself in your shop, if you have no objection.”

“My shop is but just open, and our ventilation being bad, it is much more pleasant to inhale the street air for a few minutes, than the vitiated air of houses in this neighbourhood.”

“I am not much afraid of my health for a few minutes, therefore would rather take rest.”

Todd turned his face away and ground his teeth, when he found that all his arguments were unavailing in moving the will of his new customer; therefore he soon finished shaving the first customer.

“At your service, sir,” said Todd to Sir Richard, who seemed absorbed in reading a newspaper he took from his pocket. He looked up, and saw that the stranger was nearly ready to leave, therefore he continued reading till the stranger was in the act of passing out of the shop, when he said —

“What time do the royal family pass through Temple Bar to the City this morning?”

“Half past nine,” said Todd.

“Then I have not time to be shaved now — I will call in again. Good morning.” Saying which he also left the shop.

In a few minutes after leaving the shop of Todd, Sir Richard and the men employed by him were in consultation; and he urged strongly that the men should remain nearer to the shop than they had hitherto done, for if Sir Richard had been two minutes later, most likely he who had escaped the angry billows, would have been launched into eternity by the villainous barber.

For the remainder of the day Todd was more closely besieged than ever, and when night came on, Sir Richard Blunt, with two of his men, set watch upon the house of Mrs. Lovett. Sir Richard had provided himself with skeleton keys, candles, and other housebreaking implements, for the purpose of entering Mrs. Lovett’s house after that lady had retired, as he had the full sanction of the law to use every means he could think of in bringing the culprits to justice. About eleven o’clock Mrs. Lovett was seen in her bedroom, with a candle in her hand, and making every preparation for retiring; in a few minutes the light was put out, and everything seemed still as death. Nothing was to be heard in the adjoining streets but the monotonous tread of the watchmen, with an

occasional drawling forth of the hour of the night. This was the time Sir Richard had waited for — it was the time for him to act. He approached the street door and applied his implements with success, for the door yielded to the baronet's tools, and he soon was in the shop of the piemaker. As complete a silence reigned within as was maintained without.

He waited for some time yet, though, before he moved. Finding, at length, that all was profoundly still, and feeling quite convinced that Mrs. Lovett had really retired for the night, the magistrate set about procuring a light. By the aid of some chemical matches that he had with him, this was soon accomplished, and a faint blue light shone upon the various articles in the pie shop of Mrs. Lovett. He then took a small piece of wax taper from his pocket, and lit it. This gave him sufficient light to enable him to distinguish with accuracy any object in the place. Once again he listened, in order to be quite sure that Mrs. Lovett was not stirring, and then, finding himself perfectly satisfied upon that head, he fearlessly commenced an examination of the shop. There was nothing to excite any very particular attention, except the apparatus for lowering the platform upon which the pies were sent up from the ovens below, and in a few moments the whole attention of Sir Richard Blunt was concentrated upon that contrivance. He did not meddle with it further, than looking at it sufficiently to fully comprehend it, for he had other views just then. After, then, making himself quite master of the details of that piece of machinery, he turned his whole attention to the parlour. By the aid of a skeleton key which he took from his pocket, he opened the door with ease, and at once entered that room, where lay the remains of the supper which Mrs. Lovett had so liberally provided for Sweeney Todd. This parlour was rather a large rambling room, with a number of snug, handy looking cupboards in various corners. It was towards those cupboards that Sir Richard Blunt directed his attention. They were all locked, but with the means he had with him, ordinary locks presented no impediment to the prosecution of his research.

CHAPTER LVII
Tobias is Much Better

Suddenly he heard, or fancied he heard a noise above in the house, like the sudden shutting of a door.

“Oh,” thought Sir Richard, “all is safe. She is shutting herself in for the night, I suppose. Well, Mrs. Lovett, we will see what we can find in your cupboards.”

The little bit of wax light, which Sir Richard had lit, gave but a weak kind of twilight while he moved about with it in his hand, but when he stuck it on a corner of the mantelshelf it burnt much clearer, and was sufficient to enable him just to see what he was about. So thoroughly impressed was he with the idea that Mrs. Lovett had retired to rest, that he paid no sort of attention to the house, and may be said, in a manner of speaking, to have negligently shut his ears to all sounds that did not violently attack them. He opened a cupboard, in which were some books, and on the top shelf, lying in a confused kind of heap, were some watches, and several sets of very rich buckles for shoes. There were, likewise, several snuff boxes in the lot. Were these little trifles presented to Mrs. Lovett, by Todd, as proofs of the thriving business he was carrying on? Sir Richard put two of the watches in his pocket.

“These may be identified,” he said. “And now, if I can but find the door by which she descends to the oven below, I — ”

At this moment he was startled by a sudden accession of light in the room. His first idea, and a natural enough one too, was, that the little wax light was playing some vagaries incidental to all lights, and he turned rapidly from the cupboard to look at it. What was his astonishment to see the door that led to the upper part of the house open, and Mrs. Lovett, partially undressed, standing upon the threshold with a chamber candlestick in her hand in which was a rushlight, the dim and dubious rays from which had produced the extra illumination that had first startled Sir Richard Blunt. No wonder that, with amazement upon his countenance, he now glanced upon this vision, for such it looked like at the moment; and yet he saw that Mrs. Lovett it was to all intents and purposes, and that he was discovered in his exploring expedition in her parlour appeared to be one of those facts it would have required no small share of moral hardihood to dispute. Seeing, however, should not always be believing, despite the venerable saying which asserts as much.

“I must apprehend her, now,” thought Sir Richard Blunt; “I have no resource but to apprehend her at once.”

With this object he was about to dart forward, when something strange about the appearance of Mrs. Lovett arrested his attention, and stayed his progress. He paused and remained leaning partly upon the back of a chair, while she slowly advanced into the room, and then as she came nearer to him he became convinced of what he had begun to suspect, namely — that she was walking in

her sleep. There is something awful in this wandering of the mortal frame when its senses seem to be locked up in death. It looks like a resurrection from the grave — as though a corpse was again revisiting

“The glimpses of the pale moon;”

and even Sir Richard Blunt, with all his constitutional and acquired indifference to what would be expected to startle any one else could not help shrinking back a little, and feeling an unusual sort of terror. This transient nervousness of his, though, soon passed away, and then he set himself to watch the actions of Mrs. Lovett with all the keenness of intense interest and vividly awakened curiosity. She did not disappoint him. Moving forward into the room with a slow and stately action, so that the little flame of the rushlight was by no means disturbed, she reached the middle of the parlour and then she paused. She assumed such a natural attitude of listening, that Sir Richard Blunt voluntarily shrunk down behind the chair, for it seemed to him at the moment that she must have heard him. Then, in a low and slightly indistinct tone, she spoke —

“Hush! hush! So still. The poison! Where is the poison? — Will he take it? Ah, that is the question, and yet how clear it is. But he is fiendlike in his suspicions. When will he come?”

She moved on towards the cupboard, in which the decanter of poisoned wine had been placed, and opening it, she felt in vain upon the shelf for it. It was still upon the table, and if anything more than another could have been a convincing proof of the mere mechanical actions of the somnambulist, this fact, that she passed the wine where it was, and only recollected where it had been, would have been amply sufficient. After finding that her search was ineffectual, she turned from the cupboard, and stood for a few moments in silence. Then a horror shook her frame, and she said —

“They must all die. Bandage your eyes, and you will shut out the death shrieks. Yes, that will be something, to get rid of those frightful echoes. Bandage after bandage will, and shall do it.”

Sir Richard stood silently watching; but such was the horror of the tones in which she spoke, that even his heart felt cold, as though the blood flowed but sluggishly through its accustomed channels.

“Who,” he thought to himself, “for the world’s wealth, would have this woman’s memory of the past?”

She still held the light, and it appeared to him as though she were about to go into the shop, but she paused before she reached the half-glass door of communication between it and the parlour, and shook like one in an ague.

“Another! — Another!” she said. “How strange it is that I always know. The air seems full of floating particles of blood, and they all fall upon me! Off, off. Oh, horror! Horror! I choke — I choke. Off, I say. How the hot blood steams up

in a sickly vapour. There — there, now! Why does Todd let them shriek in such a fashion?”

She now shook so, that Sir Richard Blunt made sure she would either drop the light she carried, or, at all events, shake it out, but neither of these contingencies took place; and, after a few moments, she got more calm. The violent agitation of her nerves gradually subsided. She spoke horrors, but it was in a different tone; and abandoning, apparently, the intention of going into the shop, she approached a portion of the parlour which had not yet been subjected to the scrutiny of Sir Richard Blunt, although it would not ultimately have escaped him. The appearance of this part of the room was simply that there was there a cupboard, but the back of this seeming cupboard formed, in reality, the door that led down the flight of stairs to the other strong iron door that effectually shut in the captive cook to his duties among the ovens. This was just the place that Sir Richard Blunt wanted to find out; and here we may as well state, that Sir Richard had an erroneous, but very natural idea, under the circumstances, that the cook or cooks were accomplices of Mrs. Lovett in her nefarious transactions. Had he been at all aware of the real state of affairs below, our friend, who had become so thoroughly disgusted with the pies, would not have been left for so long in so precarious a situation. Mrs. Lovett paused, after opening the lock of the cupboard, and in a strange, sepulchral sort of voice, she said —

“Has he done it?”

“Done what?” Sir Richard would fain have asked; but, although he had heard that people, when walking in their sleep, will answer questions put to them under such circumstances, he was doubtful of the fact, and by no means wished to break the trance of Mrs. Lovett.

“Has he done it?” she again repeated. “Is he no more? How many does it make? One — two — three — four — five — six — seven. Yes, seven, it must be the seventh, and I have heard all. Hush! Hush! Todd — Todd — Todd, I say. Are you dead? No — no. He would not drink the wine. The devil, his master, whispered to him that it had in it the potent drug that would send his spirits howling to its Maker, and he would not drink. God! He would not drink! No — no — no!”

She pronounced these words in such a tone of agony, that her awakening from the strange sleep she was in, seemed to be a natural event from such a strong emotion, but it did not take place. No doubt Mrs. Lovett had been long habituated to these nocturnal rambles. She now began slowly and carefully the descent of the stairs leading to the oven; but she had not got many paces, when a current of air from below, and which, no doubt, came through the small grating in the iron door, extinguished her light. This circumstance, however, appeared to be perfectly unnoticed by her, and she proceeded in the profound darkness with the same ease as though she had had a light. Sir Richard would have followed her as he was, but in the dark he did not feel sufficient confidence in her as a guide to do so; and with as noiseless a tread as possible, he went

back, and fetched from the chimneypiece shelf his own little wax light, which was still burning, and carefully guarding its flame from a similar catastrophe to what had happened to Mrs. Lovett's light, he descended the staircase, slowly and cautiously, after her. She went with great deliberation, and it was not until being rather surprised at the total absence of sound from her tread, that upon looking down to her feet, he found that they were bare. After this, he could have no doubt but that, almost immediately upon her lying down in bed, this somnambulistic trance had come over her, and she had risen to creep below, and go through the singular scene we are describing. Step by step they both descended, until Mrs. Lovett came to the iron door. She did not attempt to open it. If she had, Heaven only knows what might have resulted from the desperate risk the captive cook might have made to escape. But even in the madness of Mrs. Lovett — for a sort of madness the scene she was enacting might be called — there was a kind of method, and she had no idea of opening the iron door that shut the cook from the upper world. Pausing, then, at the door leading to the ovens, she, with as much facility as though she had had broad daylight to do it in, unfastened the small square wicket in the top part of the window. A dull reddish glare of light came through it from the furnaces, which night nor day were extinguished.

"Hist! Hist!" said Mrs. Lovett.

"Who speaks?" said a dull hollow voice, which sounded as if coming from the tomb. "Who speaks to me?"

Mrs. Lovett shut the small wicket in a moment.

"He has not done it, yet," she said. "He has not done it yet. No — no — no. But blood will flow — yes. It must be so. One — two — three — four — five — six — seven. The seventh, and not the last. Horrible! Horrible! — Most horrible! If, now, I could forget —"

She began rapidly to ascend the stairs, so that Sir Richard Blunt had to take two at a step, and once three, in order to be up before her, and even then she reached the parlour so close upon him, that it was a wonder she did not touch him; but he succeeded in evading her by a hair's breadth, and then she stood profoundly still for a few moments with her hands clasped. This quiescent state, however, did not last long, for suddenly, with eagerness, she leaned forward, and spoke again.

"No suspicion!" she said; "All is well! — Dear me, heap up thousands more. Oh, Todd, have we not enough? — There, clean up that blood! — Here is a cloth! — Stop it up — don't you see where it is running to, like a live thing? — He is not dead yet. — How clumsy. — Another blow with the hammer! — There — there — on the forehead! — What a crash! — Did the bone go that time? — Why the eyes have started out! — Horror! Horror! — Oh, God, no — no — no — I cannot come here again. — Oh, God! — Oh, God!"

She sunk down upon the floor in a huddled up mass, and Sir Richard Blunt, who could not forbear shuddering at the last words that had come from her lips now he thought that her trance was over, rapidly approaching her, said —

“Wretched woman, your career is over.”

She suddenly rose, and with the same stately movement as before, she made her way from the parlour by the door leading to the staircase. During all the strange scenes she had gone through, she had not abandoned the light, and although the air in the narrow passage of the staircase had extinguished it, she still continued to carry it with the same care as though it lit her on her way. Seeing that she still walked in that strange and hideous sleep, the magistrate let her pass him, nor did he make any attempt to follow her.

“Be it so,” he said. “Let her awaken once again in the fancied security of her guilt. The doom of the murderess is hanging over her, and she shall not escape. But there is time yet.”

He watched her until, by the turn of the stairs, she disappeared from his sight, and then he sat down to think. And there, for a brief space, we leave Sir Richard, while we take a peep at Tobias.



Mrs. Lovett in a State of Somnambulism.

CHAPTER LVIII
Tobias Unbosoms Himself

Mrs. Ragg, when she met Sweeney Todd, after he had so comfortably put out of this world of care, John Mundel, the usurer, was really upon a mission to Minna Gray, to tell her that Tobias was, to use her own expressive phraseology — “Never so much better.” Together with this news, Mrs. Ragg, at the colonel’s suggestion, sought the company of Minna to tea upon that afternoon; and the consent of all parties whom it might concern being duly obtained to that arrangement, we will suppose Minna upon her way to Colonel Jeffery’s. Timidly, and with a bashful boldness, if we may use the expression, did the fair young girl ring the area bell at the colonel’s. But he and his friend, Captain Rathbone, were both in the parlour, and saw her advance, so that she was at once welcomed into that portion of the house. The colonel, like most gentlemen, had the happy knack of making those with whom he spoke at their ease, so that Minna in a very short time recovered her first agitation — for if she had gone a thousand times to that house, agitated she would have been at first — and was able to discourse with all that gentle fervour and candid simplicity which belongs to such minds as hers.

“A most favourable change,” said the colonel, “has taken place in Tobias — a change which I attribute to the strong influence which your visit had upon him; such an opinion is not a mere fancy of mine, for the medical gentleman who is in attendance upon him fully concurs in that view of the case.”

Minna had no need to say that she was pleased, for she looked all the delight that such a communication was calculated to give her.

“Under these circumstances, then,” continued the colonel, “that which was only a faint hope of his recovery, has become a certainty.”

Minna’s eyes filled with tears.

“Yes,” added Captain Rathbone, “and we expect that to you he will make such revelations as shall bring proper punishment upon all those who have in any way been the cause of this calamity.”

“Oh, forgive them all, now,” said Minna. “Since he recovers, we can forgive them all, you know, now.”

“That cannot be, for the persecution that Tobias has endured is but part of a system which he will be the means of exposing. Will you come upstairs at once now, Miss Gray, and see him?”

“Oh, yes — yes.”

How her heart beat as she ascended the staircase, and how quickly she inspired and respired when she actually got to the door of Tobias’s room. But

then she heard the kind, although not very musical voice of Mrs. Ragg from within, say —

“But, my dear, you will give her time to come?”

“A long time, mother,” said Tobias.

Ah, how well Minna knew that voice. It was the voice of Tobias as of old. The same voice, in tone perhaps only a little weakened, and rendered more soft by sickness than it had been, but to her it was like the soft memory of some well remembered tone that she had heard, and wept with joy to hear in happier days.

“I am here, Tobias! I am here.”

“Minna — Minna!”

She entered the room radiant and beautiful as some fairy come to breathe joy by the magic of some spell, Tobias stretched out his arms towards her. She paused a moment, and then with a soft and gentle movement, embraced him. It was but for an instant she held him in her arms, and then she stepped back a pace or two and looked at him.

“Quite well,” said Tobias, understanding the look.

“Quite?”

“Oh, yes, Minna, and as happy — as — as — fifty kings.”

“Are kings happy?”

“Well, I don’t know that they are, Minna, but at all events if they are, they can’t possibly be happier than I am.”

“Bless the boy,” said Mrs. Ragg, “how he does talk, to be sure.”

“Why, Tobias,” said Colonel Jeffery, “you are wonderfully improved within this last hour.”

“Yes, sir, and still more wonderfully since the best physician in the world has come to see me.”

The direction of his eyes towards Minna Gray let them know, if they had not guessed it before, who Tobias considered the best physician in the world to him. Minna shook her head, and said —

“But, Tobias, it is to this gentleman that you owe your life.”

“Yes,” replied Tobias, “and if ever I forget to be grateful to him for all that he has done for me, I shall consider myself the worst person in the world. Aye, as bad, quite as — as Sweeney Todd.”

Tobias shuddered perceptibly as he pronounced Todd’s name, and it was quite evident that even in safety, as he could not but feel himself, and profoundly protected from the deadly malice of his late master, he could not divest himself of the absolute horror which even a mere remembrance of him engendered.

“Well, Tobias,” said the colonel, as he drew a chair close to him, “since you have named Todd, pray tell us all about him.”

“All?”

“Yes, all, Tobias.”

“I will tell all I know. Come closer to me, Minna; I feel, when you are near me, as though God had sent one of his angels to keep Todd from me. Oh, yes, I will tell all I know. How can he harm me now?”

“How indeed, Tobias?” said Minna.

Tobias still trembled. What a shock that bold, bad, unscrupulous man had given to the nerves of that boy. His bodily health might be restored, and his mind once more be brought back to sanity, but if Tobias Ragg were to live to the age of a patriarch, the name of Todd would be to him a something yet to shrink from, and the tone of his nervous system could never be what it once was. Minna looked up in his face, and the colonel, too, gazed fully upon him, so that Tobias found he was absolutely called upon to say something.

“Yes,” he began, “I remember that people came to the shop, and — and that they never went out of it again.”

“Can you particularise any instance?”

“Yes, the gentleman with the dog.”

Colonel Jeffery showed by his countenance how much he was interested.

“Go on,” he said. “What about the gentleman with the dog?”

“I don’t know how it was,” added Tobias, “but that circumstance seemed to tell more upon my fancy than any other. I suppose it was the conduct of the dog.”

“What sort of a dog was it?”

“A large handsome dog, and Todd would not let it remain in the shop, so his master made him wait outside.”

“Did he name the dog?”

Tobias passed his hand across his brow several times, and then his countenance suddenly brightening up, he said —

“Hector! Yes, Hector!”

Colonel Jeffery nodded.

“What then happened, Tobias?” said Minna.

“Why, I think Todd sent me out upon some message, and when I came back the gentleman was gone, but not the dog.”

“Now, Tobias, can you tell us what sort of a man the man with the dog was?”

“Yes, fresh coloured, and good-looking rather, with hair that curled. I should know him again.”

“Ah, Tobias,” said the colonel, “I am afraid we shall none of us ever see him again in this world.”

“Never!” said Tobias. “Todd killed him. How he did it, or what he did with the body, I know not; but he did kill him, and many more, I am certain as that I am now here. Many people came into the shop that never left it again.”

“No doubt; and now, Tobias, how came you in the street by London Bridge so utterly overcome and destitute?”

“The madhouse.”

“Madhouse?”

“Yes, I shall recollect it all. Where are you, mother?”

“Bless us and save us! — Here, to be sure,” said Mrs. Ragg.

“Did I not come to you at your room and find you ironing, and did I not tell you that I had something to say about Todd, and ask you to fetch somebody?”

“To be sure.”

“Well, when you left, Todd came, and after once looking in his face, I almost forgot what happened, except that there was a madhouse and a man named Watson.”

“Watson?” said Colonel Jeffery, as he made a note of the name.

“Yes,” added Tobias, “and Fogg.”

“Good! Fogg, I have it. Now, Tobias, where did you encounter this Fogg and Watson?”

“That I cannot tell. I recollect trees, and a large house, and rooms, and a kind of garden, and some dark and dismal cells, and then my mind seems, when I think of all those things, like some large room full of horrors, and anything comes before me just like some dreadful dream. I recollect falling, I think, from some wall, and then running at my utmost speed until I fell, and then the next thing that I remember was hearing the voice of Minna in this house.”

“One thing,” said Captain Rathbone, “is pretty certain, and that is, that this madhouse, if it were one in reality, must be in the immediate vicinity of London, or else the strength of Tobias would not have enabled him to run so far as to London from it.”

“Mrs. Ragg, I believe Todd told you that he had placed Tobias in a madhouse, did he not?” said the colonel.

“Yes, sir, he did, the wagabone!”

“Well, I am inclined to think that it was a madhouse — one of those private dens of iniquity which are, and have been for many years, a disgrace to the jurisprudence of this country.”

“If so, then,” said the captain, “there will be no great difficulty in finding it with the clue that Tobias has given us respecting the names.”

“I will not be satisfied until I have rooted out that den,” said the colonel, “but at present all our exertions must be directed to ascertain the fate of poor Ingestrie. Every circumstance appears really to combine in favour of the opinion of Johanna Oakley, to the effect that this Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie were the same.”

“It does look marvellously probable,” said the captain.

“Do you recollect any more, Tobias?” said Minna.

“Not clearly, Minna, and I am afraid that what I have recollected is not very clear, but it was the dog that made an impression upon my memory. Many things are, however, now each moment crowding to my mind, and I think that I shall soon be able to recollect much more.”

“Not a doubt, Tobias. Do not attempt to strain your memory too far now. Things will come back to you gently, and by degrees.”

"I have no doubt of that, sir, but — but —"

"But what, Tobias?"

"Oh, sir, you are quite sure —"

"Sure of what?"

"That when I least expect it, round the curtains of my bed, or from behind some chair, or from some cupboard about twilight, I shall not see the hideous face of Sweeney Todd, and feel his eyes glancing upon me?"

Poor Tobias covered his eyes with both his hands, as he gave almost frenzied utterance to these words, and both Colonel Jeffery and his friend, the captain, looked on with aspects of deep commiseration. The former, after the pause of a few moments, to allow the renewed excitement of Tobias fully to subside, spoke to him in a kind but firm voice.

"Tobias, listen to me. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir — oh, yes."

"Then I have to tell you that it is impossible Sweeney Todd can now come upon you in the way you mention, or in any other way."

"Impossible, sir?"

"Yes, quite. He is now watched by the officers of justice, day and night. His house door is never lost sight of for a moment while he is within it, and when he is abroad, he is closely followed and carefully watched by men, any one of whom is more than a match for him; so be at peace upon that head, for Sweeney Todd is more securely kept now than any wild beast in his den."

CHAPTER LIX
Sir Richard Blunt's Adventures Continued

All left Sir Richard Blunt, not in a critical situation, but in what may be called an embarrassing one, inasmuch as he could not very well make up his mind what to do next. He had heard much towards her enunciation from the lips of Mrs. Lovett, and he had possessed himself of some property, which he hoped would be authenticated as having belonged to some of Todd's victims. He had likewise found out the mode of secret communication with the ovens below, but whether or not to make any further use of that information just then was a question. While he was debating these matters in his mind, he saw that his little wax light was expiring. He accordingly produced another from his pocket, and lit it, and during the process of so doing, he made up his mind to risk a descent into the regions below, so far as the iron door. He at first took his light in his hand to take it with him, but a few moments' reflection decided him to go in the dark, and placing it upon a corner of the shelf, as he had done before, he opened the cupboard, at the back of which was the secret door, and soon found himself upon the little staircase. Of course, the object of Sir Richard Blunt was to make what discovery he could, without betraying the fact of his own presence; and, accordantly with such a design, hastened lightly as foot could fall, so that he was some few minutes in reaching the iron door, which he felt with his left hand, which he kept during his progress outstretched before him. The next object was to get the little wicket open without noise, for he recollected that Mrs. Lovett had made a sharp sound by the sudden withdrawal of a bolt that secured it on the side next to the staircase. By carefully feeling over the door, he at last lit upon this bolt, and then, by taking his time over it, he succeeded in drawing it back without creating the least sound. When this was done, the wicket yielded easily, for it had no other fastening than that bolt, and when it opened, which it did towards the stairs, the same dull reddish glare came through the small aperture that he had noticed when Mrs. Lovett was there, but he found what he had not noticed upon that occasion, namely, that when the wicket was removed there were iron bars farther securing the opening, so that it was quite clear it was intended to be a thing of strength. When, however, the magistrate found that there was nothing between him and the region of the ovens but this grating, he placed his ear close to it, in order to listen if any one was stirring. After a few moments, he heard a deep groan. Somewhat startled at this sound — for it was certainly unexpected — he tried to pierce with his eyes the obscurity of the place, but the darkness, although not absolute, was of that puzzling character that the more he looked the more all sorts of odd images seemed to be conjured up before his eyes. He began, too, to think that the groan must have been only some accidental sound that he had mistaken, but he was quickly relieved from such an opinion by hearing it again, much more distinctly and unequivocally than it had before sounded upon his ears. There was no possibility of mistaking this groan now; but while the certainty that a groan it was came upon his ears, he became only the more puzzled to account for it; and this state of feeling in him certainly arose from the difficulty he naturally had in conceiving the possibility of any one being upon the premises, and engaged in the service of Mrs. Lovett, unless they were

accomplices of that lady. The idea of the captive cook was not at all likely to cross the imagination of any one, and in her revelations upon that head, during her somnambulistic tour, Mrs. Lovett had not been sufficiently explicit to enable Sir Richard Blunt to come to a different conclusion.

“I will listen for it again,” he thought.

After a few moments more he was rewarded for his patience by not only hearing another groan, but a voice, in accents of the most woebegone character, said —

“I cannot sleep. It is of no avail. Alas! Who dare sleep here! God help me, for I am past all human aid.”

“Who on earth can this be?” said the magistrate to himself.

“It would be better for them to kill me at once,” continued the voice. “Anything would be preferable to this continued horror; but I suppose they have not suited themselves yet with some one to take my place, so I am not to be sent to see my old friends. Oh, bitter — bitter fate. I would that I were dead!”



The Captive Piemaker Contemplates Suicide.

There was a heartiness in the pronunciation of the last word, that quite convinced Sir Richard Blunt of their sincerity; but yet he thought he ought to listen to a little more before he ran the risk of falling into any trap that might be laid for him by Mrs. Lovett or her satellites, if she had any. He had not to wait long, for whoever it was that was speaking had got into a good train of groaning, and did not seem inclined to leave off for some time.

“Is she a woman, or the devil in petticoats?” said the voice.

“Humph!” thought Sir Richard Blunt, “that would be rather a hard question to answer upon oath.”

“How much longer am I to bear this load of misery?” continued the voice. “No sleep — no food, but just what will sustain nature in her continued sufferings. Oh, it is most horrible. Have I been preserved from death under many adventurous and fearful circumstances, at last to die here like a rat in a hole?”

“What on earth can be the matter with this man?” thought Sir Richard.

There was a pause in the lamentations of the man now for a few seconds, during which he only groaned once or twice, just as if by way of letting any one know, who might be listening, that he was not pacified. At length, with a sudden burst of passion, he cried —

“I can bear it no longer. Death of my own seeking, and by my own choice as to method, is far preferable to this state of existence. Farewell, all — farewell to you, fair and gentle girl, whom I loved and whose falseness first gave me a pang such as the assassin’s dagger could not have inflicted. Farewell, dear companions of my youth, whom I had hoped to see again!”

“Stop!” said Sir Richard Blunt.

The captive cook was still.

“Stop!” cried Sir Richard Blunt again.

“Good God! Who is that?” said the voice from the region of the oven.

“Your good genius, if I save you from doing anything rash; who and what are you? Tell me all.”

“To be betrayed. Ah, you are some spy of Mrs. Lovett’s of course, and you only wish to draw me into conversation for my destruction.”

“What were you going to do just now?”

“Take my own life.”

“Well, if you find I am an enemy instead of a friend, as I profess to be, you can but carry out your intention.”

“That’s true.”

The captive cook pronounced these two words in such a solemn tone, that the magistrate was more than ever convinced of his sincerity, and that he was far more a victim of Mrs. Lovett and her associate, the barber, than an accomplice.

“Speak freely,” said Sir Richard. “Who and what are you?”

“I am the most unhappy wretch that ever breathed. I am cribbed and cabined and confined, I live upon raw flour and water. I curse the hour that I was born, and wish I had been a blind kitten and drowned, rather than what I am.”

“But what do you do here?”

“Make numberless pies.”

“Well?”

“It’s all very fine for you to say well, whoever you are, but it is anything but well with me. Where are you?”

“Upon the staircase, near an iron door.”

“Ah, you are at the aperture through which that abominable Mrs. Lovett issues to me her commands and her threats. If you have any compassion in your nature, and the smallest desire to hear a story that will curdle your blood, you will find out the means of opening that door, and then I will climb up to it and make one effort for freedom.”

“My good friend, I am very much afraid it would materially derange my plans to do so.”

“Derange your what?”

“My plans.”

“And are any plans to be placed in competition with my life and liberty? Oh, human nature — human nature, what a difference there is in you when you are upon the right side of the door from what you are when you are upon the wrong.”

“My friend,” said Sir Richard Blunt, “that is a very philosophical remark, and I compliment you upon it. But now answer me truly one question, and for your own sake, and for the sake of justice, I beg you to answer me truly.”

“What is it?”

“Are you in present fear of death?”

“No. Not while I continue to make the pies.”

“Very good!”

“Very good? Now by all that’s abominable, I only wish you had but to make them here for one week, and at the same time know as much as I know — I rather suspect that you would never say very good again.”

“One week?”

“Yes, only a week.”

“Pray how long have you been here?”

“I have lost count of the long weary days and the anxious nights. Oh, sir, be you whom you may, do not sport with me, for I am very — very wretched!”

“If I could but be sure that you are a victim of the woman who lives above,” said Sir Richard.

“Sure that I am a victim? Oh, God, you suspect me of being her accomplice. Well, well, it is but natural, finding me here — I ought to expect as much. What can I say — what can I do to convince you of the contrary?”

“Reveal all.”

“Do you not know then that — that —”

“That what? I may suspect much, but I know nothing.”

“Then — then —”

The man’s voice sunk to a husky whisper, and when he had spoken a few words there was a deathlike silence between him and Sir Richard Blunt. The latter at length said —

“And you affirm this?”

“I am willing to swear to it. Release me from here and take me to any court of justice you please, and I will affirm it. If you have any suspicion of my good faith, manacle me — bind me up in iron until I tell all.”

“I am convinced.”

“Oh, joy, I shall look upon the blessed sun again. I shall see the green fields — I shall hear the lark sing, and drink in the odour of sweet flowers. I — I am not quite desolate.”

Sir Richard Blunt could hear him sobbing like a child. The magistrate did not interrupt this burst of feeling. He was, on the contrary, quite glad to be a witness of it, for it convinced him of the sincerity of the man. He could not think it possible he should find attending upon Mrs. Lovett’s ovens so consummate an

actor as it would have taken to play that part. After a few moments, however, he spoke, saying —

“Now, my friend, are you one who will listen to reason in preference to merely acting upon the feelings and suggestions of the moment?”

“I hope so.”

“Well, then, I think I could set you free tonight, but to do so would materially interfere with the course of that justice which is about speedily to overtake Mrs. Lovett. By remaining here you will keep things as they are for the present, and that, I assure you, is a great object. You say that while you continue making pies, your life is not in positive peril; I ask of you, for the sake of justice, to put up with your present position a short time longer.”

“Liberty is sweet.”

“It is, but you would not like such a woman as Mrs. Lovett to take the alarm and escape the consequences of her crimes.”

“Oh! No — no. I will remain. For how long will it be?”

“I cannot say exactly, but the time may be counted by hours, and not one shall be lost. Have but a little patience, and I will come to you again. When next you hear my voice at the grating, it will be to give the signal of liberty.”

“How can I thank you?”

“Never mind that. Good night, and take care of yourself. All will be well.”

“Good night. Good night.”

CHAPTER LX
Big Ben Makes a Discovery

At seven o'clock on the morning following these strange events, there were early prayers at St. Dunstan's, and the bells called together the devout at half past six. Todd was there! Is the reader surprised? Has he never yet in his mundane experience met with a case of sanctimonious villany? Does he think that going to prayer is incompatible with such a life as Todd's? Pho — pho! Live and learn. Todd met the beadle upon the steps of the church.

"Ah, Mr. T.," said that functionary. "It does one good to see you, that it does — a deal of good. I say that, of all the tradesmen in Fleet Street, you is the *piousest*."

"We owe a duty to our creator," said Todd, "which all the pomps and vanities of this world ought to make us neglect."

"Have you heard o' the suicide in Norfolk Street?"

Todd shook his head.

"Why, the beetle of St. Clement's was asking of me only last night, what sort of man you was."

"I?"

"Yes, to be sure. It's a gentleman as you went to shave, and as you lent a razor to, as has cut his blessed throat in Norfolk Street."

"God bless me," said Todd, "you don't mean that? Dear! Dear! We are indeed here today and gone tomorrow. How true it is that flesh is grass; — and so the gentleman cut his throat with my razor, did he?"

"Above a bit."

"Well, well, it is to be hoped that the Lord will be merciful to the little frailties of his creatures."

"Convulsions! Do you call that a little frailty?"

Todd had passed on into the body of the church, and any minute observer might have noticed, that when he got there, there was a manifest and peculiar twitching of his nose, strongly resembling the evolutions of a certain ex-chancellor. Then, in a low tone to himself, Todd muttered —

"They make a great fuss about the smell in St. Dunstan's, but I don't think it is so very bad after all."

Perhaps one of Todd's notions in going to early morning prayers was to satisfy himself upon the point of the stench in the church. The morning service was very short, so that Todd got back to his shop in ample time to open it for the business of the day. He gave a glance at the window, to be quite sure that the placard announcing the want of a pious lad was there, and then with all the calmness in the world he set about sharpening his razors. Not many minutes elapsed ere a man came in, leading by the hand a boy of about thirteen years of age.

"Mr. Todd," he said, "you want a lad."

"Yes."

"You don't know me, but I am Cork, the greengrocer in the market."

"Oh," said Todd.

"You see this is Fred, by the first Mrs. C., and the second Mrs. C. thinks he'd better go out to something now; if you will take him 'prentice we will provide him, and he can run into our place for his meals and tell us all the gossip of the shop, which will amuse Mrs. C., as she's in a delicate condition, and I have no doubt you will find him just the lad for you."

"Dear! Dear!" said Todd.

"What's the matter, Mr. T.?"

"I'm so aggravated. — Is he pious?"

"Decidedly."

"Does he know his catechism and his belief?"

"Oh, yes. Only ask him, Mr. Todd. Only ask him."

"Come here, my dear boy. Who was Shindrad, the great uncle of Joshua, and why did Nebuchadnezzar call him Zichophobattezer the cousin of Neozobulcoxacride?"

"Eh?" said the boy. "Lor'!"

"What learning!" said the greengrocer. "Ah, Mr. Todd, you are one too many for Fred, but he knows his catechiz."

"Well," said Todd, "if the boy that I have promised to think about don't suit me, I'll give you a call, Mr. Cork. But, you see, I am such a slave to my word, that if I promise to think about anything, I go on thinking until it would astonish you how I get through it."

“Well, I’m sure we are very much obliged to you, Mr. Todd. Come along, Fred.”

“Indeed!” said Todd, when he was once more alone. “That would suit me certainly. A lying, gossiping boy, to be running home three or four times a day with all the news of the shop. Good — very good indeed.”

Todd stropped away at the razors with great vehemence, until he suddenly became aware that some one must be blocking up nearly the whole of the window, for a sudden darkness, like an eclipse, had stolen over the shop. We have before had occasion to remark that Todd had a kind of peephole amid the multifarious articles which blocked up his windows, so that he was enabled to look out upon the passing world when he pleased. Upon this occasion he availed himself of this mode of ascertaining who it was that had stopped the light from making its way into the shop. It was no other than our old acquaintance, Big Ben from the Tower, who was on his way to Mr. Oakley’s. The heart of Ben had been sensibly touched by the distress of Johanna, and he was going to give her a word or two of comfort and encouragement, which would wholly consist of advising her to “never mind.” But still Ben’s intention was good, however weak might be the means by which he carried it out. As for passing Todd’s window without looking in, he could no more help having a good stare, than he could help doing justice to a flagon of old ale, if it were placed before him; and upon this occasion the little placard, announcing the want of a pious youth, fixed the whole of Ben’s wonder and attraction.

“A pious lad!” said Ben. “Oh, the villain. Never mind. Easy does it — easy does it.”

“Curses on that fellow!” muttered Todd. “What is he staring at?”

“A pious lad!” ejaculated Ben. “Pious — oh — oh. Pious!”

“Shaved this morning, sir?” said Todd, appearing at his door with a razor in his hand. “Shaved or dressed? Polish you off surprisingly, in no time, sir.”

“Eh?”

“Walk in, sir — walk in. A nice comfortable shave makes a man feel quite another thing. Pray walk in, sir. I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you before.”

Ben cast an indignant look at Sweeney Todd; and then, as upon the spur of the moment — for Ben was rather a shrewd thinker — he could not find anything strong enough to say, he wisely held his peace, and walked on. Todd looked after him with a savage scowl.

“Not much plunder,” he muttered, “but suitable enough in another point of view. Well — well, we shall see — we shall see.”

Ben continued his course towards the city, ever and anon repeating as he went — "A pious lad! — A pious lad. Oh, the rascal."

When he reached within a few doors of the spectacle maker's, he saw a boy with a letter in his hand looking about him, and probably seeing that Ben had a good-humoured countenance, he said to him —

"If you please, sir, can you tell me which is Mr. Oakley's?"

"Yes, to be sure. Is that letter for him?"

"No, sir, it's for Miss Oakley."

Ben laid his finger upon the side of his nose, and tried to think.

"Miss Oakley," he said. "A letter for Miss Oakley;" and then, as nothing very alarming consequent upon that proposition presented itself to him, he said, "Easy does it."

"Do you know the house, sir?" asked the boy.

"Yes, to be sure. Come along, boy."

"Yes, sir."

"Who's the letter from?"

"A gentleman, sir, as is waiting at the Unicorn, in Addle Street."

"A gentleman as is waiting at the Addle in Unicorn Street," said Ben; and then, not being able still to hit upon anything very outrageous in all that, he contented himself once more with an "Easy does it."

The boy accompanied him to the door of Mr. Oakley's, and then Ben said to him —

"I'll give the letter to Miss Oakley if you like, and if you don't like, you can wait till I send her to you. Easy does it."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy, "I'd rather give it to the young lady myself."

"Very good," said Ben. "Rise betimes, and hear early chimes."

With this effort of proverbial lore, Ben marched into the shop, where old Oakley was, with a magnifying glass fitted to his eyes, performing some extraordinary operation upon a microscope. Ben merely said "How is you?" and then passed on to the backroom, having received from the old optician a slight nod by way of a return of the friendly salutation. Ben always esteemed it a stroke of good fortune when he found Johanna alone, which, in the present

instance, he did. She rose to receive him, and placed one of her small hands in his, where for a moment or two it was completely hidden.

“All right?” said Ben.

“Yes, as usual. No news.”

“I saw a boy at the door with a letter from a unicorn.”

“From a what?”

“No, an addle — no. Let me see. A unicorn, waiting with a gentleman in addle something. Easy does it. That ain’t it, neither. Where is she?”

Guessing that it was some one with a communication from some friend to her, Johanna had glided to the door, and got the letter from the boy. She came with it to the parlour at once, and opened it. It was from Colonel Jeffery, and ran as follows: —

“DEAR MISS OAKLEY, — If you will oblige me with another meeting in the Temple Gardens this evening, at or about six, I have something to tell you, although I am afraid nothing cheering. — Believe me to be your sincere friend,
“JOHN JEFFERY.”

She read it aloud to Ben, and then said —

“It is from the gentleman who, I told you, Ben, had interested himself so much in the fate of poor Mark.”

“Oh, ah,” said Ben. “Easy does it. Tell him, if he’d like to see the beasts at the Tower any time, only to ask for me.”

“Yes, Ben.”

“Well, my dear, I came by the barber’s, and what do you think?”

Johanna shook her head.

“Guess again.”

“Spare me, Ben. If you have any news for me, pray tell me. Do not keep me in suspense.”

Ben considered a little whether what he had to say was news or not; and then taking rather an enlarged view of the word, he added —

“Yes, I have. Todd wants a pious boy.”

“A what?”

"A pious boy. He's got a bill in his window to say that he wants a pious boy. What do you think of that, now? Did you ever hear of such a villain? Easy does it. And he came out, too, and wanted to 'polish me off.' "

"Oh, Ben."

"Oh, Johanna. Take things easy."

"I mean that you should be very careful indeed not to go into that man's shop. Promise me that you will never do so."

"All's right. Never be afeard, or you'd never tame the beastesses. If I was only to go into that fellow's shop and fix a eye on him so — you'd see!"

Ben fixed one of his eyes upon Johanna in such a manner, that she was glad to escape from its glare, which was quite gratifying to him (Ben), inasmuch as it was a kind of tacit acknowledgment of the extraordinary powers of his vision.

"Easy does it," he said. "All's right. Do you mean to meet this colonel?"

"Yes, Ben."

"All's right. Only take care of yourself down Fleet Street, that's all."

"I will, indeed."

"What do you say to taking me with you?"

"Where, Ben?"

"Why, where you go to meet the colonel, my dear."

"Personally, I should not entertain the smallest objection; but there is no danger in the transaction. I know that Colonel Jeffery is a man of honour, and that in meeting him upon such an occasion I am perfectly safe."

"Good again," said Ben. "Easy does it. Hilloa! What's that in the shop?"

"Only my mother come home."

"Only? The deuce! Excuse me, my dear, I must be off. Somehow or another your mother and I don't agree, you see, and ever since I had that dreadful stomach ache one night here, it gives me a twinge to see her, so I'll be off. But remember — easy does it."

CHAPTER LXI
The Grand Consultation in the Temple

With this sage aphorism, Ben effected a hasty retreat from the optician's house by the private door, so that he should not run the risk of encountering Mrs. Oakley, who had made her appearance by the shop way. When Johanna was alone, she once again read the little missive from the colonel; and then, burying her face in her hands, she tried still to think that it was possible he might have some good news to tell her. And yet, if such had been the case, would he not have written it? Would he, feeling for her as she knew he did, have kept her in a state of suspense upon such a subject? Ah, no. He would rather have, in spite of all obstacles, made his way into the shop, and called to her — "Johanna, Mark Ingestrie lives," if he had really been in a position to say so much. As these thoughts chased each other through the mind of the young girl, she shed abundance of tears; and so absorbed was she in her grief, that she was not aware that any one was present, until she felt a light touch upon her shoulder, and upon starting round suddenly, she saw her friend Arabella Wilmot standing close to her.

"Johanna?"

"Yes — yes, Arabella. I am here."

"Yes, dear Johanna. But you are weeping."

"I am — I am. To you these tears shall be no secret, Arabella. Alas! Alas! You, who know my heart, know how much I have to weep for. You can bear with me. You are the only one in all the world whom I would willingly let see these bitter — bitter tears."

At those words, Johanna wept afresh, and the heart of her young friend was melted; but recovering sooner than Johanna, Arabella was able to speak somewhat composedly to her, saying —

"Have you heard anything, Johanna, new?"

"No — no. Except that Mr. Jeffery wishes to see me again to tell me something, and as he has not said in his letter what it is, I can guess it is no good news."

"Nay; is not that assuming too much?"

"No — no. I know he would, if he had had any joyous intelligence for me, have written it. He would feel of what a suspense even a few hours would be upon such a subject. No, Arabella, I feel that what he has to say is some terrible confirmation of my worst fears."

Arabella found it no easy task to combat this course of reasoning upon the part of Johanna. She felt its force, and yet she felt at the same time that it was somewhat incumbent upon her to resist it, and to make at least the endeavour to ward off the deep depression that had seized upon Johanna.

“Now listen to me,” she said. “Perhaps what Colonel Jeffery has to say to you is, after all, a something hopeful; but, at the same time, being only hopeful, and nothing positive, he may have felt how difficult it was to write it, without exciting undue effects in your mind, and so prefers saying it, when he can accompany it by all the little collateral circumstances which alone can give it its proper value.”

There was something like a gleam of sunshine in this idea.

“Do you understand me, dear Johanna?”

“Yes — yes.”

Johanna spoke more firmly than before. The last argument of her friend had had all its weight with her, and had chased away many of the gloomy thoughts that had but a few moments before possessed her. What a strange compound is the human mind, and how singularly does it take its texture,ameleon like, from surrounding circumstances? But a few moments since, and, to Johanna the brief epistle of the colonel was suggestive of nothing but despair. How different now was its aspect? Arabella Wilmot had, by a few simple words, placed it in a new light, so that it started to the imagination of Johanna symbols of life.

“Ah! You are hoping now,” said Arabella.

“I am — I am. Perhaps it is as you say, Arabella. I will think it is.”

Miss Wilmot was now almost afraid that she had gone too far, and conjured up too much hope; but she could not bear the idea of dashing down again the fairy fabric of expectation she had moved in the bosom of Johanna, and merely added —

“Well, Johanna, since you find that the letter will, at all events, bear two interpretations, I am sure that, until you may be convinced it owns to the worst, you will be as composed as possible.”

“I will. And now, Arabella, will you, and can you accompany me this evening to the Temple Gardens, to meet Colonel Jeffery?”

“Yes, Johanna. I both can and will, if such is your wish.”

“It is, Arabella, much my wish, for I feel that if what our friend, the colonel, has to say, should not be of a hopeful character, I should never be able to repeat it to you, so as to have your opinion of it.”

“Then we will go together. But we will not pass that dreadful man’s shop.”

“Todd’s?”

“Yes.”

“Why not, Arabella? I feel, the moment that I leave this house, as though some irresistible fascination dragged me there, and I think I could no more pass down Fleet Street without directing my eyes to that building, which perchance has proved fatal to poor Mark, than I could fly.”

“But — but, I shrink from that man recognising us again.”

“We will pass upon the other side of the way, Arabella; but do not say nay to me, for pass I must.”

There was such a frantic sort of earnestness in the manner in which Johanna urged this point, that Arabella no longer made any sort of opposition to it, and the two young girls soon arranged a time of meeting, when they would proceed together to the Temple Gardens, to give Colonel Jeffery the meeting he so much desired. As nothing of a very particular character occurred that day, we will at once follow Arabella and Johanna upon the mission, premising that the hours have slipped away which intervened between the time of Johanna receiving the note from Colonel Jeffery, and the time when, if she kept the appointment with him, it would be necessary for her to start from home to do so. Both the young girls made as great alterations in their attire as they could upon this occasion, so that they should not be strikingly recognisable again by Todd; and then Arabella reminding Johanna that the bargain between them was to pass upon the other side of the way, they both set off from the old spectacle maker’s. As they neared Fleet Street, the agitation of Johanna became more and more apparent, and Arabella was compelled to counsel her to calmness, lest the passers-by should notice how much she felt, from some cause to them unknown.

“My dear Johanna,” she said. “Your arm trembles in mine. Oh! pray be calm.”

“I will — I will. Are we near?”

“Yes. Let us cross.”

They reached the other side of the way from that on which Todd’s shop was situated, to the great relief of Arabella, who as yet knew not of the placard that Todd had exhibited in his window, announcing the want of a pious youth. The sight of the shop, however, seemed to bring that circumstance to the mind of Johanna, and she told her young friend of it at once.

“Oh! Johanna,” said Arabella, “does it not seem as though —”

She paused, and Johanna looked enquiringly at her, saying —

“What would you say, Arabella? What would you say?”

“Nothing now, Johanna. Nothing now. A thought struck me, and when we return from this meeting with your friend, the colonel, I will communicate it to you. Oh! Do not look opposite. Do not.”

All such injunctions were thrown away upon Johanna. Look opposite she did, and as she herself had truly said, it would have been quite impossible for her to avoid the doing so, even if the greatest personal risk had been risked in the action. But Todd’s shop, to look at from the other side of the way, presented no terrors. It simply presented the idea of a little barber’s shop, of no very great pretensions, but of sufficient respectability, as barber’s shops were in those days, not to make any decent person shrink from going into it. No doubt, in the crowd of Fleet Street — for Fleet Street was then crowded, although not to the extent it is now — Johanna and her friend passed quite unnoticed by Todd, even if he had been looking out. At all events, they reached Temple Bar without any obstruction or adventure. Finding, then, that they had passed the main entrance to the Temple, they went down the nearest adjacent street, and pursuing a circuitous route through some curious looking courts, they reached their destination yet a little before the appointed hour. Colonel Jeffery, however, was not likely to keep Johanna Oakley waiting.

“There,” said Arabella. “Is that the colonel?”

Johanna looked up just as the colonel approached, and lifted his hat.

“Yes, yes.”



Johanna and Arabella Meet and Consult Colonel Jeffery, in Temple Gardens.

In another moment he was with them. There was a look upon the countenance of Colonel Jeffery of deep concern, and that look, at one glance that was bestowed upon it by Johanna Oakley, was quite sufficient to banish all hidden hopes that she might yet have cherished regarding the character of the news that he had to impart to her. Arabella Wilmot, too, was of the same opinion regarding the physiognomical expression of the colonel, who bowed to her profoundly.

"I have brought my dearest friend with me," said Johanna, "from whom I have no secrets."

"Nor I," said the colonel, "now that I hear she stands in such an enviable relation to you, Miss Oakley."

Arabella slightly bowed; and Johanna fixing her eyes, in which tears were glistening, upon him, said —

"You have come to tell me that I may abandon all hope?"

"No — no; Heaven forbid!"

A bright flush came over the face of the young girl, and clasping her hands, she said —

"Oh, sir, do not play with feelings that perhaps you scarcely guess at. Do not tamper with a heart so near breaking as mine. It is cruel — cruel!"

"Do I deserve such a charge," said the colonel, "even by implication?"

"No — no," said Arabella. "Recollect yourself, Johanna. You are unjust to one who has shown himself to be your friend, and a friend to him whom you hope to see again."

Johanna held out her little childlike hand to the colonel, and looking appealingly in his face, she said —

"Can you forgive me? It was not I who spoke, but it was the agony of my heart that fashioned itself at the moment into words my better judgment and my better feelings will not own. Can you forgive me?"

"Can I, Miss Oakley! Oh, do not ask me. God grant that I could make you happy."

"I thank you, sir, deeply and truly thank you; and — and — now — now —"

"Now, you would say, tell me my news."

"Yes. Oh, yes."

"Then let us walk upon this broad path, by the river, while, in the first instance, I tell you that it was only from a deep sense of duty, and a feeling that I ought not, upon any consideration, to keep anything from you, that I came here today to give you some more information, and yet fresh information."

"You are very — very good to me, sir."

"No — no, do not say that, Miss Oakley. I am a friend. I am only very selfish; but, in brief, the lad who was in the barber's service at the time we think Mark Ingestrie called at the shop with the string of pearls in his possession, has told us all he knows upon the subject, freely."

"Yes — yes; and — and —".

"He knows very little."

"But that little?"

"Just amounts to this: — That such a person did come to the shop, and that he is quite clear that he never left it."

"Quite clear that he never left it!" repeated Johanna — "that he never left it. Quite clear that — that —".

She burst into tears, and clung to Arabella Wilmot for support. The colonel looked inexpressibly distressed, but he did not speak. He felt that any commonplace topics of consolation would have been an insult; and he had seen enough of human feelings to know that such bursts of passionate grief cannot be stemmed, but must have their course, and that such tears will flow like irresistible torrents into the ocean of eternity. Arabella was greatly distressed. She had not expected that Johanna would have given way in such a manner, and she looked at Colonel Jeffery as though she would have said — "Is it possible that you can say nothing to calm this grief?" He shook his head, but made no reply in words. In a few moments, however, Johanna was wonderfully recovered. She was able to speak more composedly than she had done since the commencement of the interview.

"Tell me all, now," she said. "I can bear to hear it all."

"You know all, Miss Oakley. The poor boy, in whose fate I have felt sufficiently interested to take him into my care, says that such a man as Thornhill did come to his master's shop. That he (the boy) was sent out upon some trivial errand, merely to get him out of the way, and that, pending his return, the visitor disappeared. He deposes to the fact of the dog watching the door."

"The dog?"

"Yes. Thornhill, it seems, had a faithful dog with him."

“Ah, Arabella, we must have seen that dog.”

“Has not the creature, then, fallen a victim to Todd’s malevolence?”

“We think not, sir,” said Arabella.

“Go on — go on,” said Johanna; “what more?”

“The boy states that he is certain he saw the hat of the visitor with the dog in Todd’s house, after Todd had declared he had left, and proceeded to the city.”

“The hat — the dog. Alas! Alas!”

“Nay, Miss Oakley, do not forget one thing, and that is, that neither you nor any one else have as yet identified this Mr. Thornhill as Mr. Ingestrie.”

“No, not positively; but my heart tells me —”

“Ah, Miss Oakley, the heart is the slave of the feelings and of the imagination. You must not always trust to its testimony or emotions upon cold fact.”

“There is yet hope, then, Johanna,” said Arabella. “A bright hope for you to cling to, for, as this gentleman says, there is nothing positive to prove that Mr. Thornhill was Mark Ingestrie. I would not, were I you, abandon that hope on any account, while I lived, and could still clutch it. Would it not be a great thing, sir, if any papers or documents which this Thornhill might have had about him, could be recovered?”

“It would indeed.”

Arabella at first seemed upon the point of saying something contingent upon this remark of the colonel’s, or rather this acquiescence of his in her remark, but she thought better of it, and was silent, upon which Johanna spoke, saying —

“And that is really all, sir?”

“It is, Miss Oakley.”

“But will nothing be done? Will no steps be taken to bring this man, Todd to justice?”

“Yes, everything will be done; and indeed, anything that can be done consistently with sound policy is actually now. Sir Richard Blunt, one of the most acute, active, and personally daring of the magistrates of London, has the affair in hand, and you may be quite assured that he will pursue it with zeal.”

“And what is he doing?”

“Collecting such evidence against Todd, that at a moment the law will be enabled to come upon him with a certainty that by no ingenious quibble can he escape.”

Johanna shuddered.

“I thank you, sir, from my heart,” she said, “for all the kindness and — and — I need not again trespass upon your time or your patience.”

“Ah, Miss Oakley, will you deny me your friendship?”

“Oh, no — no.”

“Then why deny me the privilege of a friend to see you sometimes. If I cannot say to you anything positively of a consoling character regarding him whom you so much regret, I can at least share your sorrows, and sympathise with your feelings.”

Johanna was silent, but after a few moments she began to feel that she was acting both with harshness and injustice towards one who had been all that the kindest and most generous friend could be to her. She held out her hand to the colonel, saying —

“Yes, sir, I shall be always happy to see you.”

The colonel pressed her hand in his, and then turning to Arabella Wilmot, they parted at the garden.