

CHAPTER XC

Todd Receives Two Extraordinary Letters, and Acts upon Them

Todd looked the picture of amazement.

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

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

“Colonel Jeffery informs Sweeney Todd that, although from a variety of reasons he may not think proper to prosecute him for his recent outrage at his house, he will, upon a repetition of such conduct, at once hand him over to the police.”

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

“What does this mean?”

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

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

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

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

“Yes, sir.”

“Trim the lamp.”

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

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

“Your obedient servants,
“BROWN, BUGGINS, MUGGS, AND SCREAMER.”

“To Mr. S. Todd.”

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

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

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

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

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

Suddenly he saw a postscript at the foot of the shipowner’s letter, which he had at first overlooked.

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

“Damn Crimmins and his wharf, too!” cried Todd.

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

At length he got into a calmer frame of mind.

“Shall I leave at once, or stay till tomorrow night, that is the question?”

He argued this with himself, pro and con.

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

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

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

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

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

Todd came out into the shop.

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

"I am here, sir."

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

"Yes, sir, no doubt."

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

Johanna shuddered. This hypocrisy sounded awful to her.

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

Johanna could not reply.

“Here is a tract that you can read before you go to sleep, if they allow you a candle, when you get abed. It is entitled ‘Groans of Grace, or the Sinner Sifted,’ a most godly production, from a pious bookseller in Paternoster Row, Charley.”

“Yes,” Johanna just managed to say.

“Now you may go.”

She darted from the shop.

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

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

“Welcome!” said a voice.

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

Johanna burst into tears.

“What has happened? — What has happened?” cried the young girl.

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

“Be of good cheer,” said a deep toned voice.

She looked up, and saw Sir Richard Blunt.

“You here, sir?”

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

“He did.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Oh yes, I will fulfil my mission.”

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

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

“It would not have been for him, sir.”

“For who, then?”

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

“Do not be too sure, Johanna.”

“Nay, look at that.”

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

“What is this?”

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

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

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

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

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

“I cannot just now shake this supposition.”

“You never will.”

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

“Oh, if I could think so!”

“You will.”

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

“None whatever.”

Johanna looked deeply affected.

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

“Ah, no — never happy.”

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

“It will be cruel for them to smile, sir; and it is now cruel of you to speak to me of loving another, when you know my affections are with Ingestrie, in that world to which he has gone before me, but to which I look forward to as the place of our happy meeting, where we shall part again no more.”

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

“Sir?”

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

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

“Then I will say no more.”

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

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

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

“You are too good to me.”

While all this was going on so close to him, Todd, with many oaths and execrations, was putting up his own shutters, which he did with a violence that nearly knocked the front of the window in. When he had finished, he walked into his house, and closing the door, he said, in a low tone —

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

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

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

CHAPTER XCI
Mr. Lupin Meddles with Other Folks' Affairs

"Brother Oakley, is sister Oakley within?"

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

Mr. Oakley looked up with surprise upon his features.

"What?" he said.

"Is sister Oakley within, brother?"

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

"Are we not all brothers in the Lord?"

"Pho! Go along."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How pleasant this is."

“What is pleasant?”

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

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

“Humph! Brother Oakley! Humph!”

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

“Speak — speak! What have you to say?”

“Humph!”

“Speak man, if you be a man!”

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

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

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

“Murder! Murder!” screamed the preacher.

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

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

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

“Let me get up. Oh, be merciful, and let me get up.”

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

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

“You are trying to prevaricate now,” said Oakley, suddenly snatching from the wall of his shop an antique sword, that had hung there as a sort of ornament, not entirely inconsistent with his trade. “You are trying to prevaricate with me now, and I must and will have your life. Prepare for the worst. You have now aroused feelings that cannot be so easily quelled again. Your last hour has come!”

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

“Mercy — mercy, and I will tell.”

“Go on, then. Quick.”

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

“You rascal, I’ll make you howl if you do not come to the point quickly.”

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

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

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

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

The spectacle maker looked confused, as well he might.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Tell me again — tell me again!” gasped Oakley.

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

“Truly, you are a vessel of wrath, brother Oakley.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He then waited for Oakley to speak, for to tell the truth, the curiosity of Lupin was strongly excited concerning Johanna, as well as his sense of enjoyment, tickled by the distress of the father whom he considered his enemy.

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

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

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

Mr. Lupin watched him attentively.

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

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

“I have,” said Lupin.

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

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

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

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

“Truly I will come with you,” said Lupin, “for I am curious — that is to say, I am in a religious point of view, anxious to know what has become of the maiden, who was so fair to look upon always, although she had not a godly spirit.”

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

CHAPTER XCII
Todd Astonishes Mrs. Lovett's Spy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As he spoke, a dull heavy sort of sound at the outer door of his house came upon his ears. It was as though something heavy had been thrown against it.

With fear expressed upon every feature of his face, Todd listened for a repetition of the sound.



Todd Preparing Combustibles to Fire his House.

It did not come again.

Todd began to breathe a little more freely, and yet he kept asking himself — “What was it?” — and the utmost powers of his imagination could return him no feasible answer to the interesting inquiry. But nothing was more easy than to go to the door and see if any one was there, or if anything had happened to it. Should he open it for such a purpose? Should he unbar and unbolt at the risk of he knew not what? No: he would, from the first floor balcony, and there was a frail one, reconnoitre the street. He should then be easily able to see if there were any danger.

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

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

The shutters had to be unfastened, for Todd’s house was always carefully closed up like the Duke of Wellington’s at the present day. He very quickly

unclosed one of the long disused windows, and opening it gently, looked out over the edge of the little crazy balcony into the street.

Something big and black was against his door.

The more Todd bent his gaze upon this object, the more a kind of undefined terror took possession of him, and the more puzzled he was to give a name to the dark mass that had been laid upon his threshold. There was no lamp very near his house, or else, miserable as was the light from those old oil apologies for illuminators, some few rays might have fallen upon the dark mass, and told Todd what it was.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Ah!” he said, “a good joke.”

“What’s a joke, sir?” said the man. “What’s a joke? Murder! Where am I? — where am I? Help!”

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

“Did she, sir?”

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

“A guinea, sir.”

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

Talking away thus all suspicion from the man who was not one of the brightest of geniuses in the world, Todd led the way to the parlour — that fatal parlour which had been the last scene of more than one mortal life.

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

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

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

“Certainly, my friend, certainly. Drink that.”

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

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

“Not like it?”

“Not much, sir.”

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

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

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



Todd Poisons Mrs. Lovett's Spy and Tells him of it.

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

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

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

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

He struck the chair from under the dead man with his foot, and the corpse that had partially been supported by it and the table, fell to the floor. Another kick sent it under the large table, and then, as another of Todd's victims had once done, it disappeared.

"Tomorrow night, by this time," said Todd, musingly, "where shall I be!"

CHAPTER XCIII
Mr. Oakley is in Despair at the Loss of Johanna

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

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

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

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

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

"Humph!" said Lupin.

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

"Ah!" said Lupin.

Mr. Oakley knocked at the door, and, as one of the family had seen him through the blinds of the parlour window, he was at once admitted, and kindly received by those who knew him and his worth well. He asked, in an odd gasping manner, that Mr. Lupin might have permission to come in, which was readily granted; and with a solemn air, shaking his head at the vanities he saw in the

shape of some profane statuary in the hall, the preacher followed Oakley to the dining room.

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

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

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

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

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

"Humph!" said Lupin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The bereaved father — yes, at that moment he felt that he was a bereaved father — clutched the arms of the chair upon which he sat, and his face turned

of a ghastly paleness. He made an inarticulate effort to speak, but could only produce a strange gurgling noise.

“Gracious Heavens! He is ill,” cried Arabella’s aunt.

“No, madam,” said Lupin. “He is only convinced.”

“Convinced of what?”

“Of what he himself will tell you, madam.”

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

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

“Is there any objection to a prayer?”

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

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

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

“Brother Oakley,” said Lupin, “you brought me here.”

“And I now command you hence. Begone, villain, begone; go and exult over the heartbroken father’s grief; go and tell the tale where you will. You cannot move me now — go — go — go.”

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

“Come,” said a man, who happened to be in the house upon some domestic errand, “Mrs. Wilmot says you are to go, and go you shall. Come, be off — I know who you are. You are the rascal that married the widow in Moorfields, but who, they say, has another wife in Liverpool. If you don’t go, I shall give you in

charge for bigamy, and the widow says she will spend her last penny in prosecuting you."



Mr. Lupin Unmasked.

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

"Flee, ye wretches," he said, "from the wrath to come! You will all go into the bottomless pit, you will, and I shall rejoice at it; and sing many songs of joy over you. Scoffers and mockers, I leave you all to your fate. The devil will have you all, and that is a great comfort and gratification to the elect and to the saints."

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

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

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

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

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

“No, no — certainly not.”

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

“Is Arabella in the house?”

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

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

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

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

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

The door opened and the aunt reappeared.

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

It is something astonishing, and yet one of the most ordinary of mental phenomena, to note what a power a cool and clear intellect will exert over one that is distracted and full of woe and clamorous grief. Mr. Oakley did sit down by the side of Arabella’s aunt, and he told her all that happened the girl of which, of course, was the real or supposed appearance of Johanna in Fleet

Street, in male attire. The collateral circumstances, such as the hurried and half frantic farewell of him in the shop by Johanna, and the misrepresentation by Arabella, that she (Johanna) was going to stop there, evidently made a deep impression upon the aunt. Her countenance changed visibly, as she said faintly —

“God help us all.”

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

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

“Not — not guilty?”

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

“Do — do you think he did so see her?”

“I doubt it much.”

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

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

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

Old Oakley fell back in his chair with a groan.

“She has them,” he said. “She has them. My child, whom I shall never see again, has them.”

CHAPTER XCIV Morning in Fleet Street Again

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

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

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

So he told himself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Reether!" said Crotchet.

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

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

"Now, Miss Oakley," said Sir Richard Blunt, "I think, then, your time has come; and, as Crotchet will take down the shutters, you may as well go over at once. I think you thoroughly understand what you have to do — and if Todd asks you where you lodged, you had better say that the servants here offered to let you sleep by the kitchen fire, and you accepted the offer — for he may be watching for you now, and see you come out of this house, for all we know to the contrary. And now remember, without any reference to my plans or what I would rather do, if you feel yourself, or fancy you feel yourself in the least

danger, take the means I have pointed out to you of summoning aid, and aid will come to you.”

“I will,” said Johanna.

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

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

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

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

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

“Well — well,” he said. “A good night’s rest, Charley?”

“Tolerable, sir!”

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

“I was very fortunate indeed, sir.”

“Oh, you were very fortunate indeed?”

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

“Oh, at Mr. a — a — ”

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

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

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

"Are there, sir?"

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

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

"Story — story? What story?"

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

Todd gave a growl.

"And so you slept there?"

"Yes, sir."

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

"Open the shop!"

"Yes, sir, directly."

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

had her hand upon the bar when he stopped, saying, in an off-handed manner —

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

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

“What’s this? Who are you?”

“Easy — easy,” said Crotchet. “Don’t get in the way old gentleman. Easy. There now!”

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

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

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

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

Crotchet went away whistling with great composure.

CHAPTER XCV
Mrs. Lovett won't Take any Excuses

Todd seized Johanna by the arm, and dragged her into the shop. He locked the door, and then confronting her, he said —

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

"My friend, sir?"

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

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

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

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

"And so that is all, Charley?"

"All at present, sir."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."

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

“Yes, sir,” said Johanna. “I daresay it is.”

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

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

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

“My name is Todd, sir. What is it?”

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

“Some time about what?” almost screamed Todd.

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

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

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

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

Todd suddenly became quite calm.

“Sir,” he said, “I take it as a very particular favour, indeed, that you should have called here upon such an errand, and I only beg that you will not hurry yourself in the least; I can go on shaving this gentleman, and perhaps when he is gone, you will permit me the honour of operating upon you?”

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

Johanna started.

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

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

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

"Thank you, sir."

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

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

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

"Yes, sir."

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

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

"You understood my message?" he said.

"Yes. My father."

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

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

"Yes, there are not a few of them," said Sir Richard. "They revel in vice, and daily try to make the Almighty an accomplice in their offences against society. Well, then, Johanna, this man has tortured your father with an account of your being in this disguise."

“It would torture him.”

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

“It was the best.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Welcome,” she said. “Welcome once again.”

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

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

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

"This way," said the young girl, who took so great an interest in the fate of Johanna. "This way, dear. He is in our room upstairs, and will be no less delighted to see you, then you will be delighted to see him."

"I am sure of that," said Johanna.

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

CHAPTER XCVI
Mr. Oakley's Anxieties much Diminish

For some few moments after this meeting, neither Mr. Oakley nor Johanna could speak. At length the old spectacle maker was just able to say —

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

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

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

“Father, listen to me.”

“Yes my child — my darling. Yes.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Alas! Alas!” said the old man, “More trouble — more anxiety — more danger.”

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

“Can I part with you again?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Exactly. I gave them instructions to seize the very first opportunity of letting you hear the watchword. Are there any large cupboards in the shop?”

“Yes. There is one of great size.”

“Would it, do you think, hold two men?”

“Oh, yes. Perchance you, who are tall, might have to stoop a little; but with that exception as to height, there is most ample space.”

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

“They will use the watchword?”

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

“That I can easily do.”

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

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

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

“Yes. I have often looked at some firearms that my father had in his shop to sell once, and I have seen them used.”

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

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

She shook her kind friend warmly by the hand, and then hastened to the barber's shop. As she got near to it, she saw the tall thin man who had so perplexed Todd about the religious tract, come out, and Todd followed him to the door, looking after him with such an expression of deadly malice, that Johanna could not but pause a moment to look at him.



Sir Richard Gives Johanna Pistols for her Protection.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Very well, sir."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His passage in the Hamburg ship was secure — the fearful proceeds of his life of rapine and murder were in her hold. How uncommonly safe Todd thought himself, and how well he considered he had managed his affairs.

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

“Such things as air is made of.”

If Todd now for one moment could have imagined that his plunder, which he believed was so safe on board the Hamburg ship, was actually, on the contrary, at the office of Sir Richard Blunt, in Craven Street, what would have been his

sensations? Would he have laughed and sniggered over the bumper of brandy he was holding to his lips in his parlour? No, indeed.

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

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

“My bosom’s lord sits lightly on its throne,”

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