

CHAPTER XCVII
Sir Richard Blunt's Subterranean Expedition

While Todd is thus waiting anxiously for the arrival of his old ally in iniquity, but who now he considered to be his most deadly foe, and his worst possible hindrance to carry out his deeply — by far too deeply — laid schemes, we shall have time to take a peep at some proceedings of Sir Richard Blunt's, which are rather entertaining, and decidedly important.

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

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

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

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

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

"All right?" asked the magistrate, "and everyone here?"

"Yes, sir. Everyone."

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

"Yes, sir."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“This, I presume, will be our direction?”

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

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

“Then,” said Sir Christopher, “through that wall would lead in a direct line to Todd’s house.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Here, according to the plans of the church, the vaults end.”

“Then we can get no further?”

“Not an inch, Sir Richard.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We shall see," said the magistrate. "Lend me that small iron crowbar, Jenkins."

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

"This is the place," said the magistrate.

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

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

"The route is direct," he said.

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

"Yes, direct."

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

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

"And I," said Sir Christopher Wren.

"And I — and I," cried every one.

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

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

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

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

"What is it?" said the fruiterer.

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

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

“Come on,” he said. “Ah! This is a different place.”

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

CHAPTER XCVIII
The Day is Progressing, and Todd's Danger Thickens

"Who on earth would have thought of vaults like these in such a situation?" said the fruiterer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

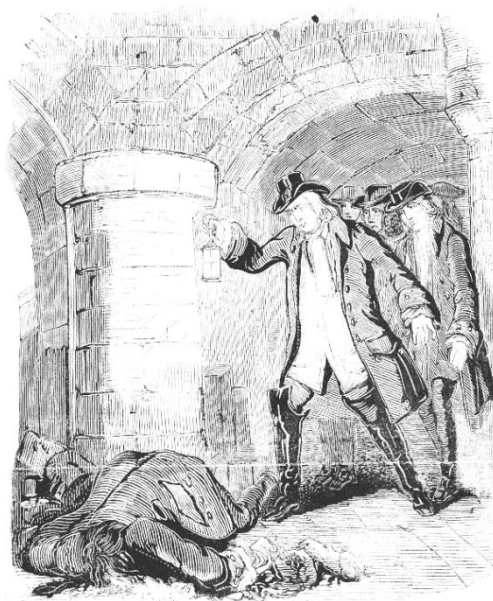
The door which was now opened, only led to some other vaults, which somewhat resembled those the party had just left, only that they were by no means so lofty or so carefully constructed as they were; and before they had proceeded far, some evidences of habitation began to show themselves. Some old boots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

"It is necessary that we proceed with the utmost caution. I think, a very few steps will take us into the cellars of Todd's house, and the object now is not by

any means to give him the least alarm, but merely to find out, if possible, by what means he murders and disposes of his victims."

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

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



The Body found under Todd's House.

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

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

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

Then the pacing to and fro of that really wretched man continued. The few words that Todd had spoken, had been sufficient to convince Sir Richard Blunt of one thing, which was, that they were beneath the parlour, and not the shop.

It was from the shop the people disappeared, so the heart of Todd's mystery remained yet to be reached. There was another small doorway a little to the left of where he stood, and Sir Richard, upon the impulse of the moment, passed through it alone. He came back again in a moment.

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

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

"I know all."

"Indeed?"

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

"Yes, yes! But there is more?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

affair, and he was pleased to think how soon again he should be personally superintending the safety of Johanna.

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

“I will come in. I’m the beadle. Fire! Fire! I will come in. What! Keep a beadle out of his own church? Oh! Oh! Oh! Convulsions, convulsions! It ain’t possible.”

“Gentlemen,” said the magistrate, “we must repress our friend the beadle’s curiosity. Let us all say ‘Hush’ to him as we go out, and not another word.”

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

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

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

“Eh?” said the beadle.

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

“Well, but — but — ”

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

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

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

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

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

"Is all right, Crotchet?"

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

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

"I knows it," said Crotchet.

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

Crotchet nodded, and made his exit.

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

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

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

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

"Mrs. Lovett, without a doubt. No one need go and look after that lady, for I don't know any one, except you or I, Jervis, who is so capable of taking care of number one. Todd will find her a troublesome customer, and if she is at all the

woman I take her to be, she will not go into his back parlour quite so easily as he would fain persuade her."

"Then no one need follow, sir?"

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

"Dead, sir!"

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

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

CHAPTER XCIX
Mrs. Lovett is Very Intractable Indeed

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

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

“Oh,” she said. “Is Mr. Todd in?”

“No,” said Johanna. “No, madam.”

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

“So,” she said, “he is out — is he?”

“Yes, madam.”

“And you are Mr. Todd’s *boy*?”

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

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

“And so he is out?” added Mrs. Lovett.

“Yes, madam.”

“How long has he been gone?”

“Only a short time.”

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

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

Mrs. Lovett was not exactly of the shuddering order of human beings.

“Did he say when he should return?”

“No, madam.”

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

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

“Only a few days, madam.”

“And what made you come?”

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

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

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

But Todd all this while was a prisoner in his own parlour, and it may easily be imagined how he chafed and fumed over such a state of things. If any

convenient mode of taking the life of Mrs. Lovett had but presented itself to him, how gladly he would have embraced it; but none did; and after enduring the present state of affairs for about a quarter of an hour, he coolly opened the parlour door and walked into the shop as if nothing were amiss.

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

“I am glad you have come home.”

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

“Indeed!”

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

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

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

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

“You don’t say so?”

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

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

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

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

“Yes, sir,” said Johanna.

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

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

“Are you mad?”

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

“Mrs. Lovett — Mrs. Lovett, is it not a melancholy thing, that you and I, who may be said to be at war with all the world, should begin to quarrel with each other? If we are not true to one another, what can we expect from others? Have we not for so long carried on our snug little business in safety, merely because we were good friends?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I care not.”

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

“It might have for once, with you for a companion on it, Sweeney Todd; but if I am desperate and reckless, you have yourself to thank for it. Well you know

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

“Mad! — Mad!” cried Todd.

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

“Bah! Bah! Bah!” cried Todd.

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

“Peace, woman!”

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

CHAPTER C
The Boat on the River

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

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

"I will be satisfied."

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

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

"It is plain enough," said Todd.

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

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

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

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

"Give me the money."

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

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

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

"In the shaving chair?"

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

“For you to cut my throat?”

“What?”

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

“Armed?”

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

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

“You would have all then.”

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

“Give me my money then.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Come — come, at once.”

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

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

“Well, what is the exact time,” said Todd, “by St. Dunstan’s?”

“A quarter past eleven, sir.”

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

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

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

“There is time enough, yet.”

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

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

“And I,” she said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Lovett followed him closely.

“Stop!” she said. “Stop!”

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

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

“It is by the Thames.”

“By the Thames?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To Pigs Quay."

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

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

"No."

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

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

To say that Mrs. Lovett kept an eye upon Todd, would be but faintly to express the feline like watchfulness with which she regarded him, as they sat together in the boat. There was not the slightest movement of his eye — the least twitch of a muscle of his face, that she did not observe, and strive to draw some conclusion from; and he felt that his very soul was being looked into by that

bold woman, who had been the companion of his iniquity, and whom he was now plotting and planning, by some mad desperate means, to deprive of her share of that ill-gotten wealth, which never in this world, even if ten times the amount, could make either of them happy.

CHAPTER CI

The Attempted Murder on the Thames

The boat that followed Todd did not, after a time, keep quite in the wake of the one containing him and Mrs. Lovett. It rather went on a line parallel to it, but it kept at a convenient distance; and there were those in that boat, who never took an eye off Todd and his female accomplice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The two boats sped on towards London Bridge — not the elegant structure that now spans the Thames, but the previous one, with its narrow arches, and

its dangerous fall of water when the tide was ebbing, which was the case upon this occasion.

The watermen looked uneasily at the arch through which it would be necessary to go, and where the tide was raging with unexampled fury, and lashing the sides of the arch like a mill stream, bearing upon its surface millions of bubbles, and making such a seething roaring sound, that it was a point of attraction to some idle chance passengers upon the bridge to watch any adventurous wherry as it shot through the dangerous passage.

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

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

Todd smiled grimly as he replied by asking a question.

"Is it dangerous?"

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

"But that is not now," said Todd.

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

"Ay, ay."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Perhaps at that moment she reflected that she had trusted herself with all her sins on board that little boat amid the wild rush of waters; but if she did, she said nothing. Neither by word nor by action did she give indication of the fear that was tugging at her heart.

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

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

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

"Easy it is," said the other.

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

She uttered a piercing shriek.

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

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

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

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

"Alas, poor thing!" said Todd.



Old London Bridge. — Todd Tries his Murderous Hand on Mrs. Lovett.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Gone!" said Todd.

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

"Are you sure of that?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It's no use grieving, sir."

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

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

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

“Oh, yes sir. All’s right.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“My name is Cummins, sir. Don’t you recollect how my poor husband, John Cummins, went out one day about a month ago, to carry the watchcases he had to polish to his employers, saying that he would call at your shop and be shaved before he went into the city, and didn’t call, sir, as you kindly told me,

but has never been heard of since? The city people will have it that he ran away; but ah, sir, I know him better. Would he run away from me and from those that he loved so well? Oh, no — no — no, I know John better.”



The Widow asks for Charity of her Husband's Murderer — Todd.

CHAPTER CII

Johanna has a Visitor while Todd is gone upon the River

"Well?" said Todd.

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

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

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

"You really think so?"

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

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

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

"And this little girl, ma'am?"

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

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

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

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

Todd walked leisurely on.

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

* * * * *

While Todd was away upon this errand of getting rid of Mrs. Lovett, which we have seen he has accomplished so much to his satisfaction, Johanna was not entirely without visitors. The excellent watch that was kept upon the movements of Todd, in their minutest particular, by Sir Richard Blunt and his officers, let them know perfectly well that Todd was from home; but it was not from them that Johanna had her first visit after Todd was gone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

think what he wanted until she found that there was a shelf at the top of the cupboard, that was equally out of her reach as it was out of his.

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

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

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

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

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

"Mr. Oakley, Spectacle Maker, 33, Fore Street, City."

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

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

Johanna started to her feet.

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

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

"Why, what's the row?" said the man, who was no other than Hector's friend, the ostler, from the inn opposite. "What's the row? Now what an out-and-out

willain of a dog you is, Pison, to cut over here like bricks as soon as you can git loose to do so. Don't you know that old Todd is a busting to do you an ill turn some o' these days? and yet you will come, you hidiot."

"Mr. Todd is out," said Johanna.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Poor Johanna was absolutely reasoning herself into an agony of grief,

when the door of the shop opened, and an old man with white hair made his appearance.

"Is Mr. Todd within?" he said.

"No, sir," replied Johanna.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In what way, my dear friend? Do I not say that it is in poor Mark's own handwriting? How could it come here unless he brought it? Oh, sir, do not ask me in what way I attach importance to it. Rather let me ask you how, otherwise than upon the supposition of his having become one of Todd's victims, can you account for its being here at all?"

"Really," said Sir Richard, "this Mark Ingestrie must have been a very forgetful young man."

"Forgetful?"

"Yes. It seems that it was necessary for him to carry your name and address in his pocket. Now if he had given such a slip of paper as this to another person for fear he should forget what was not so deeply imprinted in his memory I should not have wondered at it for a moment."

Johanna clasped her hands and looked the magistrate in the face, as she said —

"Then, sir, you think — that is, you believe — that — that this is no proof of poor Mark having been here?"

“As I hope for mercy in Heaven, it is to my mind a proof the other way, Johanna.”

She burst into a passion of hysterical weeping. Sir Richard Blunt knew too much of human nature to interfere by word or gesture, with this effort of nature to relieve the overcharged heart, and he waited patiently, affecting to be looking upon some old prints upon the wall until he heard the sobs decrease to sighs. Then he turned with a smile to Johanna, and said —

“My dear girl, gather hope from that scrap of paper, not despair. Depend upon it the address of your father held too conspicuous a place in the heart of him who loved you to require that it should have been written upon a piece of paper. You know that my theory on the subject is that Mr. Thornhill was actually sent to you by Mark Ingestrie, and that it was he who perished here.”

“And Mark himself — if that were so?”

“His fate has still to be elucidated; but that he perished here I do not believe, as I have often told you.”

“This is an exquisite relief,” said Johanna, as she laid her hand upon her heart.

“Make much of it,” said Sir Richard; “something even yet seems to tell me that you will be happy. I cannot think it possible that Heaven would permit such a man as Todd to destroy your earthly felicity. But how comes the shop in such confusion?”

“It was the dog. He would look everywhere, and I had not the heart nor the strength to prevent him. Todd has a horror of him; and fright will keep him quiet when I tell him the cause of the mischief that is done here.”

“Perhaps then it will be better to leave it as it is,” said Sir Richard, “than awaken his suspicions by attempting to put the place to rights, in which you might fail in some particulars known to him. And now tell me, Johanna, what passed between him and this Mrs. Lovett?”

“But a few words, sir, before I was sent out. There is one thing though that I suspect, and that is that Mrs. Lovett has found out my secret.”

“Indeed?”

“Yes, she regarded me with a strange gaze that made me feel that she penetrated my disguise. I know not if she will say as much to Todd, but one glance of his eye upon me when he returns will satisfy me upon that, I think.”

At this moment a bugle sounded in Fleet Street.

“That is my signal,” said Sir Richard. “Todd is coming. I will be close at hand, Johanna, lest Mrs. Lovett has told him your secret, and you should find yourself in any danger. Farewell! Heaven hold you in its keeping.”

CHAPTER CIII

The Cook Feels that all the World Neglects Him, and then He gets a Letter

Sir Richard Blunt left the shop, and Johanna had just time to conceal the scrap of paper which she had found in the waistcoat, and to seem to be busy at the fire, when Todd made his appearance. She had never seen such a grim smile upon Todd's face as it now wore. He was for once in his life fairly pleased. When had he made such a morning's work as that? Not even in his acquisition of those fatal Pearls had he gained so much as by that one slight push that had sent Mrs. Lovett and her claims into the river so neatly.

No wonder Sweeney Todd was elated and delighted. He had all the money now to himself. There was no one now to say to him "Where is my share?" He had all the produce of another's awful criminality to add to his own. Was he not thus a very happy man for a little while?

The sunshine of the heart was not a thing to last long in such a bosom as Sweeney Todd's. His was not that sweet and lasting hilarity of soul that can alone arise from a deep and sincere consciousness of right. No! The fierce delight of a successful stroke of villany may for a time resemble happiness, but it is a resemblance as weak as that between the faint watery ray of a winter's sun and the full blaze of the godlike luminary in all the beauty of the vernal season.

But for the time, we say, Todd was pleased, and the demoniac triumph of his soul beamed forth from his eyes and played around the puckered corners of his huge mouth.

"Well, Charley," he said, "how goes it with you, my lad?"

Johanna stared as well she might to hear Todd speak in such a mild pacific sort of way.

"Sir?" she said.

"I say, how goes it with you, my good boy. How have you passed the time in my unavoidable absence upon a little business?"

"Quite tolerable, sir, thank you, with the exception that a dog pushed his way into the shop, and, as you see, sir, has made some confusion."

"A dog?"

"Yes, sir. A large one, black and white. I had no strength to turn him out, so he had his will in the shop, and tossed the things about as you see, sir."

"My malediction upon that confounded dog. He is mad, Charley, I tell you, he is stark, staring mad. Why did you not throw open razors at him until one had transfixed him?"

"I don't like touching the razors, sir."

"You don't — you don't? He! He! What will he think when one touches him?" muttered Todd to himself as he turned aside and made a movement as though cutting a throat. "You don't like touching the razors, Charley?"

"No, sir, I thought you would be angry if I had, so the dog had all his own way here. I would have put the place to rights, but I thought you ought to see it as it is."

"Right, my boy — right. Tomorrow will be quite time enough to put it to rights. Yes, tomorrow. Has any one called, Charley?"

"No, sir."

"Well I am glad of that, for when one is off upon an action of charity one don't like one's business to suffer as well. It's quite unknown what I give away, and I always like to see the object myself, you know, Charley, as I find I can then better adapt my benevolence to their real wants, which is a great — a very great object."

"I should think it was, sir."

"You are a clever observant lad, Charley, and you will, when you leave me, I feel convinced, drop into a genteel independence. You will want for nothing then, I feel quite assured, Charley."

"You are very good, sir."

"I strive to be good, Charley, and by the help of the gospel we may all be good to some extent — sinners that we are. Now, simple as is, it's really a great thing to be supplied in an unlimited manner with cold water."

"No doubt of it, sir."

"Well, I have supplied the person to whom my benevolence has extended this morning, with, I hope, an unlimited quantity, and always fresh. He!"

Todd here executed one of his awful laughs, and then went into his parlour grinning at his own hideous facetiousness over the murder he had committed. Johanna had managed to say, from time to time, what was expected by way of answer to him, but it was with a shuddering consciousness that he had been about some great crime that she did so; and when he had left the shop, she said faintly to herself —

"He has murdered Mrs. Lovett."

It was sufficient, if Todd went out with an enemy and came home jocular, to conclude what had happened. That person then might be fairly presumed to be no more, and hence, with a shudder of horror pervading her frame, did Johanna whisper to herself —

“He has surely murdered Mrs. Lovett.”

The first thing that Todd did when he was alone in his parlour, and the door fast, was to produce the memoranda he had made of all that he had to do previous to leaving England. One item ran thus: —

“*Mem.* To pay Mrs. Lovet in full.”

After that item he wrote *paid*, and then he laughed again in his hideous way, and leaning his head upon his hand, or rather his chin upon it, he spoke in a chuckling tone.

“She will turn up some day — yes, she will turn up some day, and the swollen disgusting mass, that was once the bold and glittering Mrs. Lovett, will be pulled through the river mud by a boathook, and then there will be an inquest, and a verdict of found drowned, with a statement that the body was in too advanced a state of decomposition to be identified. Ha!”

Todd actually rubbed his hands together, and then he took a good drop of brandy, and felt himself quite a pleasant sort of character, and one upon whom the fickle goddess, Fortune, had taken to smiling in her most bland and pleasant way.

“When I am snug and comfortable at Hamburg,” he said, “how eagerly I shall look for the London papers, to let me know how far the fire in Fleet Street, that is to happen tonight, has extended. How I shall laugh if it travel to the old church, and burns that down likewise. Ha! I think I shall take to laughing as a regular thing when I am fairly abroad with all my money, and safe — so safe as I shall be, so very — very safe.”

Yes, there sat Sweeney Todd rejoicing. He might have said with Romeo in Mantua —

“My bosom’s lord sits lightly in his throne,
And all this day an unaccustomed spirit
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.”

But as it was with the young husband of the sainted Juliet, the day of reckoning was coming to Todd, and the spirit that spoke of comfort, joy, and security to his heart and brain, was after all a false one.

But we must leave Todd to his self-felicitations, while we request the reader’s kind company to Bell Yard, for certain things had taken place in the establishment of Mrs. Lovett which it is highly necessary should find a place in this veracious and carefully collected narrative.

When Mrs. Lovett, with a full notion of the projected perfidy of Todd, left home for the purpose of bringing that individual to a sense of his wrong doings, and insisting upon a settlement, she did not awaken popular remark or popular interest by shutting up her shop, but she took such measures as she believed would last very well until she got back again.

She was not sanguine upon the subject of getting back very soon, for she had made up her mind that back she would not come without the money.

Previously, then, to leaving, she sought the narrow opening in the strong iron door through which she was accustomed to speak to the discontented cook, and fastening a bottle of wine by the neck to a piece of cord, she let it down into the prison-house of pie manufactory, saying as she did so —

“I keep my word with you. Here is wine. I trust that you will keep your word with me. A batch is wanted at twelve today, as you know.”

“Very well,” said the cook. “Very well. They shall be ready. But you promised me freedom, Mrs. Lovett.”

“I did, and freedom you shall have shortly. All you have to do now is to attend to business for a little while. When I ring at twelve, send up the batch.”

“I will — I will. But yet — ”

“What is it now?”

“If you only could fancy, Mrs. Lovett, what it was to pass one’s time in this place, you would have some feeling for me. Will you send or bring me some real butcher’s meat?”

Bang went the wicket door, and the cook found himself once again shut out from the world in those dismal vaults of Mrs. Lovett’s house.

“Twelve o’clock,” muttered Mrs. Lovett, as she proceeded to her parlour. “I shall surely be home by twelve. Todd will find out that I am too persevering for him. His fears will force him to pay me, although his justice never would. I will threaten him into payment. The odious villain! to attempt yet to deprive me of all that I have toiled for, with the exception of what of late I have had the prudence to keep in the house!”

The next thing that Mrs. Lovett had to do was to get someone to effectually mind the shop in her absence, and for that purpose she pitched upon a Mrs. Stag, a tall, gaunt looking female, who acted as a kind of supernumerary laundress in Lincoln’s Inn. With this person Mrs. Lovett felt that she need have no delicacy as regards locking up and so forth; and as Mrs. Stag laboured under a defect of hearing, she would not be likely to pay any attention to what might take place below; but still Mrs. Lovett was determined to leave nothing to

chance, and she left Mrs. Stag a note which was to go down on the movable platform to the cook in case she, Mrs. Lovett, was not at home at the twelve o'clock batch. This note contained the following words, which, as Mrs. Stag's parents and guardians had omitted to include reading in her education, were perfectly safe from her scrutiny —

"Send up the four o'clock batch, and you will be free within twenty four hours from then."

This she concluded would keep him quiet; and within twenty four hours Mrs. Lovett felt that her affairs must be settled in some way or another; so that it was a very safe promise, even if she had not still retained in her own hands the means of breaking it if there should be occasion so to do.

Truly, Mrs. Lovett was, in the full acceptation of the term, a woman of business.

Mrs. Stag was sure to look in the first thing in the morning upon Mrs. Lovett; so that as soon as that useful and submissive personage made her appearance in Bell Yard, she was duly installed in authority in the shop — the parlour being properly fastened up against Mrs. Stag and all intruders.

"You will be so good as to sit here until I come back, Mrs. Stag?" said Mrs. Lovett; "and sell as many pies as you can. I am going to the christening of a friend's child, who is anxious that I should be its godmother."

What a delightful godmother Mrs. Lovett would have made!

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Stag.

"I think I shall be back at twelve o'clock; but if I am not, you can let this note go down with the empty tray on the trapdoor after you have slid off it the twelve o'clock batch of pies."

"Yes, ma'am."

"You will answer no questions to any one. All you have to say is, that I am out in the neighbourhood, and may come home at any minute, as indeed I may. I shall, of course, pay you, Mrs. Stag, for your whole day. Pray help yourself to a pie or two, as you feel inclined. Good morning."

"Good mornin', ma'am, good mornin'. She's a very pleasant woman," said Mrs. Stag, after Mrs. Lovett had left; "she's a remarkably pleasant woman. What a delicious pie, to be sure!"

Mrs. Stag was deep in the mysteries of a yesterday's veal.

"It's very odd," added the laundress, as she wiped the gravy from the sides of her mouth; "it's very odd that Mrs. Lovett is so very particular in shutting up

her parlour always, when she might know what a likely thing it is that anybody may want to look at the drawers and cupboards. It's a most remarkable thing to think what she can have there that she will lock up in such a way."

Upon this, just with a faint forlorn sort of hope that the door might be left open, Mrs. Stag tried it, but it was fast; and, with a sigh of disappointment, she returned to her seat again.

In another moment a yesterday's pork yielded up its fascinations to the appetite of Mrs. Stag.

This, then, was the sort of life that Mrs. Stag passed in the shop. Lamentations and gravy — gravy and lamentations; and while she was thus occupied, the cook was pacing the cellars in rather a discontented mood, with his hands behind his back, reflecting upon things past, present, and to come, and upon his own dismal situation in particular.

"I cannot stand this," he said, "I really cannot stand this. I have had promises from Mrs. Lovett of freedom, and I have had similar promises from he who came to the grating in the door, but none of the promises have been fulfilled. I cannot stand this any longer, it is impossible. I am driven mad as it is already. I must do something. I can no longer exist in this way."

The cook looked about him, as many people are in the habit of doing when they say they must do something, without having a very clear notion of what it is to be; but as he at length fixed his eye upon that piece of machinery, far up to the roof, by which the batches of pies went up to the shop, and by which flour and butter and other matters, always excepting meat, found their way down to him, an idea took possession of him.

What that idea was will show itself in another place.