

CHAPTER LXII
The Proposal of Arabella

“Johanna,” said Arabella Wilmot, as they passed out of the Temple by the old gate at Whitefriars, “Johanna, if there had been no Mark Ingestrie in the world, could you not have loved some one else truly?”

“No, no — oh, no.”

“Not such a one as Colonel Jeffery?”

“No, Arabella, I respect and admire Colonel Jeffery. He comes fully up to all my notions of what a gentleman should be, but I cannot love him.”

Arabella sighed. The two young girls passed Todd’s shop upon the other side of the way, and Johanna shuddered as she did so, and repeated in a low voice —

“He went there, but he never left.”

“Nay, but you should remember that was Thornhill.”

“Yes, Thornhill, alias Ingestrie.”

“You will cling to that idea.”

“I cannot help it, Arabella. Oh, that I could solve the dreadful doubt. You speak to me of finding consolation and hope from the possibility that this Thornhill might not have been Ingestrie; but I feel, Arabella, that the agony of that constant doubt, and the pangs of never ending thought and speculation upon that subject will drive me mad. I cannot endure them — I must be resolved one way or the other. It is suspense that will kill me. I might in the course of time reconcile myself to the fact that poor Mark had gone before me to that world where we shall assuredly meet again; but the doubt as to his fate is — is indeed madness!”

There was a manner about Johanna, as she pronounced these words, that was quite alarming to Arabella. Perhaps it was this alarm which went a long way towards inducing her, Arabella, to say what she now said to Johanna —

“Have you forgotten your idea of going disguised to Todd’s, Johanna? And have you forgotten what Mr. Ben, your friend from the Tower, told you?”

“What? Oh, what, Arabella — what did he tell me that I should remember?”

“Why that Todd had placed a placard in his window, stating that he wanted a boy in his shop. Oh, Johanna, it would be so romantic; and to be sure, I have

read of such things. Do you think you would have courage sufficient to dress yourself again in my cousin's clothes, and go to Todd's shop?"

"Yes, yes — I understand you — and apply for the vacant situation."

"Yes, Johanna; it might, you know, afford you an opportunity of searching the place, and then, if you found nothing which could assure you of the presence at one time there of Mark Ingestrie, you would come away with a heart more at ease."

"I should — I should. He could but kill me?"

"Who? Who?"

"Sweeney Todd."

"Oh, no — no, Johanna, your stay would not exceed a few short hours."

"Oh, what long hours they would be."

"Well, Johanna, I almost dread the counsel I am giving to you. It is fraught probably with a thousand mischiefs and dangers, that neither you nor I have sufficient experience to see; and now that I have said what I have, I beg of you to think no further of it, and from my heart I wish it all unsaid."

"No, Arabella, why should you wish it unsaid? It is true that the course you suggest to me is out of the ordinary way, and most romantic, but, then, are not all the circumstances connected with this sad affair far out of the ordinary course?"

"Yes, yes — and yet —"

"Arabella, I will do it."

"Oh, Johanna, Johanna — if any harm should come to you —"

"Then absolve yourself, Arabella, from all reproach upon the subject. Remember always that I go upon my own responsibility, and against your wishes, feelings, and advice. All that I now ask of you is that you will once more lend me that disguise, and assist me in further making myself look like that I would represent myself, and I shall then, perhaps, ask no more of your friendship in this world."

Arabella was horrified. The plan she had proposed had, from her course of romantic reading, such charms for her imagination, that she could not have forborne mentioning it, but, now that in earnest Johanna talked of carrying it out, she became terrified at what might be the consequences. In the open streets she was afraid of making a scene by any further opposition to Johanna, whose

feelings, she saw, were in a great state of excitement; but she hoped that she would be able yet to dissuade her from her purpose when she got her home.

“Say no more now of it, Johanna, and come home with me, when we will talk it over more at large.”

“I am resolved,” said Johanna. “The very resolution to do something bold and definite has given me already a world of ease. I am different quite in feeling to what I was. I am sure that God is, even now, giving me strength and calmness to do this much for him who would have risked anything for me.”

To reason with any one impressed with such notions would have been folly indeed, and Arabella forbore doing so at that juncture. She could not but be amazed, however, at the firmness of manner of Johanna now, in comparison with the frantic burst of grief which she had so recently been indulging in. Her step was firm, her lips were compressed, and her countenance, although more than usually pale, was expressive in every feature of highly wrought determination.

“She will do it or die,” thought Arabella, “and if anything happens to her, I shall wish myself dead likewise.”

In this state of feeling — not a very amiable one — the two young girls reached the abode of Arabella Wilmot. The strongly marked feeling of composure and determination by no means left Johanna, but, if anything, seemed to be rather upon the increase, while occasionally she would mutter to herself —

“Yes — yes; I will know all — I will know the worst.”

When they were alone in the little chamber of Arabella — that little chamber which had witnessed so many of the mutual confidences of those two young girls — Arabella at once began to say something that might provoke a discussion about the propriety of the hazardous expedition to Todd’s, but Johanna stopped her by saying as she laid her hands gently upon her arm —

“Arabella, will you do me two favours?”

“A hundred; but — ”

“Nay, hear me out, dear friend, before you say another word. The first of those favours is, that you will not, by word or look, try to dissuade me from my purpose of going in disguise to Todd’s. The second is, that you will keep my secret when I do go.”

“Oh! Johanna! Johanna!”

“Promise me.”

“Yes. I do — I do.”

"I am satisfied. And now, my own dear Arabella, let me tell you that I do not think that there is any such danger as you suppose in the expedition. In the first place, I do not think Todd will easily discover me to be aught else than what I pretend to be, and if I should see that I am in any danger, Fleet Street, with all its living population, is close at hand, and such a cry for aid as I, being, as I am, forearmed by being forewarned, could raise, would soon bring me many defenders."

Arabella sobbed.

"And then, after all, I only want to stay until, by one absence of Todd's from the house, I shall be able to make a search for some memorial of the visit of Mark Ingestrie there. If I find it not, I return to you at once better satisfied, and with better hopes than I went forth. If I do find it, I will call upon the tardy law for justice."

"Johanna — Johanna, you are not the same creature that you were!"

"I know it. I am changed. I feel that I am."

Arabella looked at the sweet childish beauty of the face before her, and her eyes filled with tears again at the thought that something near akin to despair had implanted upon it that look of unnatural calmness and determination it wore.

"You doubt me?" said Johanna.

"Oh! No — no. I feel now that you will do it, and feeling that, I likewise feel that I ought not to drive you to seek assistance from another, in your enterprise. But something must be arranged between us."

"In what respect?"

"Such as, if I should not hear of you within a certain time, I — I —"

"You would feel bound to find me some help. Be it so, Arabella. If I do not come to you or send to you, before the midnight of tomorrow, do what you will, and I shall not think that you have committed any breach of faith."

"I am content, Johanna, to abide by those conditions; and now I will say nothing to you to bend you from your purpose, but I will pray to Heaven that you may become successful, not in finding any record of Mark Ingestrie, but in procuring peace to your mind by the utter absence of such record."

"I will go now."

“No — no, Johanna. Bethink you what pain your unexplained absence would give to your father. Something must be said or done to make him feel at ease during the, perhaps, many hours that you will be absent.”

“It is well thought of, Arabella. Oh! How selfish we become when overwhelmed by our own strange emotions! I had forgotten that I had a father.”

It was now agreed between the two young girls that Johanna should go home, and that Arabella Wilmot should call for her, and ask Mr. Oakley’s permission for her (Johanna) to come to her upon a visit for two days. It was no very unusual thing for Johanna to pass a night with her friend, so that it was thought such a course now would have the effect of quieting all anxiety on account of the absence of the young girl from her parental home.

CHAPTER LXIII
Todd Finds a Boy

“Temporary insanity, and a dividend of one shilling upon the razor!”

Such was the enlightened verdict of twelve sapient shopkeepers in the Strand upon John Mundel — peace to his manes! He is gone where there are no discounts — no usury laws — no unredeemed pledges, and no strings of pearls! Good day to you, John Mundel!

“Ha! Ha! Ha!” laughed Sweeney Todd. “That affair is settled in an uncommonly satisfactory manner. What an odd thing it is, though, that nobody now comes into my shop, but somebody else, upon some shuffling excuse or another, comes in within two minutes afterwards. Now, if I were superstitious, which — I — I am not —”

Here Todd looked first over his right shoulder and then over his left, with two perceptible shudders.

“If, as I say, I were superstitious which — Hilloa! Who’s this?”

“Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Todd,” said a woman in widow’s weeds, as she entered the shop, “but they do say that — that — ”

“What?” screamed Todd, “what?”

“That you are charitable to the poor.”

“Oh, that’s all. I — I. That’s all. Very good. I am charitable to the poor. Very — very charitable to the poor. What may your business be, madam?”

“You don’t know me, Mr. Todd, I dare say, but my name is Slick.”

“Slick — Slick? No, madam, I have not the pleasure of knowing you; and may I again ask why I am honoured with the visit?”

“Why, sir, I have got up a little humble petition. You see, sir, my husband, Solomon Slick, is a watchmaker, and one day, about a month ago, he went out to go to the city with two chronometers, to take to Brown, Smuggins, Bugsby, and Podd, who employ him, and he was never afterwards heard of, leaving me with six children, and one at the breast. Now, Mr. Brown is a kind sort of man, and spoke to Podd about doing something, but Bugsby and Smuggins, they will have it that my husband ran away with the watches, and that we are only watching the best time to go to him; but my aunt, Mrs. Longfinch, in Bedfordshire, will do something for us if we go there; so I am trying to get up a pound or two to take me and the little ones.”

Todd made a chuckling noise, like a hen in a farmyard, and looked the picture of compassionate commiseration.

“Dear — dear, what a shocking thing.”

“It is indeed, sir.”

“And have you no idea of what has become of him, madam?”

“Not in the least, sir — not in the least. But I said to myself — ‘I dare say Mr. Todd will be so good as to assist us in our necessities.’ ”

“Certainly, madam — certainly. Do you know what is the most nourishing thing you can give to your children?”

“Alas! Sir, the poor things, since their poor father went, have had little choice of one thing or another. It was he who supported them. But what is it, sir?”

“Mrs. Lovett’s pies.”

“Ah, sir, they had one a piece, poor things, the very day after poor Solomon Slick disappeared. A compassionate neighbour brought them, and all the while they ate them, they thought of their father that was gone.”

“Very natural, that,” said Todd. “Now, Mrs. Slick, I am but a poor man, but I will give you my advice, and something more substantial. The advice is, that if anybody is moved to compassion, and bestows upon you a few pence for your children, you go and lay it out in pies at Mrs. Lovett’s; and as for the more substantial something, take that, and read it at your leisure.”

Todd, as he spoke, took from a drawer a religious tract, entitled “The Spiritual Quartern Loaf for the Hungry Sinner”, and handed it to Mrs. Slick. The poor woman received it with a look of disappointment, and said, with a slight shudder —

“And is this all you can do, Mr. Todd?”

“All!” cried Todd. “All? Good gracious, what more do you want? Recollect, my good woman, that there is another world where the poor will have their reward, provided that in this they are not too annoying to the rich and the comfortable. Go away. Dear — dear, and this is gratitude. I must go and pray for the hardness of heart and the Egyptian darkness of the common and the lower orders in general, and you in particular, Mrs. Slick.”

The woman was terrified at the extraordinary faces that Todd made during the delivery of this harangue, and hastily left the shop, having dropped the “Spiritual Quartern Loaf for Hungry Sinners” in the doorway.

“Ha! Ha!” said Todd when she was gone. “They thought of their father, did they, while they ate Lovett’s pies. Ha! Ha!”

At this moment a man made his appearance in the shop, and looked with a sly twinkle at Sweeney Todd. The latter started, for in that man he imagined no other than an under attendant at the establishment of Mr. Fogg, at Peckham. That this man came with some message from Fogg, he did not for a moment doubt, but what could it possibly be, since he (Todd) fully believed that Tobias Ragg was no more.

“Do you know me?” said the man.

As a general proposition, Todd did not like to say yes to anything, so he looked dubious, and remarked that he thought it might rain soon, but if he (the man) wanted a clean shave, he (Todd) would soon do for him.

“But, really, Mr. Todd, don’t you know me?”

“I know nobody,” said Todd.

The man chuckled with a hideous grimace, that seemed habitual to him, for he at times indulged in it, when, to all appearance, no subject whatever of hilarity was on the topic, and then he said —

“I come from Fogg.”

“Fogg’s, not Fogg?”

The man did not at first seem to understand this nice distinction that Todd drew between coming from Fogg’s establishment and coming from Fogg himself; but after knitting his brows, and considering a little, he said —

“Oh — ah — I see. No, I don’t come from Fogg, confound him, he don’t use me well, so I thought I’d come to tell you — ”

The shop door opened, and a stout burly looking man made his appearance. Todd turned upon him, with a face livid with passion, as he said —

“Well, sir, what now?”

“Eh?” said the stout burly man. “Ain’t this a barber’s shop?”

“To be sure it is; and, once for all, do you want to be shaved, or do you not?”

“Why, what else could I come in for?”

“I don’t know; but you have been here more than once — more than twice — more than thrice, and yet you have never been shaved yet.”

“Well, that is a good one.”

“A good what?”

“Mistake, for I have only just come to London today; but I’ll wait while you shave this gentleman. I am in no hurry.”

“No, sir,” said Todd; “this gentleman is a private friend of mine, and don’t come to be shaved at all.”

The stout burly looking man seemed rather confused for a moment, and then he turned to the stranger, and said —

“Are you really a private friend of Mr. Todd’s?”

“Very,” said the other.

“Then I scorn to interrupt any one in their confidential discourse, just because my beard happens to be a day old. No; I trust that time, and old English politeness, will ever prevent me from doing such a thing; so, Mr. Todd, I will look in upon some other occasion, if you please.”

“No — no,” said Todd, “sit down: business is business. Pray sit down. You don’t know how disappointed I shall feel if I don’t polish you off, now that you are here, sir.”

“Could not think of it,” said the other, in whom the reader has, no doubt, recognised one of Sir Richard Blunt’s officers. “Could not for a moment think of it. Good day.”

Before Todd could utter another remonstrance, he was out of the shop, and when he got about twelve paces off, he met Crotchet, who said —

“Well, what do yer bring it in now?”

“I must cut it. Todd is beginning to recollect me, and to think there is something odd going on.”

Mr. Crotchet gave a slight whistle, and then said —

“Wery good; but did you leave a *hindevidel* in the shaving crib, to be done for?”

“Yes; but he said he was a private friend of Todd’s.”

“Good agin, that will do. He’s safe enough, I dare say, and if he isn’t, why he ought to be more *petikler* in addressing of his acquaintances. Do you know where the governor is?”

“No. I have not seen him; but will you tell him, Crotchet, why I think it’s better for me to be scarce for a day or two?”

“To be sure, old fellow. You can go on some other day.”

“Surely — surely.”

CHAPTER LXIV
Todd Receives some Startling Intelligence

It took Todd, master as he was, or used to be, in the art of dissimulation, some few minutes to recover his composure, after the officer had left the shop, and during that time, the gentleman from Fogg's looked at him with the quiet sniggering kind of laugh so peculiar to him. Todd was evidently, day by day, losing that amount of nerve which had at one time formed his principal characteristic. It was getting, in fact, clear to himself that he was not near so well fitted for the business he was carrying on as he had been. Turning to the man from Fogg's, he said, while he put on as bland a smile as he could —

"Well, my friend, I suppose you have sought me with some motive? Pray speak out, and tell me what it is."

The man laughed.

"I have had a row with Fogg," he said, "and we parted in anger. I told him I would split upon the den, but he is a deep one, and he only coughed. Fogg, though, somehow don't laugh as he used. However, as well as he could laugh, he did, and, says he, 'Peter, my lad,' says he, 'if you do split upon the old den, I'll get you transported, as safe as you think yourself.'"

"Well?"

"Well. I — I — didn't like that."

"Then you are probably," said Todd in a bland manner — "you are probably aware that you may be obnoxious to the law."

"A few!" said the fellow.

"And what followed?"

"'Why, Peter,' added Fogg, 'you may leave me if you like, and once a month there will be a couple of guineas here for you. There's the door, so away, I insist;' and it has struck me, that if Fogg gives me a couple of shiners a month to hold my tongue, other gentlemen might do as much, and through one and another, I might pick up a crust and something to moisten it with."

The man laughed again. Todd nodded his head, as much as to say — "You could not have explained yourself clearer," and then he said —

"Peter, in your way you have a certain sort of genius. I might just remark, however, that after paying Fogg handsomely for what he has done, it is rather hard that Fogg's castoff officials should come upon Fogg's best customers, and threaten them out of any more."

"I know it's hard," said the man.

"Then why do you do it?"

"Because, to my thinking, it would be a deuced sight harder for me to want anything; and besides, I might get into trouble, and be in the hands of the police, when who knows but that in some soft moment some one might get hold of me, and get it all out of me. Wouldn't that be harder still for all?"

"It would."

"Ah! Mr. Todd, I always thought you were a man of judgment, that I did."

"You do me infinite honour."

"Not at all. I say what I think, you may take your oath of that. But when I saw you come about that last boy, I said to myself — 'Mr. Todd is carrying on some nice game, but what it is I don't know. Howsomedever he is a man with something more than would go into a small teaspoon hereabouts.' "

Mr. Peter tapped his forehead with his finger as he spoke, to intimate that he alluded to the intellectual capacity of Todd.

"You are very obliging," said Todd.

"Not at all. Not at all. How much will you stand, now?"

"I suppose, if I say the same as Mr. Fogg, you will be satisfied, Mr. Peter. Times are very bad, you know."

Peter laughed again.

"No, no! Mr. Todd, times are not very bad, but I do think what you say is very fair, and that if you stand the same as Fogg, I ought not to say one word against it."

"How charming it is," said Todd, casting his eyes up to the ceiling, as though communing with himself or some higher intelligence supposed to be in that direction. "How charming it is to feel that you are at any time transacting business with one who is so very obliging and so very reasonable."

Somehow Peter winced a little before the look of Todd. The barber had come into his proposal a little too readily. It almost looked as though he saw his way too clearly out of it again. If he had declaimed loudly, and made a great fuss about the matter, Mr. Peter would have been better pleased, but as it was he felt, he scarcely knew why, wonderfully fidgetty.

"That boy," he said, "to change the conversation. That boy, used to say some odd things of you, Mr. Todd."

“Insanity,” said Todd, “is a great calamity.”

“Oh, very.”

“And so clouds the faculties, that the poor boy no doubt said things of me, his best friend, that, if he had been restored to reason, he would have heard spoken of with a smile of incredulity.”

“Ha! Ha! By the bye — Ha! Ha!”

“Well, sir?” said Todd, who did not in the smallest degree join in the odd laugh of Peter. “Well, sir?”

“I was merely going to say. Have you, by any chance, heard anything more of him?”

Todd walked close to Peter, and placed his two brawny hands upon his shoulders, as he slowly repeated —

“Have I by any chance heard anything more of him? What do you mean? Speak out, or by all that’s powerful, this is the last moment of your existence. Speak out, I say.”

“Murder!”

“Fool! Be more explicit, and you are safe. Be open and candid with me, and not a hair of your head shall suffer injury. What do you mean by asking me if I have heard anything more of him?”

“Don’t throttle me.”

“Speak.”

“I — I can’t while you hold me so tight. I — I — can — hardly — breathe.”

Todd took his hands off him, and crossing his arms over his breast, he said in tones of most unnatural calmness —

“Now speak.”

“Well, Mr. Todd — I — I — only — .”

“You only what?”

“Asked you naturally enough, if you had heard anything of the boy Tobias Ragg, you know, since he ran away from Fogg’s. That’s all.”

“Since he what?”

“Ran away from Fogg’s one night.”

“Then he — he is not dead? The villain Fogg sent word to me that he was dead.”

“Did he though? Well I never. That was so like Fogg. Only to think now. Lord bless you, Mr. Todd, he made his escape and ran away, and we never heard anything more of him from that time to this. The idea now of Fogg telling you he was dead. Well, I did wonder at your taking the thing so easy, and never coming down to enquire about it.”

“Not dead? Not dead?”

“Not as I know on.”

“Curses!”

“Ah! That will do you good, Mr. Todd. Whenever I am put out, I set to swearing like a good one, and that’s the way I come round again. Don’t mind me. You swear as long as you like. It was a shame for Fogg not to tell you he had bolted, but I suppose he thought he’d take his chance.”

“The villain!”

“*Worser! Worser! Nor a willain!*” said Peter. “Who knows now what mischief may be done, all through that boy. Why, he may be now being gammoned by the police and a parson to tell all he knows. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!”

Todd sunk upon a chair — not the shaving one — and resting his hand upon his head, he uttered a sepulchral groan.

Peter shook himself.

“You don’t seem well, Mr. Todd. I didn’t think you was the sort of man to be down on your blessed luck in this sort of way. Cheer up. What’s the use of grieving, as the old song says.”

Todd groaned again.

“And if so be as the kid,” continued Peter, “did run away, my opinion is as he’d seen enough and felt enough, while he was at Fogg’s, to make him as mad as a March hare.”

There was hope in that suggestion, and Todd looked up.

“You really think, then, Mr. Peter, that — that his intellects — ”

“His what?”

“His mind, I mean, has not withstood the shock of what he went through while he was in Fogg’s establishment?”

“How could it? Once or twice things very nigh infected me, and how should he stand up agin ’em? But arter all, Mr. Fogg, what was it all about? That’s what used to bother me. Was there anything in what he said, or wasn’t there?”

“My good fellow,” said Todd, “I have only one question to ask you — ”

“Fire away.”

“And that is, if you would prefer to have a sum of money down, and not trouble me any more?”

“Down!”

“Yes, down.”

“On the nail? Well, its temptatious, I own. Let me see. Thus Fogg’s riglar annuity, as a fellow may call it, and a good round sum down from you, Mr. T. I think you said a good round sum down on the nail, didn’t you?”

“Yes — yes. Any sum in reason.”

“Done, then. I’ll do it. Honour bright and shining. Mr. T., when I says a thing, it’s said, and no mistake, and if I takes something down, you won’t hear no more of me; whatever you may think, Mr. T., I ain’t one of them fellows as will spend their tin, and then come asking for more — not I. Oh, dear no! Only give me what’s reasonable down, and the thing’s settled.”

“Very good,” said Todd, in a voice which was calm and composed. “Just step this way, into the back parlour, and I’ll satisfy you. As for troubling me any more, I am, I assure you, as perfectly easy upon that point as it is at all possible to be.”

CHAPTER LXV
Todd Clears off Circumstances

The arrangement come to between Todd and his visitor seemed to give equal satisfaction to both, and Mr. Peter, if he had what the phrenologists call an organ of caution at all developed, must have had acquisitiveness so large as completely to overpower its action at the present time. The idea of getting from Todd's fears a sum of money at once, and from Fogg's fears a regular small annuity, was to him a most felicitous combination of circumstances, and his reflections upon the pleasant consequences resulting therefrom had such full possession of him, that his scruples vanished, and as he followed Todd into the back parlour from the shop, he muttered to himself —

"I'll try and get enough out of him to open a public house."

Todd heard the wish, and turning quickly with what he intended should be an engaging smile, he said —

"And why not, Peter — and why not? Nothing would give me more sincere gratification than seeing you in a public house, for although a man may be a publican, he need not be a sinner, you know."

"Eh?"

"I say he need not be a sinner; and there would be nothing in the world, Peter, to prevent you from having prayers night and morning, and I am sure I should be most happy to come now and then, if it were only to say 'Amen!' "

"Humph!" said Peter. "You are too good, you are. Much too good, really."

"Not at all, Peter. Let us be as good as we may, we cannot be too good. Human nature is a strange compound, you know, mixed up of several things opposite to each other, like a lather in a shaving dish."

With this sentiment Todd held open the door of the sanctum behind his shop, and by a cautious wave of his hand invited Mr. Peter to enter. That gentleman did so.

"Now," said Todd, in quite a confidential tone, "what is your peculiar affection in the — "

Here Mr. Todd went through the pantomimic action of draining a glass. Peter laughed, and then shaking his head waggishly, he said —

"What a rum 'un you are! Fogg had his funny ways, but I do think you beat him, that you do. Well, if I must say I have a partiality, it's to brandy. Do you know, I think, between you and me and the post, that a drop of good brandy is rather one of them things that makes human nature what it is."

“What a just remark,” said Todd.

Peter looked as sage as possible. He was getting upon wonderfully good terms with his own sagacity — a certain sign that he was losing his ordinary discretion. Todd opened a small cupboard in the wall — what a number of small cupboards in the wall Todd had — and produced a long-necked bottle and a couple of glasses. He held the bottle up to the dim light, saying —

“That’s the thing, rather.”

“It looks like it,” said Peter.

“And it is,” said Todd, “what it looks. This bottle and the liquor within it have basked in the sun of a fairer clime than ours, Peter, and the laughing glades of the sweet south have capped it in beauty.”

Peter looked puzzled.

“What a learned man you are, Mr. T.,” he said. “You seem to know something of everything, and I dare say the brandy is to the full as good as it looks.”

This was decidedly a quiet sort of hint to decant some of it without further loss of time, and Todd at once complied. He filled Peter’s glass to the brim, and his own more moderately; and as the golden liquor came out with a pleasant bubble from the bottle, Peter’s eyes glistened, and he sniffed up the aroma of that pure champagne brandy with the utmost complaisance.

“Beautiful! Beautiful!” he exclaimed.

“Pretty well,” said Todd.

“Pretty well? It’s glorious!”

Mr. Peter raised the glass to his lips, and giving a nod to Todd over the rim of it, he said —

“I looks towards you.”

Todd nodded, and then, in another moment Peter put down his empty glass.

“Out and out!” he gasped. “Out and out! Ah, that is the stuff.”

Todd tossed off the glass, with the toast of “A long life, and a merry one!” which was duly acknowledged by Peter, who replied —

“The same to you, Mr. T., and lots of ’em.”

"It's like milk," said Todd, as he filled Peter's glass again. "It's for all the world like milk, and never can do any one any harm."

"No — no. Enough. There — stop."

Todd did stop, when the glass was within a hair's breadth of running over, but not before; and then again he helped himself, and when he set the bottle upon the table, he said —

"A biscuit?"

"Not for me. No."

"Nay. You will find it pleasant with the brandy. I have one or two here. Rather hard, perhaps, but good."

"Well, I will, then. I was afraid you would have to go out for them, that was all, Mr. T., and I wouldn't give you any trouble for the world. I only hope we shall often meet in this quiet comfortable way, Mr. T. I always did respect you, for, as I often said to Fogg, of all the customers that come here, Mr. Todd for me. He takes things in an easy way, and if he is a thundering rogue, he is at all events a clever one."

"How kind!"

"No offence, I hope, Mr. Todd?"

"Offence, my dear fellow? Oh, dear me! How could you think of such a thing? Offence, indeed! You cannot possibly offend me!"

"I'm rejoiced to hear you say so, Mr. T., I am really; and this is — this is — the — very best — ah — brandy that ever I — where are you going, Mr. T.?"

"Only to get the biscuits. They are in the cupboard behind you; but don't stir, I beg. You are not at all in the way."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

Todd stepped easily between Peter's chair and the wall, and opening another of the mysterious small cupboards, he laid his hand upon a hammer, with a long handle, that was upon the shelf.

"If this," said Peter, "was the last word I had to say in the world, I would swear to the goodness of the brandy."

As he uttered the words he turned his head sharply, and faced Todd. The hammer was upraised, and would, if he had not so turned, have descended with

fatal effect upon the top of his head. As it was, Peter had only time to utter one shriek, when down it came upon the lower part of his face. The crush was hideous. The lower jaw fell crushed and mangled, and, with a frightful oath, Todd again raised the hammer: but the victim closed with him, and face to face they grappled. The hammer was useless, and Todd cast it from him as he felt that he required all his strength to grapple with the man who, at that moment, fastened on him with the strength of madness. Over chair — over the table, to the destruction of all that was on it, they went, coiled up in each other's embrace — dashing here and there with a vehemence that threatened destruction to them both, and yet not a word spoken. The frightful injury that Peter had received effectually prevented him from articulating, and Todd had nothing to say. Down! Down they both come; but Todd is uppermost. Yes; he has got his victim upon the floor, and his knee is upon his chest! He drags him a few inches further towards the fireplace — inches were sufficient, and then grappling him by the throat, he lifts his head and dashes it against the sharp edge of an iron fender! Crash! — Crash! — Crash! The man is dead! Crash again! That last crash was only an injury to a corpse! Once more Todd raised the now lax and smashed skull, but he let it go again. It fell with a heavy blow upon the floor!

“That will do,” said Todd.



Sweeney Todd Butchers the Turnkey.

He slowly rose, and left his cravat in the hands of the dead man. He shook himself, and again that awful oath, which cannot be transcribed, came from his lips. Rap! Rap! Rap! Todd listened. What's that? Somebody in the shop? Yes, it must be — or some one wanting to come in, rather, for he had taken the precaution to make the outer door fast. Rap! Rap! Rap!

“I must go,” said Todd. “Stop. — Let me see.”

He snatched a glass from the wall, and looked at himself. There was blood upon his face. With his hand, he hastily wiped it off, and then, walking as

composedly as he could into the shop, he opened the door. A man stood upon the threshold with quite a smile upon his face, as he said —

“Busy, I suppose?”

“Yes, sir,” said Todd. “I was just finishing off a gentleman. Shaved or dressed, sir?”

“Shaved, if you please. But don’t let me hurry you, by any means. I can wait a little.”

“Thank you, sir, if you will oblige me for a moment or two. You will find some amusements, sir, from the *Evening Courant*, I dare say.”

As he spoke, he handed the then popular newspaper to his customer, and left him. Todd took good care to close the door leading into the parlour, and then proceeding up to the body of the murdered Peter, he, with his foot, turned it over and over, until it was under the table, where it was most completely hidden by a cover that hung down to within an inch of the floor. Before Todd had got this operation well completed, he heard his shop door open. That door creaked most villanously; by so doing, while he was otherwise engaged, he could always hear if it was opened or attempted to be opened. Todd was in the shop in a moment, and saw a respectable looking personage, dressed in rather clerical costume, who said —

“You keep powder?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“Then I wish my hair powdered; but do not let me interrupt this gentleman. I can wait.”

“Perhaps, sir, if you could make it convenient to look in again,” said Todd, “you will probably be more amused by looking at the shops, than by waiting here while this gentleman is shaved.”

“Thank you, you are very kind; but I am rather tired, and glad of the opportunity of having a rest.”

“Certainly, sir. As you please. The *Courant*, sir, at your service.”

“Thank you — thank you.”

The clerical looking old gentleman sat down to read the *Courant*, while Todd commenced the operation of shaving his first customer. When that operation was half completed, he said —

“They report, sir, that St. Dunstan’s is giving way.”

“Giving way,” said the clerical looking gentleman. “How do you mean about giving way?”

“Why, sir,” said Todd, with an air quite of reverential respect, “they say that the old church has a leaning towards Temple Bar, and that, if you stand at the opposite side of the way, you may just see it. I can’t, but they do say so.”

“Bless me,” said the clerical looking gentleman. “That is a very sad thing indeed, and nobody can be more sorry than I am to hear such a tale of the old church.”

“Well sir, it may not be true.”

“I hope not, indeed. Nothing would give me greater pain than to be assured it was true. The stench in the body of the church that so much has been said about in the parish is nothing to what you say, for who ought to put his nose into competition with his eternal welfare?”

“Who, indeed, sir! What is your opinion of that alarming stench in old St. Dunstan’s?”

“I am quite at a loss to make it out.”

“And so am I, sir — so am I. But begging your pardon, sir, if I am not making too free, I thought as you were probably a clergyman, sir, you might have heard something more about it than we common folks.”

“No — no. Not a word. But what you say of the church having a leaning to Temple Bar is grievous.”

“Well, sir, if you were to go and look, you might find out that it was no such thing, and by the time you return I shall have completely finished off this gentleman.”

“No — no. I make no sort of doubt in the world but that you would by that time have finished off the gentleman, but as for my going to look at the old church with any idea that it had a leaning to anything but itself, I can only say that my feelings as a man and a member of the glorious establishment will not permit me.”

“But, my dear sir, you might satisfy yourself that such was really not the case.”

“No — no. Imagination would make me think that the church had a leaning in all sorts of directions, until at last fancy might cheat me into a belief that it actually tottered.”

The clerical looking gentleman pronounced these words with so much feeling, that the person who was being shaved nearly got cut by twisting his head round in order to see him.

"True, sir," said Todd. "Very true — very true indeed, and very just; imagination does indeed play strange freaks with us at times, I well know."

The horrible face that Todd made as he spoke ought to have opened the eyes of any one to the fact that he was saying anything but what he thought, but no one saw it. When he pleased, Todd generally took care to keep his faces to himself.

"I don't wonder, Rev. sir," he said, "that your feelings prompt you to say what you do. I'm afraid I have taken off a little too much whisker, sir."

"Oh, never mind. It will grow again," said the person who was being shaved.

Todd suddenly struck his own head with the flat of his hand, as a man will do to whose mind some sudden thought has made itself apparent, and in a voice of doubt and some alarm, he pronounced the one word —

"Powder!"

"What's the matter? You are a long time shaving me."

"Powder!" said Todd again.

"Gunpowder," said the three-quarter shaved man, while the clerical-looking personage entirely hid his face, with the *Courant*.

"No," said Todd. "Hair powder. I told this gentleman, whose feelings regarding the church do him so much honour, that I had hair powder in the house, and it has just come over me like a wet blanket that I have not a particle."

The clerical-looking gentleman quickly laid down the *Courant*, and said wildly —

"Are you sure you have none?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Then I won't occupy your shop and read your *Courant* for nothing, and as I am here I will have a shave."

"That's very kind of you, sir," said Todd. "Very kind."

"Not at all," said the gentleman, taking up the paper again with all the coolness in the world. "Not at all. Don't mention it, I always like to carry out the

moral maxim of — Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you.”

“How charming!” exclaimed Todd, lifting up his hands, in one of which was the razor. “How charming it is in this indifferent and selfish age to meet with any one who is so charitable as to do more than merely speak of such a sentiment as a curiosity in morals.”

“You are above your condition as regards education,” said the clerical looking gentleman.

“Why, to tell the truth, sir — ”

“Psha!” said he who was being or rather not being shaved — “Psha! And all this while the very soap is drying upon my face.”

“A thousand pardons,” said Todd.

“Many apologies,” said the clerical gentleman, hastily resuming the perusal of the *Courant*.

“Sir,” added Todd, as he finished the shaving and whipped off the cloth from the patient. “Sir, I should have finished you five minutes ago, so that I am sure no one would have heard the slightest complaint from you, but for the truly engaging conversation of this gentleman here, whom I shall have great pleasure now in polishing off.”

“Oh, don’t name it” said the shaved customer, laying down a penny. “Don’t name it, I said I was in no hurry, so I can hardly blame you for taking your time.”

He went through the usual operation of a partial slosh of cold water from a pewter basin, and then dried himself upon a jack towel, and left the shop.

“Now, sir,” said Todd.

The clerical looking gentleman waved his hand as though he would have said —

“For goodness sake don’t interrupt me until I have finished this paragraph.”

Todd fixed his eyes upon him, and began slowly stropping the razor he had been recently using.

“Now, sir, if you please.”

“One moment — one — mo — ment, I shall get through the deaths in an instant.”

Todd continued stropping the razor, when suddenly the *Courant* dropped from the hands of the clerical-looking gentleman, and he uttered a groan that made Todd start.

“Hopkins — Hopkins — Gabriel Hopkins!”

“Sir.”

“Hop — kins! my friend — my councillor — my fellow student — my companion — my Mentor — my — my Hopkins.”

The clerical looking gentleman shut up his face in his hands, and rocked to and fro in an agony of grief.

“Good God, sir,” cried Todd, advancing. “What is the meaning of this?”

“In that paper you will find the death of Hopkins inserted, sir. Yes, in the obituary of that paper. Gabriel Hopkins — the true — the gentle — the affectionate — the christian — Hop — kins!”

“How sorry I am, sir,” said Todd. “But, pray sit in this chair, sir, a shave will compose your feelings.”

“A shave! You barbarian. Do you think I could think of being shaved within two minutes of hearing of the death of the oldest and best friend I ever had in the world. No — no. Oh, Hopkins — Hop — kins!”

The Rev. gentleman in a paroxysm of grief rushed from the house, and Todd himself sunk upon the shaving chair.

“It is, it must be so,” cried Todd, as his face became livid with rage and apprehension. “There is more in these coincidences than mere chance will suffice to account for. Why is it that, if I have a customer here, some one else will be sure to come in, and then after waiting until he is gone himself, leave upon some frivolous excuse? Do I stand upon a mine? Am I suspected? — Am I watched? Or — or more terrible, ten times more terrible question still, am — am I at length, with all my care, discovered?”

CHAPTER LXVI
Johanna Starts for Todd's

We will leave Todd to the indulgence of some of the most uncomfortable reflections that ever passed through his mind, while we once again seek the sweet companionship of the fair Johanna, and her dear romantic friend, Arabella Wilmot. The project which these two young and inexperienced girls were bent upon, was one that might well appal the stoutest heart that ever beat in human bosom. It was one which, with a more enlarged experience of the world, they would not for one moment have entertained, but by long thought and much grief upon the subject of her hopeless love, Johanna had much observed that clearness of perception that otherwise would have saved her from what to all appearance is a piece of extravagance. As for Arabella, she had originally conceived the idea from her love for the romantic, and it was only when it came near to the execution of it that she started at the possible and indeed highly probable danger of the loss to one whom she loved so sincerely as she loved Johanna. But all that has passed away. The remonstrances have been made, and made in vain; Arabella is silenced, and nothing remains but to detail to the reader the steps by which the courageous girl sought to carry out a plan so fraught with a thousand dangers. Both Arabella and Johanna sought the abode of the latter's father, for the first step in the affair was to say something there which was to account seemingly satisfactorily for any lengthened stay of Johanna from home. This was by no manner of means a task of any difficulty, for in addition to the old spectacle maker being innocence itself as regarded the secreting anything in the shape of a plot, Arabella Wilmot was the very last person in all the world he would have thought capable of joining in one. As for Mrs. Oakley, she was by far too intent, as she said herself frequently, upon things which are eternal, to trouble herself much about terrestrial affairs, always except they came to her in the shape of something enticing to the appetites. What a state of things, that a mother should forget the trust that is placed in her when she is given a child, and fancy she is really propitiating the Almighty by neglecting a stewardship which He has imposed upon her! But so it is. There are, we fear, in different ways, a great many Mrs. Oakleys in the world.

"Ah, my dear Miss Wilmot," said the old spectacle maker to Arabella, when he saw her. "How glad I am to see you. How fresh you look."

Arabella's face was flushed with excitement, and some shame that the errand she came upon was to deceive. She had not heard yet of the spurious philosophy that the end sanctifies the means.

"I have come to — to — to — "

"Yes, my dear. To stay awhile, and let us look at your pretty face. Come, my dear Johanna, your mother is out. What can you get for your friend, Miss Wilmot? Here, my dear, take this half crown and get some sweetmeats, and I will open for you a bottle of the old Malaga wine."

Johanna's eyes filled with tears, and she was compelled to turn aside to conceal those tell-tale traces of emotion from her father. Arabella saw that if anything was to be said or done in furtherance of the affair upon which Johanna had now set her heart, she must do it or say it. Summoning all her courage, she said —

“My dear sir — ”

“Sir? — sir? Bless me, my child, when did you begin to call your old kind friend sir?”

“My dear Mr. Oakley — ”

“Ah, that's nearer the old way. Well, my dear Arabella, what would you say to me?”

“Will you trust Johanna with me tonight, and perhaps tomorrow night?”

“I don't think Johanna can come to much harm with you, my dear,” said Mr. Oakley. “You are older than she a little, and at your age a little goes a long way, so take her, Arabella, and bring her back to me when you like.”

With what a shrill of agony did Arabella hear Johanna thus committed to her care. She was compelled to grasp the back of the old spectacle maker's chair for support.

“Yes, yes, sir,” she said. “Oh, yes, Mr. Oakley.”

“Well, my dears, go, and God bless you both.”

To both Arabella and Johanna's perception there was something ominous about this blessing, at such a time, and yet it had really about it nothing at all unusual, for Mr. Oakley was very much in the habit of saying to them “God bless you” when they left him; but feeling, as they did, the hazard that she (Johanna) might encounter before again she heard that voice say “God bless you” if, indeed, she ever again heard it, no wonder the words sank deep into their hearts, and called up the most painful emotions. Johanna certainly could not speak. Arabella tried to laugh, to hide an emotion that would not be hidden, and only succeeded in producing an hysterical sound, that surprised Mr. Oakley.

“What's the matter, my dear?” he said.

“Oh, nothing — nothing, dear Mr. Oakley, nothing.”

“Well, I'm glad to hear it. Perhaps I only fancy it; but you both seem — seem — ”

"What do we seem, father?" said Johanna, looking very pale, and speaking with a great effort.

"Not quite as usual, my darling."

"That — that," gasped Johanna, "can only be — be fancy."

"Of course not," said Oakley. "Fancy, I think I said it was, or if I did not, I meant to say so, my love."

"Come," said Arabella.

"Yes — yes. Father — father. Good day."

She kissed his cheek; and then, before the old man could say another word, she rushed to the door.

"Farewell!" said Arabella. "Good day, Mr. Oakley. I — I thank you, sir. Good day, sir."

"Dear, dear," said the old man, "what is the matter with the girls? How odd they both seem today. What can be the cause of it? I never before saw them so strange in their manner. Ah! I have it. My wife has met them, I dare say, and has said some unkind things to them about hats or ribbons, or some harmless little piece of girlish pride. Well — well. All that will pass away. I'm glad I hit upon it, for —"

At this moment old Oakley was astounded by the sudden entrance of Johanna, who, clasping him in her arms, cried in a voice, half choked with tears —

"Good bye, father — good bye. God help me!"

Without, then, waiting for a word from the spectacle maker, she again rushed from the shop, and joining Arabella a few doors off, they both hurried to the house of the latter. Old Oakley tottered back until he came to a seat, upon which he sank, with an air of abstraction and confusion, that threatened to last him for some time; and in that, for the present, we must leave him, while we look narrowly at the conduct of the two young creatures, who have, in the pride of their virtue and their nobleness of purpose, presumed to set up their innocence against the deep craft of such a man as Sweeney Todd. Well might Johanna say "God help me!"

"It is done!" said Johanna, as she clutched her friend by the arm. "It is done now. The worst is over."

"Oh, Johanna — Johanna —"

“Well, Arabella, why do you pause? What would you say?”

“I scarcely know, and yet I feel that it ought to be something that I have promised you. I would not say.”

“Let your lips be sealed, then, dear friend; and be assured that now nothing but the visible interposition of God shall turn me from my purpose. I am calm and resolved.”



Johanna's Farewell of her Father Prior to her Encounter with Todd.

These words, few as they were, were too significant, and spoken with too evident sincerity to permit a doubt of their deep intensity and truth, and from that moment Arabella Wilmot looked upon the scheme of Johanna going in disguise to Todd's as quite settled so far as regarded the attempt. It was the result now only that had to be looked to.

“I will say no more, Johanna, except as regards detail. In that I may offer you advice.”

“Oh, yes — yes, Arabella. Thankfully received advice, as well you know. What is it you would say?”

“That you ought to wait until the morning.”

“And so perhaps lose precious hours. Oh, no — no. Do not ask me now to submit to any delays, Arabella.”

“But if there be reason, Johanna?”

“Well, the reason, then — the reason?”

"I think that, if possible, it would be well to avoid the necessity of remaining a night at Todd's; and so if you go in the morning, you see, Johanna, you may have an opportunity before nightfall of making all the discoveries you wish, or of satisfying yourself that they are not to be made at all."

"It might be so, and yet — yet I almost think night will be the best time of all."

"But by waiting until tomorrow morning, Johanna, you will have both day and night."

"Yes, yes. I wish I knew what would be the best, Arabella. My feelings are wound up to this enterprise, and I am altogether in such a frightful state of excitement concerning it, that — that I know not how I should be able to support myself under the delay of the remainder of today and the whole of the ensuing night."

"In the night you will have repose, and tomorrow morning, with much more calmness and effect, you will be able to start upon your errand. Believe me, Johanna, I don't counsel this delay with any hope, or wish, or expectation, that it will turn you from your purpose, but simply because I think it will the better ensure its successful termination."

"Successful! What will you call successful, Arabella?"

"Your coming back to me uninjured, Johanna."

"Ah, that speaks your love for me, while I — I love him for whose sake I am about to undergo so much, sufficiently to feel that were I sure he was no more, my own death at the hands of Sweeney Todd would be success."

"Johanna — Johanna, don't speak in such a strain. Have you no thought for me? Have you no thought for your poor father, to whom, as you well know, you are the dearest tie that he has in the world? Oh, Johanna, do not be so selfish."

"Selfish?"

"Yes, it is selfish, when you know what others must suffer because they love you, to speak as though it were a thing to be desired that you should die by violence."

"Arabella, can you forgive me? can you make sufficient allowances for this poor distracted heart, to forgive its ravings?"

"I can — I do, Johanna, and in the words of your father, I am ever ready to say 'God bless you!' You will not go till tomorrow?"

After the pause of a few moments, Johanna said faintly —

“I will not — I will not.”

“Oh that is much. Then at least for another night we shall enjoy our old sweet companionship.”

They by this time had reached the home of Arabella, and as it was an understood thing that Johanna was not expected home, the two young girls retired to converse in unrestrained freedom upon all their hopes and fears.

CHAPTER LXVII
Todd Commences Packing Up

“Yes,” said Todd, as he suddenly with a spring rose from the shaving chair, upon which we left him enjoying reflections of no very pleasant character. “Yes, the game is up.”

He stood for a few moments now in silence, confronting a small piece of looking glass that hung upon the wall exactly opposite to him, and it would appear that he was struck very much by the appearance of his own face, for he suddenly said —

“How old and worn I look.”

No one could have looked upon the countenance of Todd for one moment without fully concurring in this opinion. In truth, he did look old and worn. But a comparatively short time has elapsed since we first presented him to the readers of this most veracious narrative. Then he was a man whose hideous ugliness was combined with such a look of cool triumphant villany, that one did not know which most to ponder upon. Now his face had lost its colour; a yellowish whiteness was the predominating tint, and his cheeks had fallen. There was a wild and an earnest restlessness about his eyes that made him look very much like some famished wolf, with a touch of hydrophobia to set him off; and certainly, take him for all in all, one would not be over anxious

“To see his like again!”

“Old and worn,” he repeated, “and the game is up; I am decided. Off and away, is my game — off and away! — I have enough to be a prince anywhere where money is worshipped, and that of course must be the case in all civilised and religious communities. I must keep in some such. In the more savage wilds of nature man is prized for what he is, but, thank God, in highly cultivated and educated states he is only prized for what he has been. Ha! Ha! If mankind had worshipped virtue, I would have been virtuous, for I love power.”

A thought seemed suddenly to strike Todd; and he went into the parlour muttering to himself —

“My friend Peter must be effectually disposed of.”

He raised the cover which was upon the table, and with a grunt of satisfaction, added —

“Gone! — That will do.”

There was no trace of the body that he had kicked under the table. By some strange mysterious agency it had entirely disappeared, and then Todd went

somehow to the back of the house and got a wet mop, by the aid of which he got rid of some stains of blood upon the floor and the fender.

“All’s right,” he said, “I have done some service to Fogg, and I will, when I am far enough off for any sting not to recoil upon myself, take good care that the law pays him a visit. The villain as well as the fool, to deceive me regarding the boy Tobias. What can have become of him?”

This was a question that gave Todd some uneasiness, but at length he came to the conclusion that the dreadful treatment he, Tobias, had received at the asylum had really driven him mad, and that in all human probability he had fallen or cast himself into the river, or gone into some field to die.

“Were it otherwise,” he said, “I should and must have heard something of him before now.”

Todd then fairly began packing up. From beneath several tables in the room he dragged out large trunks, and opening then some of the drawers and cupboards that abounded in his parlour, he began placing their valuable contents in the boxes.

“My course is simple enough,” he said — “very simple; I must and will, by violence — for she is by far too wily and artful to allow me to do so by any other means — get rid of Mrs. Lovett. Then I must and will possess myself of all that she calls her share of the proceeds of business. Then, at night — the dead hour of the night — after having previously sent all my boxes full of such valuables as from their likelihood to be identified I dare not attempt to dispose of in England, to Hamburg, I will set the whole house in a flame.”

The idea of burning down his house, and if possible involving a great portion of Fleet Street in the conflagration, always seemed to be delightful enough to Todd to raise his spirits a little.

“Yes,” he added, with a demoniac grin. “There is no knowing what amount of mischief I may do to society at large upon that one night, besides destroying amid the roar of the flames a mass of accumulated evidence against myself that would brand my memory with horrors, and, for aught I know, cause a European search after me.”

As he spoke, watches — rings — shoe buckles — brooches — silver heads of walking canes — snuff boxes, and various articles of bijouterie were placed row upon row in the box he was packing.

“Yes,” he added, “I know — I feel that there is danger; I know now that I have spies upon me — that I am watched; but it is from that very circumstance that I ground my belief that as yet I am safe. They fancy there is something to find out, and they are trying to find it out. If they really knew anything, of course it would be — Todd, you are wanted.”

Having placed in one of the boxes as many articles of gold and silver as made up a considerable weight, Todd lifted it at one end, and feeling satisfied that if he were to place any more metal in the box it would be too heavy for carriage, he opened a cupboard which was full of hats, and filled up the box with them. By this means he filled up the box, so that the really valuable articles within it would not shake about, and then he securely locked it.

“One,” he said. “Some half dozen of such will be sufficient to carry all that I shall think worth the taking. As for my money, that will be safest about me. Ah, I will outwit them yet, I will be off and away — only just in time. Suspicion will take a long time to ripen into certainty, and before it does, the flaming embers of this house will be making the night sky as fair and magnificent as the most golden sunset of summer.” Another box was now opened, and in that, as it was of considerable length, he began to pack swords of a valuable character. He went to the rooms above stairs, which, as the reader is already aware, contained much valuable property, and brought down troops of things, which with complacent looks he carefully placed in the chest. Ever and anon, as he went through this process, he kept muttering to himself his hopes and fears. “What is to hinder me, in some principality of Germany, from purchasing a title which shall smother all remembrance of what I now am, and as the Baron Something, I shall commence a new life, for I am not old; no — no, I am not old — far from old, although late anxieties have made me look so. I am not so nervous and fearful of slight things as I was, although my imagination has played me some tricks of late.” Some slight noise, that sounded as if in the house, although it was in all probability in the next one, came upon his ears, and with a howl of terror he shrunk down by the side of the box he had been packing.



Todd Alarmed at Strange Sounds whilst Packing his Plunder.

“Help! Mercy! What is that?”

The noise was not repeated, but for the space of about ten minutes or so, Todd was perfectly incapable of moving except a violent attack of trembling, which kept every limb in motion, and terribly distorted his countenance, if it might be called so.

“What — what was it?” he at length gasped. “I thought I heard something, nay, I am sure I heard something — a slight noise, but yet slight noises are to me awfully suggestive of something that may follow. Am I really getting superstitious now?”

He slowly rose and looked fearfully round him. All was still. True, he had heard a voice, but that was all. No consequences had resulted from it, and the fit of trembling that had seized him was passing away. He went to the cupboard where he kept that strong stimulant that had so much excited the admiration of Peter. He did not go through the ceremony of procuring a glass, but placing the neck of the bottle to his throat, he took a draught of the contents which would have been amply sufficient to confound the faculties of any ordinary person. Upon Todd, however, it had only a sort of sedative effect, and he gradually recovered his former diabolical coolness.

“It was nothing,” he said. “It was nothing. My fears and my imaginations are beginning now to play the fool with me. If there were none others, such would be sufficient warnings to me to be off and away.”

He continued the packing of the box which had been temporarily suspended, but ever and anon he would pause, and lifting up one of his huge hands, placed it at his ear to listen more acutely, and when nothing in the shape of alarm reached him he would say with a tone of greater calmness and contentment —

“All is still — all is still. I shall be off and away soon — off and away!”

The dusky twilight had crept on while Todd was thus engaged, and he was thinking of going out, when he heard the creaking noise of his shop door opening. As he was but in the parlour, he made his way to the shop at once, and saw a young man, who spoke with an affected lisp, as he said —

“Mr. Todd, can you give my locks a little twirl? I’m going to a party tonight, and want to look fascinating.”

“Allow me,” said Todd, as he rapidly passed him and bolted the door. “I am annoyed by a drunken man, so, while I am dressing your hair, I wish to shut him out, or else I might scorch you with the tongs.”

“Oh, certainly. If there’s anything, do you know, Mr. Todd, that I really dislike more than another, it’s a drunken man.”

“There’s only one thing in society,” said Todd, “can come near it. — Sit here, sir.”

“What’s that?”

“Why, a drunken woman, sir.”

“Werry good — Werry good.”

Some one made an effort to enter the shop, but the bolt which Todd had shot into its place effectually resisted anything short of violence sufficient to break the door completely down.

“Mr. Todd — Mr. Todd,” cried a voice.

“In a moment, sir,” said Todd. “In a moment.”

He darted into the parlour. There was a loud bang in the shop as though something had fallen, and then a half stifled shriek. Todd reappeared. The shaving chair in which the young man had been sitting was empty. Todd took up his hat, and threw it into the parlour. He then unbolted the door, and admitted a man who glanced around him, and then, without a word, backed out again, looking rather pale. Todd did not hear him mutter to himself, as he reached the street —

“Sir Richard will be frantic at this. I must post off to him at once, and let him know that it was none of our faults. What an awkward affair to be sure.”

CHAPTER LXVIII
A Moonlight Visit to St Dunstan's Vaults

For the remainder of that day Todd was scarcely visible, so we will leave him to his occupation, which was that of packing up valuables, while we take a peep at a very solemn hour indeed at old St. Dunstan's Church. The two figures on the outside of the ancient edifice had struck with their clubs the sonorous metal, and the hour of two had been proclaimed to such of the inhabitants of the vicinity who had the misfortune to be awake to hear it. The watchman at the gate of the Temple woke up and said "past six," while another watchman, who was snugly ensconced in a box at the corner of Chancery Lane, answered that it was "four o'clock and a rainy morning." Now it was neither four o'clock nor a rainy morning — for the sky, although by no means entirely destitute of clouds, was of that speckled clearness which allows the little stars to pass out at all sorts of odd crevices, like young beauties through the jalousies of some Spanish Castle. The moon, too, had, considering all things, a pretty good time of it, for the clouds were not dense enough to hide her face, and when behind them, she only looked like some young bride, with the faint covering of bashful blonde before her radiant countenance. And at times, too, she would peep out at some break in that veil with such a blaze of silvery beauty as was dazzling to behold, and quite stopped the few passengers who were in the streets at that lone hour.

"Look," said one of four gentlemen, who were walking towards Temple Bar from the Strand. "Look! Is not that lovely?"

"Yes," said another. "A million fires are out in London now, and one can see the blue sky as it was seen when —"

"Wild in the woods the painted savage ran."

"But, after all," said another, "I prefer good broad cloth to red ochre. What say you, Sir Richard?"

"I am of your lordship's opinion," said Sir Richard Blunt, who was one of the party of four: "I certainly think we have gained something by not being Ancient Britons any longer than was absolutely necessary. This is, in truth, a most splendid night."

"It is — it is," they all said.

By this time, strolling along in an independent sort of fashion, they had reached Temple Bar, and then Sir Richard, bowing to the one who had not yet made any sort of remark, said —

"Mr. Villimay, you have not forgotten the keys?"

"Oh no, Sir Richard; oh no."

“Then, gentlemen, we are very near our place of destination. It will be advisable that we look about us, and use the utmost precaution, to be sure that we are not watched by any one.”

“Yes — yes,” said the other. “You will be the best judge of that Sir Richard; with your tact, you will be able to come to a conclusion upon that subject much better than we can.”

Sir Richard Blunt made a slight kind of bow in acknowledgment of the compliment to his tact, and then, while what we may call the main body waited under the arch of Temple Bar, he advanced alone into Fleet Street. After advancing for a short distance, he took from his pocket a small silver whistle, and produced upon it a peculiar thrilling note. In a moment a tall man, with a great coat on him, emerged from behind a column that lent its support to a doorway.

“Here you is,” said the man.

“Is all right, Crotchet?” said Sir Richard.

“Yes; everything is quiet enough. Not a blessed mouse hasn’t wagged his tail or smoothened his whiskers for the last half hour or so.”

“Very good, Crotchet. I’m afraid, though, I cannot dismiss you just yet, as the business is very important.”

“What’s the odds,” said Crotchet, “as long as you are happy?”

Sir Richard Blunt smiled, as he added —

“Well, Crotchet, you deserve, and you shall have an ample reward for the services you are doing and have done, in this affair. I and some gentlemen will go into the church, and I wish you to remain at the porch, and if you find occasion to give any warning, I think your whistle will be quite shrill enough to reach my ears.”

“Not a doubt on it, Sir Richard. If what they calls the last trumpet is only half as loud as my last whistle, it will wake up the coves, and no mistake.”

“Very good, Crotchet. Only don’t make any profane allusions in the hearing of the gentlemen with me, for one of them is the Under Secretary of State, and the other two are men of account. We have to meet some one else in the church.”

“Then he hasn’t come.”

“That’s awkward. The Lord Mayor was to meet us. Ah! Who is this?”

A private carriage stopped on the other side of the way, and some one alighted, and a voice cried —

“Go home now, Samuel, and put up the horses. I shall not want you any more tonight. Go home.”

“Shan’t we call anywhere for you, my lord?” said Samuel, the coachman.

“No — no, I say. Go away at once.”

“That’s the Lord Mayor,” said Sir Richard. “He is pretty true to his time.”

As he spoke, Sir Richard crossed the road, and addressed the chief magistrate of the city, saying —

“A fine night, my lord.”

“Oh, Sir Richard, is that you? Well, I am very glad to meet with you so soon. If I were to tell you the difficulty I have had to get here, you would not believe me. Indeed you could not.”

“Really, my lord.”

“Yes. You must know, Sir Richard, between you and I, and — and” — Here the Lord Mayor, who did not like to say post, looked about him, and his eyes falling upon Temple Bar, added — “Bar, I say; between you and me and the Bar, the Lady Mayoress, although a most excellent woman — indeed I may say an admirable woman — has at times her little faults of temper. You understand?”

“Who is without?” said Sir Richard.

“Ah, who indeed — who indeed, Sir Richard. That is a very sensible remark of yours. Who is without? As you justly enough say.”

“The Lord Mayor!” said Sir Richard, who had been gradually leading his lordship to Temple Bar, and now announced his arrival to the three gentlemen who were there in waiting.

The three gentlemen professed themselves to be quite delighted to see the Lord Mayor, and the Lord Mayor professed to be quite in raptures to see the three gentlemen, so that a pleasanter party than they all made, could not have been imagined.

“Now,” said Sir Richard Blunt, “I think, with all deference, gentlemen, that the sooner we proceed to business the better.”

“Yes, yes,” said Mr. Villimay, who was the senior churchwarden. “Oh, yes — certainly.”

“And yet,” said the Lord Mayor, “we must be very cautious.”

“Oh, very — very cautious,” cried Villimay.

“But a bold front is the best,” remarked Sir Richard.

“Yes. As you say, sir, there’s nothing like a bold front,” cried Villimay.

Sir Richard, with a quiet smile, said to the under secretary —

“A very obliging person, you perceive, Mr. Villimay is.”

“Oh, very,” laughed the secretary.

Preceded now by the churchwarden, they all made their way towards the church, but the watchman at the corner of Chancery Lane must have had something upon his mind, he was so very wakeful, for after they had all passed but Crotchet, he looked out of his box, and said — “Thieves!”

“What’s that to you?” said Crotchet, facing him with a look of defiance, “Eh? Can’t you be quiet when you is told?”

“Murder!” said the watchman, as he began to fumble for his rattle.

“Hark ye, old pump,” said Crotchet. “I’ve settled eight watchmen atween this here and Charing Cross, and you’ll make nine, if you opens your mouth again.”

The appalled watchman shrank back into his box.

“Eight, did you say?”

“Yes.”

Crotchet took the lantern off its hook in front of the box, and smashed it upon the head of the guardian of the night, whereupon the aforesaid guardian shrank completely down to the bottom of the box, with the fragments of the lantern hanging about him, and said not another word.

“I rather think,” said Mr. Crotchet to himself, “as I’ve settled that old fellow comfortable.”

With this conviction upon his mind — the amiability or the non-amiability of which we shall not stop to discuss — Mr. Crotchet ran hastily after the rest of the party, and stationed himself by the church porch, according to orders. By this time, Mr. Villimay, the churchwarden, had produced a little gothic looking key, and proceeding to a small side door, he, after some rattling, partly consequent upon the lock being in a state of desuetude, and partly from personal nervousness, he did succeed in turning the rusty wards, and then, with an ominous groan, the door yielded. Sir Richard Blunt had quite satisfied

himself that there were no eavesdroppers at hand, so he was anxious to get the party housed — perhaps in this instance churched would be a more appropriate expression.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “the night is stealing past, and we have much to do.”

“That is true, Sir Richard,” said the secretary. “Come on, Donkin, and let us get through it.”

The Lord Mayor shook a little as he passed through the little door, last, having, although king of the city, given the *pas* to every one of his companions, upon that most mysterious mission to old St. Dunstan’s church at such an hour. Perhaps he had a faint hope that they might leave him entirely behind, and shut the door precipitately, so that he could not get in. If he had any such hope, however, it was doomed, like too many human hopes, to bitter disappointment, for Sir Richard Blunt held the door open for him, saying blandly —

“Now, my lord. We could not get on without you.”

“Oh, thank you — thank you. You are very good.”

The Lord Mayor crossed the threshold, and then Mr. Villimay, who had occupied a remote and mysterious position at the back of the door, closed it, and locked it on the inside.

“If — if you were to lose the key, Mr. Villimay?” said the Lord Mayor.

“Why, then,” interposed Sir Richard Blunt, “I’m afraid we should have to stay there until Sunday, unless some couple kindly got married in the meantime.”

The Lord Mayor gave a very odd kind of cough, as he said —

“What would the Lady Mayoress say?”

The air without had been cold, but what was that compared with the coldness within? At least, the street breeze had been dry, but in the church there was such a fearful dampness pervading the narrow passage in which the party found itself, that every one felt as though his very marrow was cold.

“This passage,” said Mr. Villimay, “hasn’t been opened for many a long day.”

“Indeed!” said the secretary.

“No, my lord, it has not: and it’s only a wonder that, after a good hunt in the vestry cupboard, I at all found the key of it.”

“Fortunate that you did,” said Sir Richard Blunt, who was all this time making exertions to procure a light, which were as often defeated by the

dampness of the air. At length he was successful in igniting a piece of wax candle, and he said —

“Gentlemen, this will show us our way through the church to the vestry, where we can get lanthorns.”

“Yes,” said the Lord Mayor, who was getting so nervous that he thought himself called upon to make some reply to anything and anybody. “Yes, lanthorns in the vestry.”

“Well,” said the secretary, “my Lord Mayor, your mayoralty will be distinguished by this dreadful affair for all time to come.”

“Many thanks to your lordship, it will.”

The secretary smiled as he whispered to his friend Donkin —

“The city magistrate don’t seem happy, Donkin.”

“Far from it.”

At the end of the little narrow, damp, gloomy, cobwebby passage in which they were, was another little door, the upper half of which was of highly ornamented iron fretwork, the side of which next to the church interior being gilt. This door likewise yielded to a key which Mr. Villimay produced, and then they found themselves at once in the western aisle of the church.

“The stench don’t seem so bad,” said Sir Richard.

“No, sir,” said Villimay. “We have got all the windows open far up above there, and there’s quite a current of air, too, right up the belfry.”

CHAPTER LXIX
The Cook's Visitor's

Sir Richard shaded with his hand the little light that he carried as he walked solemnly across the nave towards the chancel, where the vestry room was situated. He was followed closely by the whole party, and the audible breathing of the Lord Mayor sufficiently proclaimed the uneasy state of his lordship's nerves.

"How strange it is," said the secretary, "that men will pile up stones and timber until they make something to enter, which then terrifies their weak natures, and they become the slaves of the very materials that they have made to enclose and roof in a certain space upon which otherwise they would stand unmoved."

"It is so," said Donkin.

"Why the fact is, I suppose," said Sir Richard Blunt, "that it is what is called original sin that sticks to us, and so —

'Conscience doth make cowards of us all!'

whether we are personally or not obnoxious to the pangs of the still small voice."

"Upon my word, Sir Richard," said the secretary, "you are quite a freethinker — indeed you are."

Suddenly the whole party paused, for something resembling a moan was heard from among the pews in the centre of the church, and every one was anxious to listen for a repetition of the sound.

"Did you hear it?" whispered the secretary.

"In faith, I did," said Mr. Donkin.

"And I," said Sir Richard Blunt.

"And we," said the Lord Mayor, in defiance of grammar. "I — I — feel rather unwell, gentlemen, do you know."

"Hush! Let us listen," said the secretary.

They all stood profoundly still for a few minutes, and then, just as they were one and all beginning to think that after all it must be a mere thing of fancy, the same mournful moan came once more upon their ears.

"There can be no mistake," said Sir Richard. "We all hear that; is it not so, gentlemen?"

“Yes — yes!” said everybody.

“I’m getting worser,” said the Lord Mayor.

“This mystery must be cleared up,” said the secretary. “Is it a trick upon us, do you think, Sir Richard?”

“No, my lord, certainly not.”

“Then we cannot go on until this is cleared up. You are armed, of course, Sir Richard?”

“Yes, my lord.”

Sir Richard Blunt took from his pocket a double-barrelled pistol. There was now a sort of pause, as though each of those present expected the others to say or to do something which should have the effect of discovering what the singular noise portended. Of course, Sir Richard Blunt felt that in such an emergency he would be the man naturally looked to.

“It is absolutely necessary,” he said, “that we should find out what this means before proceeding farther.”

“Yes, yes,” said the Lord Mayor, “no doubt of it; and in the meantime I’ll run to the Mansion House and get some assistance, gentlemen.”

“Oh, no, my lord — oh, no,” said the secretary to the chief magistrate of the city. “We cannot think of sparing you.”

“But — but — ”

“Certainly not,” said Sir Richard Blunt, who was keenly alive to the tone of irony in which the secretary spoke. “Certainly not; and as I fancy the sound which has excited our curiosity comes from about the centre of the pews, you and I, my lord, will go and find out who it is. Come, if you please, at once.”

“I — I — ” stammered the Lord Mayor, “I really — humph! If I felt quite well, do you know, Sir Richard, I should not hesitate a moment.”

“Pho! Pho!” said Sir Richard, taking his arm, and leading him unwillingly forward. “Remember that the eyes of those are upon you whose opinions are to you of importance.”

With a groan the unfortunate Lord Mayor, who from the first had shrunk from the enterprise altogether, being fearful that it might possibly involve dangerous consequences, allowed himself to be dragged by Sir Richard Blunt in the direction of the pews.

"If you have a pistol," said the magistrate, "you had better keep it in your hand ready for service."

"Lord bless you," said the Lord Mayor, in a nervous whisper, "I never fired off a pistol in all my life."

"Is that possible?"

"I don't know about being possible, but it's true."

"Well, you do surprise me."

"So — so you see, Sir Richard," added his temporary lordship, suddenly popping into the churchwarden's pew, which they had just reached — "so I'll stay here and keep an eye upon you."

Sir Richard Blunt was not at all sorry to get rid of such a companion as the Lord Mayor, so with a cough, he left him in the pew, and went forward alone, determined to find out what it was that made the extraordinary noise. As he went forward, towards the spot from whence it had come, he heard it once again, and in such close proximity to him, that albeit, unaccustomed to allow anything to affect his nerves, he started back a pace. Shading, then, the little bit of wax candle that he had in his hand, he looked steadily in the direction of the low moaning sound. In an instant he found a solution of the mystery. A couple of pigeons stood upon the hand rail of one of the pews, and it was the peculiar sound made by these birds, that, by the aid of echo in the silent empty church, had seemed to be of a very different character from its ordinary one.

"And from such simple causes," said Sir Richard, "arise all the well authenticated stories of superstition which fancy and cowardice give credence to."

He looked up, and saw that in the wish to ventilate the church, the windows had been liberally opened, which had afforded the means of ingress to the pigeons, who, no doubt, would have slumbered soundly enough until morning, if not disturbed by the arrival of the party at the church. As Sir Richard Blunt retraced his steps, he passed the pew where the Lord Mayor was; and willing to punish that functionary for his cowardice, he said, in a well affected voice of alarm —

"Gracious Heaven! What will become of us?"

With a groan, the Lord Mayor flopped down to the floor of the pew, and there he lay, crouching under one of the seats in such an agony of terror, that Sir Richard felt certain he and the others would be able to transact all the business they came about, before he would venture to move from that place of concealment. The magistrate speedily informed the rest of the party what was the cause of the alarm, and likewise hinted the position of the Lord Mayor, upon which the secretary said —

“Let him be. Of course, as a matter of courtesy, I was obliged to write to him upon the subject; but we are as well, and perhaps better without him.”

“I am of the same opinion,” said Sir Richard.

They now went at once to the vestry, and two good lanterns were then procured, and lit. The magistrate at once led the way to the stone that had been raised by the workmen, in the floor of the church, and which had never been effectually fastened down again. In a corner, where no one was likely to look, Sir Richard placed his hand for a crowbar which he knew to be there, and, having found it, he quickly raised the stone on one side. The other gentlemen lent their assistance, and it was turned fairly over, having exposed the steps that led down to the vaults of old St. Dunstan’s church.

“Let us descend at once,” said the secretary, who, to tell the truth, in the whole affair, showed no lack of personal courage.

“Allow me to precede you, gentlemen,” said Sir Richard Blunt; “and you, Mr. Villimay, will, perhaps, bring up the rear.”

“Yes, oh, yes,” said the churchwarden, with some degree of nervousness, but he was quite a hero compared to the Lord Mayor.

Sir Richard handed one of the lanterns, then, to Mr. Villimay, and took the other himself. Without another moment’s delay, then, he began the descent. They could all, as they went, feel conscious that there was certainly a most unearthly smell in the vaults — a smell which, considering the number of years that had elapsed since any interments had taken place in them, was perfectly unaccountable. As they proceeded, this stench became more and more sickening, and the secretary said, as he held a handkerchief to his mouth and nose —

“The Bishop of London spoke to me of this, but I really thought he was exaggerating.”

“It would be difficult to do that,” said Sir Richard. “It is as bad almost as it can very well be, and the measures taken for the purpose of ventilation, have not as yet had a very great effect upon it.”

“I should say not.”

With tolerable speed the magistrate led the party on through a vast number of vaults, and through several narrow and rather tortuous passages, after which he came to an iron door. It was locked, but placing the lantern for a few moments upon the floor, he soon succeeded in opening it with a skeleton key. The moment he had done so, the secretary exclaimed —

“Heyday! This is something different.”

"In what respect, my lord?"

"Why, if my senses don't deceive me, the horrible charnel house smell, which we have been enduring for some time past, has given way to one much more grateful."

"What is it like, my lord?"

"Well, I should say some delicious cooking was going on."

"You are right. There is cooking going on. We are not very far from Mrs. Lovett's pie manufactory."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and the smell, or rather I ought to say the odour of which the air is full, comes from the bakehouse."

The secretary gave a perceptible shudder, and Mr. Villimay uttered a groan. The gentleman who was with the secretary was about to say something, but the magistrate, in a low voice, interrupted him, saying —

"Pardon me, but now we are in close proximity to the place of our destination, I would recommend the profoundest caution and silence."

"Certainly — certainly. We will only be silent spectators."

"It is better, I think," added Sir Richard Blunt, "to allow me to carry on the whole of the conversation that is to ensue; and at the same time, any of you gentlemen can suggest to me a question to ask, and I will at once put it to the man we come to speak to."

"That will do, Sir Richard, that will do."

The magistrate now hurried on as though those savoury steams that scented the air from the bakehouse of Mrs. Lovett's pies were to him more disagreeable than the horrible smell in the vaults that made everybody shake again. In a few minutes he arrived at a room, for it could not be called a vault. It had a floor of rough stone flags, which seemed as though they had originally belonged to some of the vaults, and had been pulled up and carried to this place to make a rude flooring. There was nothing very remarkable about the walls of this place, save at one part, and there there was evidently a door, across which was placed a heavy iron bar.

"It is through there," said Sir Richard.

"But — but you do not intend to open it?"

“Certainly not. There is a small crevice through which there will be no difficulty in maintaining a conversation with the imprisoned cook, if I can only make him hear me from this spot.”