

CHAPTER CXI
Mrs. Oakley Dissembles

With trembling steps, Mrs. Oakley followed Lupin, the murderer, into his own room. Of course she was resolved to see nothing, and to make no remark that could in any way direct the attention of Lupin more closely to her, and, oh, how she panted for some opportunity of rushing into the street and crying aloud to the passers by, that the pious hypocrite was a murderer. But as yet she felt that her life depended upon the manner in which she played her part.

"Truly, sister Oakley," said Lupin, "I hope you passed a quiet and peaceful night. Amen!"

"Very," replied Mrs. Oakley.

"Ah, I wish I could say as much, sister Oakley."

"And can you not?"

"Alas! No, I had some dreams — some very bad dreams; but Satan always will be doing something, you know, sister. Do you know I dreamt of a murder!"

As he uttered these words, no Grand Inquisitor could have looked more keenly into the eyes of a victim, than did Mr. Lupin into the face of Mrs. Oakley; but she divined his motive, she felt that he was trying her, but she had even in such a moment sufficient presence of mind to keep her eyes steadily upon his face, and to say with seeming unconcern —

"Murder, did you say, Mr. Lupin?"

"Yes, I did say murder, and you —". He pointed at her with his finger, but finding that she only looked surprised, rather, he added — "and you are one of the elect, I rejoice to say, sister Oakley. Amen! It is a capital thing to be saved!"

"It is, indeed, Mr. Lupin."

"Well — well. Let us have the carnal meal, called breakfast. I will proceed, God willing, to the corner of the court, and purchase two eggs, Mrs. Oakley, if it be pleasing to you."

"Anything you like, Mr. Lupin; I have but a poor appetite in the morning, always."

Mr. Lupin put on his hat, and after slowly turning round and casting an anxious glance upon the room and every object within, to assure himself that he had left no evidences of his crime behind him, he slowly left to get the eggs.

Mrs. Oakley heard him descend the stairs, and she heard the door close behind him. Then she asked herself if that were really and truly an opportunity of escape that she dared attempt to avail herself of, or if it were only one in seeming, and that if she were upon its provocation to attempt to leave the place, she would only be confirming the slight suspicions that might be in the mind of Lupin, concerning her privity to his deed of blood.

He had talked of only going to the corner of the court, and how did she know that he had even gone so far? Might not the message about the eggs be merely a pretended one, to see what she would do? This was a consideration that kept her, tremblingly, where she was.

About five minutes elapsed, and then she heard a knock at the door below. Who could that be? Mr. Lupin had a key with which he always let himself in, so it could not be he. What was she to think? What was she to do? Suddenly then she heard the door opened, and then after a few moments delay some footstep sounded upon the stairs, but it was very unlike that of Lupin, the murderer.

The delightful thought came over the imagination of Mrs. Oakley, that some one was coming to whom she might at once make an avowal of all she knew of Lupin's guilt, and who might be able to protect her from the vengeance of the murderer. She rose, and peeped through the keyhole.

She saw Lupin coming up the stairs. He was making quite a laborious effort to tread differently to what was usual with him, and from that moment Mrs. Oakley felt that she was to be subjected to some extraordinary trial of her self-possession. She crept back to her seat, and waited in terror.

In the course of a few moments, Lupin, after treading with a heavy thump upon every stair, instead of gliding up in his usual manner, reaching the door at which he tapped, and then in an assumed voice, which if she, Mrs. Oakley, had not known he was there, would have deceived her, he said —

"Hilloa! Who's at home?"

"Who's there?" said Mrs. Oakley.

"It's John Smith," cried Lupin. "I am an officer of the police. Has anybody anything to say to me here? They tell me in the court that some odd noises were heard in the night."

"I don't know anything about it," said Mrs. Oakley, "but if you will come in and wait until Mr. Lupin comes in, he may like to see you."

"Oh, no, no, no! It's no matter. Good morning, ma'am."

Down stairs went Lupin, thinking he had acted the officer to perfection, and making no doubt in the world but that he had thoroughly deceived Mrs. Oakley, who he was now quite satisfied knew absolutely nothing about the murder.

In the course of a couple of minutes, Mr. Lupin in his own character came gliding in.

"I am afraid I have kept you waiting, sister Oakley."

"Oh, not at all, but there has been a man there who says his name is Smith, and he — "

"I met him! I met him! It is all right. He heard something going on in the next house, I suppose, and mistook it for this. Pray cook the eggs to your liking, sister Oakley, and help yourself to anything. Don't be particular, sister Oakley, but make yourself at home."

"I will, reverend sir, I will."

Mrs. Oakley was really playing her part very well, but she fancied each moment that the murderer would see something in her manner to give him a suspicion that she knew too much for his safety.

She was wrong though, for upon the contrary, Mr. Lupin felt quite satisfied that the secret of his guilt was confined to his own breast.

"I pray you, sister Oakley," he said, "to eat freely of my humble fare, and after breakfast we will have a prayer."

It seemed to Mrs. Oakley, now that she had awakened to a sense of the awful hypocrisy of Mr. Lupin, something very horrible for him to talk of having a prayer; but she took care not to show what she felt in that particular.

"How kind and good of you," she said.

"Ay, truly, sister Oakley, I am kind and good, and yet there are envious folks in the world, who I dare say would not hesitate to give even me a bad name."

"Impossible, surely."

"I would it were, I would it were, my dear sister Oakley, I would it were impossible."

"It seems to me, reverend sir, as though it would not be in the power of poor human nature to praise you too much; but it is time that I should think of going home now, if you please."

"Well, sister, if you must go home among the heathens and the Philistines, I will not hinder you; but with the hope of seeing you soon again, I will now offer up a prayer."

It was truly sickening even to Mrs. Oakley, whose feelings the reader will think could not be very fine, to see such an arch hypocrite offering up a prayer to that Deity whom he must so bitterly have offended by his awful crimes.

But Mr. Lupin cut the prayer tolerably short, and then giving to Mrs. Oakley what he called the kiss of peace, and to which, loathsome as it was from him, she felt herself forced to submit, he bade her good day.

And now, indeed, she began to entertain a sanguine hope, that she would be released from his company, and she should soon be in a condition to denounce him to justice for the awful crime which she had seen him commit. She could not possibly avoid a slight feeling of satisfaction to appear upon her face.

"You seem pleased," said Lupin.

"I am, reverend sir."

"May I ask what at?"

"Ah, how can I be otherwise than delighted, when I am assured by such a saint upon earth as yourself that I am one of the elect?"

This was an answer with which, whether it was satisfactory or not, Mr. Lupin was, as it were, compelled to put up with; but taking up his hat, he said —

"Truly, sister Oakley, it will become me to see you a part of the way home."

Mrs. Oakley expressed her satisfaction with the holy man's company, and they both descended the stairs together. She felt, however, an exquisite pang of alarm upon finding that Lupin led her down the staircase that led to the chapel, and not down the one which would have conducted them to the ordinary door of exit from the domestic portion of the building.

But even with all the dread upon her soul that he might be meditating some awful act in the chapel, she felt that she must assume a calmness though she felt it not.

"Why this leads to the chapel," she said. She thought it would sound more natural for her to make that remark, than to say nothing about it.

"Yes, sister it does, and here is the trapdoor that conducts to the vaults."

He suddenly turned upon her, and clutched her by the arm, as he spoke. Poor Mrs. Oakley then really thought that her last hour was come, and that all along in pretending to have no suspicion of her, he was only dissembling. It was a mercy she did not at that terrible moment commit herself in some way. Surely Heaven supported her, for she did not.

"Reverend sir," she said, "what mean you?"

“What mean I? I mean will you descend to the vaults with me.”

“And pray? Yes, if you wish it.”

“Nothing — nothing,” muttered Lupin. “What a fool I am. I might have been well convinced long ago, and yet I cannot forbear new trials. All is safe, all is safe. This way, sister Oakley, this way. I will only see you to the corner of your own street.”

“Many thanks.”

They both emerged from the chapel. Lupin slammed the door after him, and arm in arm they walked up the court together.

Poor Mrs. Oakley felt that to be the most trying moment of all for her nerves. While she had much to do — while she was alone with Lupin in the domestic portion of the chapel, and while she knew that the least slip of the tongue, or the least want of control over her feelings might be her death — she conducted herself gallantly; but now when she was fairly in the open air, now that she was in comparative safety, her feelings almost got the better of her.

It was only by a powerful effort that she could at all control them.

She felt that by suddenly quitting the arm of Lupin, and making a rush for it, she might escape him, but then she did not want him to escape the consequences of his crime, for Mrs. Oakley had a woman’s sympathy with the fate even of the not very respectable Mrs. Lupin. Besides, with all the vindictive hate that he might be supposed to feel upon finding that his guilt was known, he might yet pursue her, and before she could find aid, kill her.

“I must still dissemble,” she thought, “and speak this most monstrous villain fairly.”

“Quite a charming morning, reverend sir,” she said.

“Very,” said Lupin.

“I really am afraid that I am sadly intruding upon your time, by letting you come with me?”

“Oh, no — no — no.”

He seemed to be getting very thoughtful, and Mrs. Oakley was proportionably more and more upon her guard, for she felt convinced that if he really thought she knew anything of his guilt he would kill her.

Now they emerged from the court; but it was yet rather an early hour in the morning, and but very few passengers were in the streets. The only person that

was tolerably close to them was an elderly woman, and Mrs. Oakley much as she panted for an opportunity of separating herself from Lupin, felt that the time to do so had not yet come.

On they went, in the direction of Mrs. Oakley's house, that house that she now began to feel she had so much neglected, to look after what, in the language of scripture, might truly have been termed "Strange Idols" — that home which she now looked to as a haven of safety from the terror of death itself.

"How silent you are, sister," said Lupin.

"Yes, I was thinking."

"Of what?" he said, fiercely.

"Of how much I should be able to take from Mr. Oakley's till, to bring to you, this day week."

"Oh! Oh!"

"You may depend, reverend sir, it shall be as much as possible. Of course I must be cautious, though."

"Oh, yes — yes."

They had now reached within a few paces of the corner of the street, and yet Mrs. Oakley had seen no one upon whom, from their appearance, she thought she could rely to call to for aid against the murderer. Suddenly then round the corner, there came a bulky form. The heavy tread of some one of unusual weight sounded upon the street pavement.

Big Ben, the beefeater, with his arms behind him, and in a very thoughtful mood, came pacing slowly along.

As Mrs. Oakley said afterwards, her heart, at that moment, was in her mouth.

She could not dissemble an instant longer with Lupin, but with a loud shriek that echoed far and wide in the streets, she suddenly sprang from him, crying —

"Ben, Ben, dear strong Ben, seize this man! He is a murderer!"

"Damn! Done at last!" cried Lupin.

He turned to fly, but treading upon a piece of cabbage leaf that was upon the pavement, down he fell.

"Easy does it" said Ben, and he flung himself upon the top of Lupin, spreading out his arms and legs, and holding him by sheer weight as firmly to the pavement as though he had been nailed there.

“Help, help, help! Murder! Help!” shouted Mrs. Oakley. “Murder, murder, murder!”

People began to flock to them from all parts. Lupin succeeded in getting a knife from his pocket, but Mrs. Oakley held him by the wrist with both hands, and in a minute more he was in the grasp of two strong men, one of whom was a police officer, and who gloried in the job.

CHAPTER CXII

Returns to Mrs. Lovett and how she got out of the River

Our readers have been aware for a long time past that Mrs. Lovett was no common, everyday, sort of woman, and what we are about to relate concerning her, will be further proof that way tending, if it should be by any sceptical person in any way required.

To all appearance, Todd had seen the last of her on the river. But Todd was born to be deceived, and at the time he should have recollected an old adage, to the effect that, folks who are born to be hanged are very seldom drowned.

We shall see.

Mrs. Lovett did go down, but as fortune and the amazingly strong current of the river would have it, she came up again, with a barge between her and Todd, and involuntarily laying hold of the side of the barge, there she remained, too exhausted to cry out, until Todd was far off.

She was seen at last by a man who was at the window of a public house, and in the course of ten minutes after Todd had began to congratulate himself upon the demise of Mrs. Lovett, she was in a warm bed at the public house, and her clothes drying at the kitchen fire.

She had scarcely been for a moment at all insensible; and as she lay in bed she had a most accurate perception of all that happened. The reader may suppose that the feelings of Mrs. Lovett towards Sweeney Todd, were by no means ameliorated by the morning's proceedings.

And yet how calculating she was in her rage!

As the effects of her submersion wore off, and her ordinary strength came back to her, her mind became intently fixed upon but one object, and that was how to be completely and bitterly revenged upon Todd.

"He shall hang," she said. "He shall hang, but I must think of the means, while I likewise take care to avoid the gallows myself; but he shall hang, let the consequences be what they may."

The landlady of the public house was very assiduous in her attention to Mrs. Lovett, and while she was thus thinking of her revenge upon Todd, she (the landlady) made her appearance in the room with a steaming glass of mulled and spiced wine.

"I hope you are better," she said; "and if you will give me the name and address of your friends, I will send to them at once."

"Friends!" said Mrs. Lovett. "How came you to think that I had any friends?"

“Well, I hardly thought you were without. Don’t most folks have friends of some sort or another?”

“Ah, I had forgotten. I have a friend with me — a very dear friend, who will not forsake me. I have more of them at home — for I have a home.”

“Oh,” thought the landlady, “she is raving.”

“Bring me my stays,” said Mrs. Lovett.

The stays, which, together with the rest of her apparel, now had got quite dry, was brought to her, and in a little secret pocket in them, Mrs. Lovett dived with her two fingers, and found a damp five pound note.

“Take that,” she said, “for your trouble. I do not want any change. Only be so good now as to help me to dress, and tell me what the time is.”

“Three o’clock,” said the landlady, “and I’m sure you can’t think how pleased I am that you are better. Do you really think you are strong enough to go home yet?”

“Yes. What I have to do at home will lend me strength, if I wanted it.”

Mrs. Lovett was soon dressed, and at her request a coach was sent for; and in the course of half an hour from the time that the landlady had asked her if she should send for her friends, she, Mrs. Lovett, was bowling along the dense thoroughfares of the city to her home.

What pen could describe the dark and malignant thoughts that filled her brain as she proceeded? What language would be strong enough to depict the storm of passion that raged in the bosom of that imperious woman?

It must suffice, that she made herself a solemn promise of vengeance against Todd, let the risk or the actual consequences to herself be what they might. If with perfect safety to herself she could be revenged upon him — of course she would; but she resolved not to hesitate, even if it involved a self-sacrifice, so full of the very agony of rage was she.

“He shall hang — he shall hang!”

Such were the words she uttered as the lumbering hackney coach reached Fleet Street.

For all she knew to the contrary, Todd might be looking from his door, for that he had gone home in great triumph at the thought of having got rid of her she did not doubt; and so as it was just then a great object with her to keep him in that pleasant delusion, she got quite down among the straw at the bottom of the hackney coach.

But she kept her eyes — those bright metallic looking eyes, which, with a questionable taste, had been so much admired by the lawyers' clerks of the Temple and Lincoln's Inn — she kept her eyes just on the edge of the coach window, so that she might have a passing glance at Todd's shop.

Todd was at the door.

How pleased and self-satisfied he looked! He was rubbing his huge hands slowly together, and a grim smile was on his horrible features.

Mrs. Lovett clinched her hands until her nails made marks in the palms of them that did not come out for hours, and in a harsh growling voice, she said —

“Ah, grin on, grin on, fiend — your hours from now shall be numbered. You shall hang, hang, and I shall hope to see you in your last agony. If any bribe can induce the hangman, by some common bungling to protract your pain, he has but to name his price and he shall have it.”

The coach rolled on.

Mrs. Lovett rose up from among the straw with a shudder. The immersion in the river had not drowned her certainly, but it had done her no good; and she could not conceal from herself, that a serious illness might very probably result from her unexpected cold bath.

“Never mind!” she said. “Never mind! What care I so that I complete my revenge against Todd? If I die after that it will not much matter. I will have my revenge.”

The coach stopped at the corner of Bell Yard.

“That will do,” said Mrs. Lovett as she pulled the check string. “That will do. I will alight here.”

She paid the coachman double the amount of his fare, so he only muttered a few curses between his teeth, and drove off.

With quite a staggering step, for Mrs. Lovett was anything but well, she walked to her own shop. The door was closed, and she looked through the upper half of it which was of glass, just in time to see the highly trustworthy personage whom she had left in charge of the concern, place a bottle to her lips, and slowly lift it up.

Mrs. Lovett opened the door, just as the titillating contents of the bottle were rippling over the palate of the lady, who had had such an adventure with Todd.

“Wretch!” exclaimed Mrs. Lovett.

Down fell the bottle, and smashed into many fragments on the floor of the shop. An unmistakable odour of gin filled the air.

“So,” cried Mrs. Lovett, “this is the way you employ your time is it, while I am away?”



Mrs. Lovett Finds Somebody out — at Home.

“T — T — Todd,” stuttered the woman, “T — T — Todd is such a nice man.”

“Todd, do you say?”

“Yes — I — I say — T — Todd is a nice man.”

“Answer me, wretch, instantly. Has he been here? Speak, or I will shake your wretched life out of you.”

Mrs. Lovett suited the action to the word, and the word to the action, for she clutched her substitute by the throat, and shook her vehemently.

“D — D — Don’t Mrs. L. — I — will — tell all — all. I will indeed.”

“Speak then. Has Todd been here?”

“In course, and quite a nice man — I — I may say — quite a gin — I mean a nice man — a cordial old Tom. No! Cream of the — Todd.”

“Wretch!”

Mrs. Lovett paced the shop for a few moments in an agony of rage. Todd presuming upon her death had actually been there, no doubt upon an expedition to ransack the place. A touch to the lock of the parlour door, told her

at once that it was open, and from that moment she no longer could doubt but that the whole house had been subject to the scrutiny of Sweeney Todd.

“The wretch!” she said. “He thought to find enough no doubt to reward his pains, but he has been deceived in that hope, I feel well assured. What I have here, I have too well hidden for any search of a few hours to find it. If they were to pull the house to pieces, brick by brick and timber by timber, they might find something to pay them for their labour.”

The lady with the partiality for gin, now seemed to be lapsing into a state of somnolency, but Mrs. Lovett gave her rather a rough shake.

“Tell me,” she said, “when did this man come, and what did he say to you?”

“Gin!”

“I ask you what Todd said to you?”

“Oh, yes. I — really — fine times. Old Tom Todd — cream of the Todd.”

It was quite clear that she was too far gone in drunkenness for anything distinct or to be relied upon to be got from her, and the only thing Mrs. Lovett had to do, was to consider what to do with her. If she threw her out of the shop into the court, the probability was, that a crowd would collect round her, and that was just what Mrs. Lovett did not want. Indeed, for all she, Mrs. Lovett knew, the drunken woman might stagger round to Todd’s, and let him know what of all things, she wished to keep secret from him, namely, that she had returned.

Mrs. Lovett had not yet formed her plans, and certainly until she had done so, she did not want any premature knowledge of her rescue from drowning to reach the ears of Todd.

But what to do with the drunken woman was the question. Mrs. Lovett had to think a little over that. At length, however, she made up her mind, and approaching the lady who had such a partiality for Old Tom, she said —

“Did you ever taste my cordial spirit, that I have up stairs in my bedroom?”

“Eh?”

“Come, I will give you a bottle of it, if you will walk up stairs. Only try.”

By the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, the gin heroine rose and tottered to the staircase; Mrs. Lovett pushed her on, and stair by stair she managed to mount to the first floor. It was by far too great a job to get her any further, so opening the door of the backroom, Mrs. Lovett pushed her in with violence, and slammed the door upon her.

“Lie there and rot,” she said, “so that you are out of my way. Lie there and rot, idiot.”

Without then pausing to cast another thought or look at her victim, Mrs. Lovett walked down the staircase again to the shop.

When there, she felt a kind of faintness come over her, and she was compelled to sit down for a few minutes to recover herself.

“How much I have to think of,” she said, when she had a little recovered. “How much I have to think of, and how little a time in which to think. Something must be done before midnight. Todd will fly if I do not do something.”

A racking pain in her head, compelled her to rest it upon her hands.

“If I thought,” she said, “that I should get very ill — if I thought that there was any chance that I should die, I would go at once to the police office and denounce him. But no — ’tis only a passing pang, and I shall soon be better — shall soon be myself again.”

She did not speak now for some few moments, and during that time she rocked to and fro, for the pain in her head was excessive. It did not last, however, but gradually went off, leaving only a sensation of dullness behind it, with some amount of confusion.

Then Mrs. Lovett, as well as she was able, set about thinking calmly and dispassionately, as she hoped, about the best means of satisfying her revenge against Todd. That that revenge should be complete and ample, she was resolved.

Gradually she began to work out a plan of operations, and as she did so, her eyes brightened, and something of her old expression of bold confidence came back to her.

She rose and paced the shop.

“Yes, the villain shall die,” she said, “by the hands of the executioner — I swear it! And he shall know, too, that it is I who have doomed him to such a death. He shall feel that, had he kept faith with we all would have been well; but now he shall hang — hang! — and I shall look on and see his torments!”

CHAPTER CXIII
Johanna has Plenty of Company at Todd's

We return to Johanna, whom for a few hours, owing to the pressure of other circumstances, we have been compelled, with all manner of reluctance, to neglect.

Recent events, although they had by no manner of means tended to decrease the just confidence which Johanna had in her own safety, had yet much agitated her; and she at times feared that she should not be able to carry on the farce of composure before Todd much longer.

"Charley, my dear boy," said Todd, "you are a very good lad, indeed, and I like you."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, sir — very glad."

"That is right; but when I say I like anyone, I do not confine myself to that mere expression of liking, and there an end. Of course, as a religious man, I love my enemies, and feel myself bound to do so — eh, Charley?"

"Of course, sir."

Poor Johanna had no resource but to seem to be deceived by this most disgusting hypocrisy.

"But although," continued Todd, waving a razor in the air; "although I may love my enemies, I need not to go out of my way, you know, Charley, to do good things to them as I would to my friends; but you I will do all I can for; and as it may very materially help you to get an honest independence in the course of a little time, I will manage to accommodate you with sleeping here tonight and all nights henceforth."

"How kind of you, sir!"

"I am glad you appreciate it, Charley; and I feel quite sure that your slumber will be most profound."

Todd, upon this, made one of his diabolical faces, and then, taking his hat, he marched out, merely adding as he crossed the threshold of the door —

"I shall not be long gone, Charley."

The day was on the decline, and a strong impression came over Johanna's mind that something in particular would happen before it wholly passed away into darkness. She almost trembled to think what that something could be, and that she might be compelled to be a witness to violence, from which her gentle spirit revolted; and had it not been that she had determined nothing should

stop her from investigating the fate of poor Mark Ingestrie, she could even then have rushed into the street in despair.

But as the soft daylight deepened into the dim shadows of evening, she grew more composed, and was better able, with a calmer spirit, to wait the progress of events.

"I am alone once more," said Johanna, "in this dreadful place. Again he leaves me with all my dark and terrible thoughts of the fate of him whom I have so fondly loved thronging around my heart; and this night, no doubt, he thinks to kill me! Oh, Mark Ingestrie! If I were only but quite sure that you had gone to that world from whence there is no return, I think I could, with scarce a sigh, let this dreadful man send me after you!"

Johanna rested her head upon her hands, and wept bitterly.

Suddenly a voice close to her said —

"St. Dunstan."

She sprang from the little low seat upon which she was, and, with a cry of alarm, was about to make a rush from the shop, when the intruder caught her by the arm, saying —

"Don't you know me, Johanna?"

"Ah, Sir Richard! My dear friend, it is, indeed, you, and I am safe again — I am safe!"

"Certainly you are safe; and permit me to say that you have all along been tolerably safe, Johanna. But how very incautious you are. Here I have come into the shop, and actually stood by you for some few moments, you knowing nothing of it! What now if Todd had so come in?"

"He would have killed me."

"He might have done so. But now all danger is quite over, for you will have protectors at your hand. Do you know where Todd has gone?"

"I do not."

"Well, it don't matter. Let me look at this largest cupboard. I wonder if it will hold two of my men? Let me see. Oh, yes, easily and comfortably. I will be back in a moment."

He went no further than the door, and when he came back, he brought with him Mr. Crotchet and another person, and pointing to the cupboard, he said —

“You will stow yourselves there, if you please, and keep quiet until I call upon you to come out.”

“I believe you” said Crotchet. “Lord bless you, we shall be snug enough. How is you, Miss O.? I suppose by this time you feels quite at home in your breech — ”

“Silence!” said Sir Richard. “Go to your duty at once, Crotchet. Miss Oakley is in no humour to attend to you just now.”

Upon this, Mr. Crotchet and the other man got into the cupboard, and a chair was placed against it; and then Sir Richard said to Johanna —

“I will come in to be shaved when I know that Todd is here, and your trials will soon be over.”

“To be shaved? — By him?”

“Yes. But believe me there is no danger. Any one may come here now to be shaved with perfect safety. I have made such arrangements that Todd cannot take another life.”

“Thank Heaven!”

“Here is a letter from your friend, Miss Wilmot, which I promised her I would deliver to you. Be careful how you let Todd see it. Read it at once, and then you had better destroy it at once. I must go now; but, of course, if you should be in any danger, call upon my men in the cupboard to assist you, and they will do so at once, although it may spoil my plot a little.”

“Oh! How much I owe you.”

“Nay, nay, no more upon that head. Farewell now, for a brief space. We shall very soon meet again. Keep a fair and agreeable face to Todd, if you can, for I do not wish, if it can possibly be helped, anything to mar the plot I have got up for his absolute conviction upon abundant testimony.”

Sir Richard shook hands with Johanna, and then hastily left the shop, for he did not wish just then to be found there by Todd, who might return at any moment.

The moment he was gone Johanna eagerly opened the letter that had been brought to her, and found it to contain the following words: —

“MY DEAR JOHANNA, — this is a selfish letter; for as I cannot see you, I think I should go mad if I did not write to you; so I do so for the ease of my own heart and brain. For the love of Heaven, and for the love of all you hold dear in this world, get away from Todd as quickly as you can; and when I see you again,

I shall have something to say to you which will give you more pleasure than ever, with my bad advice, I have given you pain.

“Sir Richard Blunt has kindly promised to give this to you, and you know that I am — Your ever affectionate

ARABELLA.”

“Yes,” said Johanna, when she had finished the epistle. “In truth I know you are ever my affectionate Arabella, and I am most happy in such a friend. But this must not meet Todd’s eye. Ah! That footstep, I know it too well. He comes — he comes.”

She had just hidden the letter, when Sweeney Todd made his appearance.

“Anybody been?” he asked.

“Yes, one man, but he would not wait.”

“Ah, wanted to be shaved, I suppose; but no matter — no matter; and I hope you have been quiet, and not been attempting to indulge your curiosity in any way, since I have been gone. Hush! Here’s somebody coming. Why, it’s old Mr. Wrangle, the tobacconist, I declare. Good day to you, sir — shaved, I suppose? I’m glad you have come, sir, for I have been out till this moment. Hot water, Charley, directly, and hand me that razor.”

Johanna, in handing Todd the razor, knocked the edge of it against the chair, and it being uncommonly sharp, cut a great slice of the wood off one of the arms of it.

“What shameful carelessness,” said Todd; “I have half a mind to lay the strop over your back, sir; here you have spoilt a capital razor — not a bit of edge left upon it.”

“Oh, excuse him, Mr. Todd — excuse him,” said the old gentleman; “he’s only a little lad, after all. Let me intercede for him.”

“Very good, sir; if you wish me to look over it, of course I will; and, thank God, we have a stock of razors, of course, always at hand. Is there any news stirring, sir?”

“Nothing that I know of, Mr. Todd, except it’s the illness of Mr. Cummings, the overseer. They say he got home about twelve to his own house, in Chancery Lane, and ever since then he has been as sick as a dog, and all they can get him to say is, ‘Oh, those pies — oh, those pies!’ ”

“Very odd, sir.”

“Very. I think Mr. Cummings must be touched in the upper story, do you know, Mr. Todd. He’s a very respectable man, but, between you and I, was never over bright.”

“Certainly not, sir — certainly not. But it’s a very odd case. What pies can he possibly mean, sir? Did you call when you came from home?”

“No. Ha, ha! I can’t help laughing; but, ha, ha! I have come away from home on the sly, you see. The fact is, my wife’s cousin — hilloa! — I think you have cut me.”

“No, no — we can’t cut anybody for three-halfpence, sir. I think I will just give you another lather, sir, before I polish you off. And so you have the pearls with you; well, how odd things come round, to be sure.”

“What do you mean?”

“This shaving brush is just in a good state now. Always as a shaving brush is on the point of wearing out, it’s the best. Charley, you will go at once to Mr. Cummings, and ask if he is any better; you need not hurry, that’s a good lad. I am not at all angry with you now. And so, sir, they think at home that you have gone after some business over the water, do they, and have not the least idea that you have come to be shaved? There, be off, Charley — shut the door, that’s a good lad, bless you.”

* * * * *

When Johanna came back, the tobacconist was gone.

“Well,” said Sweeney Todd, as he sharpened a razor very leisurely, “how is Mr. Cummings?”

“I found out his house, sir, with some difficulty, and they say he is better having gone to sleep.”

“Oh, very good! I am going to look over some accounts in the parlour, so don’t choose to be disturbed, you understand; and for the next ten minutes, if anybody comes, you will say I am out.”

Sweeney Todd walked quite coolly into the parlour, and Johanna heard him lock the door on the inside; a strange, undefined sensation of terror crept over her, she knew not why, and she shuddered, as she looked around her. The cupboard door was not close shut, and she knew not what prompted her to approach and peep in. On the first shelf was the hat of the tobacconist: it was rather a remarkable one, and recognised in a moment.

“What has happened? Good God! What can have happened?” thought Johanna, as she staggered back, until she reached the shaving chair, into which she cast herself for support. Her eyes fell upon the arm which she had taken

such a shaving off with the razor, but all was perfectly whole and correct; there was not the least mark of the cut that so recently had been given to it; and lost in wonder, Johanna, for more than a minute, continued looking for the mark of the injury she knew could not have been, by any possibility, effaced.

And yet she found it not, although there was the chair, just as usual, with its wide spreading arms and its worn, tarnished paint and gilding. No wonder that Johanna rubbed her eyes, and asked herself if she were really awake?

What could account for such a phenomenon? The chair was a fixture too, and the others in the shop were of a widely different make and construction, so it could not have been changed.

“Alas! Alas!” mourned Johanna, “My mind is full of horrible surmises, and yet I can form no rational conjecture. I suspect everything, and know nothing. What can I do? What ought I to do, to relieve myself from this state of horrible suspense? Am I really in a place where, by some frightful ingenuity, murder has become bold and familiar, or can it be all a delusion?”

She covered her face with her hands for a time, and when she uncovered them, she saw that Sweeney Todd was staring at her with looks of suspicion from the inner room.

The necessity of instantly acting her part came over Johanna, and she gave a loud scream.

“What the devil is all this about?” said Todd, advancing with a sinister expression. “What’s the meaning of it? I suspect — ”

“Yes, sir,” said Johanna, “and so do I; I must tomorrow have it out.”

“Have what out?”

“My tooth, sir — it’s been aching for some hours; did you ever have the toothache? If you did, you can feel for me, and not wonder that I lean my head upon my hands and groan.”

Todd looked about half satisfied at this excuse of Johanna’s, and for a few moments as he looked at her, she thought that after all she should have to call upon her friends in the cupboard to save her from the danger that his eyes, in their flashing ghastliness, threatened. Another moment, and her lips would have parted with the shrill cry of “Murder!” upon them, and then Heaven only knows what might have been the result; but he turned suddenly, and went into the parlour, muttering to himself —

“It is not worth while now, and this night ends it all — yes, this night ends it all.”

He slammed the door violently behind him, and Johanna was relieved from the horror which his gaze had awakened, in her heart. She stood still, but gradually she recovered her former calmness — if calmness it could at all be called, seeing that it was only a stiller species of agitation.

But she now began to recall the words of Sir Richard Blunt to the effect that measures had been taken that no more murders could be committed by Todd, and she began to feel comforted.

“There is something that I do not know yet,” she said; “Sir Richard should have told me how there could be no more murders done here, and then I should not have suffered what I did, and what I still suffer with the thought that almost before my eyes a fellow creature has been hurried into eternity; and yet I ought to have faith, and in defiance of all the seeming evidences of a horrible deed about me, I ought, I suppose, to believe that it has been prevented in some most strange and miraculous way.”

The more Johanna thought over this promise of Sir Richard Blunt’s the more she became convinced that he would never have given utterance to it if he had not felt perfectly sure it would be fulfilled, and so she got comforted, and once again resolved to play her part in that dreadful drama of real life, in the vortex of which, with the purest and the holiest of motives, she had plunged recklessly, we will admit, but yet from motives entitling her to sympathy on earth, and protection in heaven.

Todd remained for a considerable time in the parlour; and when he came out, Johanna saw that he had made some alteration in his apparel. The first words he uttered were —

“Keep a good fire, Charley.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you ever see a house on fire, my boy?”

“I never did, sir.”

“Ah! It must be an amusing sight — a very amusing sight, especially if the conflagration spreads, and one has an opportunity of viewing it from the water. Talking of water, the lady who was here this morning — Mrs. Lovett — was very fond of water, and now she has got plenty of it. Ah!”

“Really, sir? Has she gone to the seaside?”

Johanna looked Todd rather hard in the face as she spoke these words, and the close observation seemed to anger him, for he spoke hastily and sharply —

“What is it to you? Get out of my way, will you? And you may begin to think of shutting up, I think, for we shall have no more customers tonight. I am tired and weary. You are to sleep under the counter, you know.”

“Yes, sir, you told me so. I daresay I shall be very comfortable there.”

“And you have not been peeping and prying about, have you?”

“Not at all.”

“Not looking even into that cupboard, I suppose, eh? It’s not locked, but that’s no reason why you should look into it — not that there is any secrets in it; but I object to peeping and prying upon principle.”

Todd, as he spoke, advanced towards the cupboard, and Johanna thought that in another moment a discovery would undoubtedly take place of the two officers who were there concealed; and probably that would have been the case, had not the handle of the shop door been turned at that moment, and a man presented himself, when Todd turned quickly, and saw that he was a substantial looking farmer, with dirty topboots, as if he had just come off a journey.

“Well, master,” said the visitor, “I wants a clean shave.”

“Oh,” said Todd, not in the best of humours, “it’s rather late; but I suppose you would not like to wait till morning, for I don’t know if I have any hot water.”

“Oh, cold will do.”

“Cold? Oh, dear no; we never shave in cold water; and if you must, you must; so sit down, sir, and we will soon settle the business.”

“Thank you, thank you. I can’t go to bed comfortable without a clean shave, do you see? I have come up from Braintree with beasts on commission, and I’m staying at the Bull’s Head, you see.”

“Oh, indeed,” said Todd, as he adjusted the shaving cloth, “the Bull’s Head.”

“Yes, master; why I brought up a matter o’ 220 beasts, I did, do you see, and was on my *pooney*, as good a stepper as you’d wish to see; and I sold ’em all, do you see, for 550 *pun*. Ho, ho! Good work that, do you see, and only forty two on ’em was my beasts, do you see; I’ve got a missus at home, and a daughter; my girl’s called Johanna — ahem!”

Up to this point Johanna had not suspected that the game had begun, and that this was no other than Sir Richard himself, most admirably disguised, who had come to put an end to the malpractices of Sweeney Todd; but his marked pronunciation of her name at once opened her eyes to that fact, and she knew that something interesting must soon happen.

“And so you sold them all?” said Todd.

“Yes, master, I did, and I’ve got the money in my pocket now, in banknotes; I never leaves my money about at inns, do you see, master; safe bind, safe find, you see; I carries it about with me.”

“A good plan, too,” said Todd; “Charley, some hot water; that’s a good lad — and — and — Charley?”

“Yes, sir.”

“While I am finishing off this gentleman, you may as well just run to the Temple to Mr. Sergeant Toldrunis and ask for his wig; we shall have to do it in the morning, and may as well have it the first thing in the day to begin upon; and you need not hurry, Charley, as we shall shut up when you come back.”

“Very good, sir.”

Johanna walked out, but went no further than the shop window, close to which she placed her eyes, so that, between a pomatum jar and a lot of hair brushes, she could clearly see what was going on.

“A nice looking little lad, that,” said Todd’s customer.

“Very, sir; an orphan boy; I took him out of charity, poor little fellow; but then, we ought to try to do all the good we can.”

“Just so; I’m glad I have come to be shaved here. Mine’s rather a strong beard, I think, do you see.”

“Why, sir, in a manner of speaking,” replied Todd, “it is a strong beard. I suppose you didn’t come to London alone, sir?”

CHAPTER CXIV
Todd's Hour has Come

The hideous face that Todd made above the head of his customer at this moment, was more like that which Mephistopheles might have made, after achieving the destruction of a human soul, than anything human. Sir Richard Blunt quickly replied to Todd's question, by saying —

"Oh, yes, quite alone; except the drovers I had no company with me; why do you ask?"

"Why, sir, I thought if you had any gentleman with you who might be waiting at the Bull's Head, you would recommend him to me if anything was wanting in my way, you know, sir; you might have just left him, saying you were going to Todd the barber's, to have a clean shave, sir."

"No, not at all; the fact is, I did not come out to have a shave, but a walk, and it wasn't till I gave my chin a stroke, and found what a beard I had, that I thought of it; and then passing your shop, in I popped, do you see."

"Exactly, sir, I comprehend; you are quite alone in London?"

"Oh, quite; but when I come again, I'll come to you to be shaved, you may depend, and I'll recommend you, too."

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Todd, as he passed his hand over the chin of his customer, "I'm very much obliged; I find I must give you another lather, sir, and I'll get another razor with a keener edge, now that I have taken off all the rough, as one may say, in a manner of speaking."

"Oh, I shall do."

"No, no, don't move, sir, I shall not detain you a moment; I have my other razors in the next room, and will polish you off now, sir, before you will know where you are; you know, sir, you have promised to recommend me, so I must do the best I can with you."

"Well, well, a clean shave is a comfort, but don't be long, for I want to get back, do you see."

"Not a moment, not a moment."

Sweeney Todd walked into his back parlour, conveying with him the only light that was in the shop, so that the dim glimpse that, up to this time, Johanna from the outside had contrived to get of what was going on, was denied to her; and all that met her eyes was impenetrable darkness.

Oh, what a world of anxious agonising sensations crossed the mind of the young and beautiful girl at that moment. She felt as if some great crisis in her history had arrived, and that she was condemned to look in vain into darkness to see of what it consisted.

We must not, however, allow the reader to remain in the same state of mystification, which came over the perceptive faculties of Johanna Oakley; but we shall proceed to state clearly and distinctly what did happen in the barber's shop while he went to get an uncommonly keen razor in his back parlour.

The moment his back was turned, the seeming farmer who had made such a good thing of his beasts, sprang from the shaving chair, as if he had been electrified; and yet he did not do it with any appearance of fright, nor did he make any noise. It was only astonishingly quick, and then he placed himself close to the window, and waited patiently with his eyes fixed upon the chair, to see what would happen next.

In the space of about a quarter of a minute, there came from the next room a sound like the rapid drawing back of a heavy bolt, and then in an instant, the shaving chair disappeared beneath the floor; and the circumstances by which Sweeney Todd's customers disappeared was evident.

There was a piece of the flooring turning upon a centre, and the weight of the chair when a bolt was withdrawn by means of simple leverage from the inner room, weighed down one end of the top, which, by a little apparatus, was to swing completely round, there being another chair on the under surface, which thus became the upper, exactly resembling the one in which the unhappy customer was supposed to be 'polished off'.

Hence was it that in one moment, as if by magic, Sweeney Todd's visitors disappeared, and there was the empty chair. No doubt, he trusted to a fall of about twenty feet below, on to a stone floor, to be the death of them, or, at all events, to stun them until he could go down to finish the murder, and — *to cut them up for Mrs. Lovett's pies!* — after robbing them of all the money and valuables they might have about them.

In another moment, the sound as of a bolt was again heard, and Sir Richard Blunt, who had played the part of the wealthy farmer, feeling that the trap was closed again, seated himself in the new chair that had made its appearance with all the nonchalance in life, as if nothing had happened.

It was a full minute before Todd ventured to look from the parlour into the darkened shop, and then he shook so that he had to hold by the door to steady himself.

"That's done," he said. "That's the last, I hope. It is time I finished; I never felt so nervous since the first time. Then I did quake a little. How quiet he went: I have sometimes had a shriek ringing in my ears for a whole week."

It was a large high-backed piece of furniture that shaving chair, so that, when Todd crept into the shop with the light in his hand, he had not the remotest idea it was tenanted; but when he got round it, and saw his customer calmly waiting with the lather upon his face, the cry of horror that came gurgling and gushing from his throat was horrible to hear.

“Why, what’s the matter,” said Sir Richard.

“O God, the dead! The dead! O God!” cried Todd, “This is the beginning of my punishment. Have mercy, Heaven! Oh, do not look upon me with those dead eyes.”

“Murderer!” shouted Sir Richard, in a voice that rung like the blast of a trumpet through the house.

In an instant he sprang upon Sweeney Todd, and grappled him by the throat. There was a short struggle, and they were down upon the floor together, but Todd’s wrists were suddenly laid hold of, and a pair of handcuffs most scientifically put upon him by the officers who, at the word “murderer”, that being a preconcerted signal, came from the cupboard where they had been concealed.

“Secure him well, my men,” said the magistrate, “and don’t let him lay violent hands upon himself.”



Sweeney Todd’s Hour has come.

Johanna rushed into the shop, and clung to the arm of Sir Richard, crying —

“Is it all over! Is it indeed all done now?”

“It is, Miss Oakley.”

The moment Todd heard these few words addressed to Charley Green as he thought him, he turned his glassy bloodshot eyes upon Johanna, and glared at her for the space of about half a minute in silence. He then, although handcuffed, made a sudden and violent effort to reach her, but he was in too experienced hands, and he was held back most effectually.

He struck his forehead with his fettered hands, making a gash in it from which the blood flowed freely, as in infuriated accents, he said —

“Oh fool — fool, to be cheated by a girl! I had my suspicions that the boy was a spy, but I never thought for one moment there was a disguise of sex. Oh, idiot! Idiot! And who are you, sir?”

“I am Sir Richard Blunt.”

Todd groaned and staggered. The officers would have let him sit down in the shaving chair for a moment or two to recover from the shock his mind had sustained by his capture, but when he found that it was the shaving chair he was led to, he shuddered, and in a wailing voice, said —

“No — no! Not there — not there! Anywhere but there. I dare not sit there!”

“It isn’t worth while sitting at all,” said Crotchet. “I’m blowed if I ain’t all crumpled up in a blessed mummy by being in that cupboard so jolly long. All my joints is agoing crinkley-crankley.”

Todd looked in the face of Sir Richard Blunt, and in a faint voice spoke —

“I — I don’t feel very well. There’s a little drop of cordial medicine that I often take in my coat pocket. You see I can’t get at it, my hands being manacled. I only want to take a drop to comfort me.”

“Get it out, Crotchet,” said Sir Richard.

“Here ye is,” said Crotchet, as he produced a little bottle, with a pale straw coloured liquid in, from Todd’s pocket.

“Give it to me. Oh, give it to me,” said Todd. “I will thank you much. It will recover me. Give it to me!”

“No, Todd,” said Sir Richard, as he took the little bottle and put it in his own pocket. “I do not intend, if I can help it, to permit you to evade the law by poisoning yourself.”

Finding himself thus defeated in his insidious attempt upon his own life, Todd got quite frantic with rage, and had a grand struggle with the officers, in his endeavours to get at some of the razors that were near at hand in the shop; but they effectually prevented him from doing so, and finally he became too much exhausted to make any further efforts.

“My curses be upon you all!” he said. “May you, and all who belong to you — ”

But we cannot transcribe the horrible denunciations of Todd. They were too horrible even for the officers to listen to with patience, and Sir Richard Blunt, turning to Johanna, said —

“Run over the way to your friends at the fruiterer’s. All is over now, and your disguise is no longer needed.”

Johanna did not pause another moment, but ran over the way, and in the course of a few moments she was in the arms of the fruiterer’s daughter, where she relieved her overcharged heart by weeping bitterly.

“Shut up the shop, Crotchet,” said Sir Richard Blunt, “and then get a coach. I will lodge this man at once in Newgate, and then we will see to Mrs. Lovett.”

At this name Todd looked up.

“She has escaped you,” he said.

“I don’t think so,” responded Sir Richard.

“But I say she has — she is dead: she fell into the Thames this morning and was drowned.”

“Oh, you allude to your pushing her into the river this morning near London-bridge?” said Sir Richard. “I saw that affair myself.”

Todd glared at him.

“But it was not of much consequence. We got her out, and she is all right again now at her shop in Bell Yard.”

Todd held his hands over his eyes for some moments, and then he said in a low voice —

“It is all a dream, or I am mad.”

Crotchet, in obedience to the orders he had received, put up the shutters of Todd’s shop, and then fetched a coach, during the whole of which time, Sir Richard Blunt himself kept his hand upon Todd’s collar, so that he could control him if he should again become so violent as he had been.

The spirit to struggle was, however, gone from Todd for the time being. Indeed, he seemed to be completely stunned by his capture, and to be able only to see things darkly. He was yet to awaken to a full consciousness of his situation, and let that awakening be when it would, it was sure to be awful.

"All's right," said Crotchet. "Here's the vehicle, and the crib is shut up."

"Crotchet!"

"Yes, your worship. What is it? Why, you never looked at a feller in that sort of way before."

"I never did have anything so important to say to you, Crotchet, nor did I ever place in your hands so important a trust. It is one that will make you or mar you, Crotchet. I have myself important business here, or I would myself take this man to Newgate. As it is, Crotchet, I wish to entrust you with that important piece of duty, and I rely upon you, Crotchet, for keeping an eye upon him, and delivering him in safety."

"It's as good as done," said Crotchet. "If he gets away from me, he has only another individual to do, and that's the old gent as is down below, with the long tail. Lor' bless you, sir, didn't I say from the first, as Todd smuggled the people as comed to him to be shaved?"

"You did, Crotchet."

"Werry good. Then does yer think as I'm the feller all for to let him go when once I've got a hold of him? Rather not!"

"I entrust you with him then, Crotchet. Take him away. I give him entirely into your hands."

Upon this, Crotchet slid his arm beneath that of Sweeney Todd, and looking in his face with a most grotesque air of satisfaction, he said, "Kim up — kim up!"

He then, by an immense exertion of strength, hoisted Todd completely over the door step, after which, catching him with both hands about the small of his back, he pitched him into the coach.

"My eye," said the coachman, "has the gemman had a drop too much?"

"He will have," said Crotchet, "some o' these odd days. To Newgate — to Newgate."

Crotchet rode inside along with Todd "for fear he should be dull" he said, and the other officer got up outside the coach, and then off it went to that dreadful building that Todd had often grimly smiled at as he passed, but into which as a resident he had never expected to enter.

Sir Richard Blunt remained in the shop of Sweeney Todd. The oil lamp that hung by a chain from the ceiling shed a tolerable light over all objects, and no sooner had the magistrate fastened the outer door after the departure of

Crotchet with Todd, than he stamped three times heavily upon the floor of the shop.

This signal was immediately answered by three distinct taps from underneath the floor, and then the magistrate stamped again in the same manner.

The effect of all this stamping and countersignals was immediately very apparent. The great chair which has played so prominent a part in the atrocities of Sweeney Todd slowly sunk, and the revolving plank hung suspended by its axle, while a voice from below called out —

“Is all right, sir?”

“Yes, Crotchet has taken him to Newgate. I am now alone. Come up.”

“We are coming, sir. We all heard a little disturbance, but the floor is very thick you know, sir. So we could not take upon ourselves to say exactly what was happening.”

“Oh, it’s all right. He resisted, but by this time he is within the stone walls of Newgate. Let me lend you a hand.”

Sir Richard Blunt stooped over the aperture in the floor, and the first person that got up was no other than Mr. Wrangle the Tobacconist.

“How do you feel after your tumble?” said Sir Richard.

“Oh, very well. The fact is they caught me so capitally below that it was quite easy. Todd did not think it worth his while to come down to see if I were alive or dead.”

“Ah, that was the only chance; but of course if he had done so he must have been taken at once into custody — that would have been all. Come on, my friends, come on. Our trouble with regard to Todd is over now, I think.”

The two churchwardens of St. Dunstan’s and the beadle, and four of Sir Richard Blunt’s officers, and the fruiterer from opposite, now came up from below the shop of Sweeney Todd, where they had been all waiting to catch Mr. Wrangle when the chair should descend with him.

“Convulsions!” said the beadle, “I runned agin everybody when I seed him acoming. I thought to myself, if a parochial authority had been served in that ’ere way, there would have been an end of the world at once.”

“I had some idea of asking you at one time to play that little part for me,” said Sir Richard.

“Convulsions! Had you, sir?”

“Yes. But now, my friends, let us make a careful search of this house; and among the first things we have to do is, to remove all the combustible materials that Todd has stowed in various parts of it, for unless I am much deceived, the premises are in such a state that the merest accident would set them in a blaze.”

“Convulsions!” then cried the beadle. “I ain’t declared out of danger yet then!”

CHAPTER CXV
Mrs. Lovett Joins her old Friend in Newgate

We hasten to Bell Yard again.

Mrs. Lovett's immersion in the Thames had really not done her much harm. Perhaps the river was a little purer than we now find it, and probably it had not entirely got rid of its name of the "Silver Thames" — an appellation that now would be really out of place, unless we can imagine some silver of a much more dingy hue than silver ordinarily presents to the eye of the observer.

She soon, we find, settled in her own mind a plan of action, notwithstanding the rather complicated and embarrassing circumstances in which she found herself placed. That plan of action had for its basis the impeachment of Todd as a murderer, at the same time that it looked forward to her own escape from the hands of justice. Her first action was to quiet the cook in the regions below, for if she did not take some such step, she was very much afraid her establishment might come to a standstill some few hours before she intended that it should do so.

With this object, she wrote upon a little slip of paper the following words, and passed it into the cellar through an almost imperceptible crevice in the flooring of the shop —

"Early tomorrow morning you shall have your liberty, together with gold to take you where you please. All I require of you is, that you do your ordinary duty tonight, and send up the nine o'clock batch of pies."

This, she considered, could not but have its due effect upon the discontented cook; and having transmitted it to him in the manner we have described, she sat down at her desk to write the impeachment of Todd. In the course of an hour, Mrs. Lovett had filled two pages of writing paper with a full account of how persons met their death in the barber's shop. She sealed the letter, and directed it to Sir Richard Blunt in a bold free hand.

"It is done," she said. "When I am far from London, as I can easily find the means of being, this will reach the hands of the magistrate to whom it is addressed, and who has the character of being sharp and active." (Mrs. Lovett did not know how sharp and active Sir Richard had already been in her affairs!) "He will act upon it. Todd, in the midst of his guilt, with many evidences of it about him, will be taken, and I shall escape! Yes, I shall escape, with about a tithe of what I ought to have — but I shall have revenge!"

On one of the shelves of the shop — certainly out of reach, but only just so — stood an old dirty looking tin jar, such as fancy biscuits might be kept in. No one for a moment would have thought of looking for anything valuable in such a place; and yet, keeping the shop door locked the while, lest any intruder

should at unawares pop in and see what she was about, it was to this tin can upon its dirty shelf that Mrs. Lovett cautiously went.

“Those who hide can find,” she muttered. “I warrant now that Todd had searched in every seemingly cunning and intricate hiding place in this whole house, and he has gone away disappointed. The secret of hiding anything is not to try to find some place where people may be baffled when they look, but to light upon some place into which they will not look at all.”

With these words, Mrs. Lovett took down the tin can, and having from the upper portion of it removed some dusty, mouldy small biscuits, she dived her hand into it, and fished up a leathern bag. The tape that held its mouth together was sealed, and a glance sufficed to convince Mrs. Lovett that it had not been touched.

“Safe, safel” she muttered. “It is but a thousand pounds, but it is safe, and it will enable me to fly from this place — it will enable me to have vengeance upon Todd; and small as the sum is, in some country, where money is worth more than it is in pampered England, I shall yet be able to live upon it. I will not complain if I have but the joy of reading an account of the execution of Todd. I fear I must deny myself the pleasure of seeing that sight.”

The little leathern bag she hid about her, and then she carefully replaced the tin case upon the shelf whence she had taken it, to disburden it of its costly contents.

After this Mrs. Lovett got much calmer. She had not the least apprehension now of a visit from Todd. She saw by the state of the house that his search had been a prolonged one, and until he shut up his own shop, she did not expect that he would again think of coming to Bell Yard, and as that would be ten o’clock, she fully believed that before then she would be far away.

And then she sat behind her counter, looking only a shade or so paler than was her wont, and moving her lips slightly now and then as she settled in her own mind the course that she would take so as to baffle all pursuit.

“With no luggage but my gold and notes,” she muttered, “I will leave this place at half past nine, by which time the last batch of pies will have been up and sold, and all will be quiet. That will be a little more money to me. Then on foot I will take my way to Highgate — yes, to Highgate, and I will trust no conveyance, for that might be a ready means of tracing me. I will go on foot. Then passing Highgate, I will go on foot upon the Great North Road until some coach overtakes me. It will not matter whither it be going, so that it takes me on that road; and by one conveyance and another, I shall at length reach Liverpool, from which port I shall find some vessel starting to some place abroad, where I can live free from the chance of detection. Yes, that is the plan! That is the plan!”

Mrs. Lovett was a woman of some tact, and the plan of operations she had chalked out was all very well, provided such very malapropos proceedings had not taken place at Sweeney Todd's in the meantime. Little did Mrs. Lovett suspect what was there transpiring.

And now we will leave her for a brief space behind her counter, ruminating, and at odd times smiling to herself in a ghastly fashion, while we pop down to the cellars, and take a glance at the impatient imprisoned cook.

About ten minutes before he received the letter — if letter the little flattering memorandum of Mrs. Lovett could be called — from his mistress, the cook had been a little alarmed by a noise in the stone pantry, where the mysterious meat used to make its appearance. Upon proceeding to the spot with a light, he found lying upon the floor a sealed paper, upon lifting which he saw was addressed to himself, and at one corner was written the following words —

“Definitive instructions for tonight from Sir Richard Blunt.”

To tear open the letter and to read it with great care, was the work of a few moments only, and then drawing a long breath, the cook said —

“Thank God! I shall not stop another night in this place. I shall be free before midnight. Oh, what an oppressive — what an overpowering joy it will be to me once more to see the sky — to breathe pure fresh air, and to feel that I have bid adieu for ever to this dreadful — dreadful place.”

The poor cook looked around him with a shudder, and then he had hardly placed the magistrate's letter securely in his bosom, when the little missive from Mrs. Lovett came fluttering to his feet, through the crack in the roof.

“’Tis well,” he said, when he had read it. “’Tis very well. This will chime in most admirably with my instructions from Sir Richard Blunt. Mrs. Lovett I thank you. You shall have the nine o'clock batch. Oh, yes, you shall have them. I am all obedience. Alas, if she whom I loved had not been false to me, I might yet, young as I am, feel the sunshine of joy in the great world again. But I can never love another, and she is lost — lost to me for ever. Ay, for ever!”

With this the poor cook, who but a few moments before had been so elated by the thoughts of freedom, sat himself down, and in quite a disconsolate manner rested his head upon his hands, and gave himself up to bitter fancy.

“That she should be false to me” he said mournfully. “It does indeed almost transcend belief. She, so young, so gentle, so innocent, and so guileless. If an angel from Heaven had come and told me as much I should have doubted still; but I cannot mistrust the evidence of my own senses. I saw her. Yes, I saw her!”

The cook rose and paced the gloomy place to and fro in the restlessness of a blighted heart, and no one to look at him could for a moment have supposed that he was near his freedom from an imprisonment of the most painful and

maddening description to one of his impatient temperament. But so it is with us all; no sooner do we to all appearance see the end of one evil, than with an activity of imagination worthy to be excited in better things, we provide ourselves with some real or unreal reason for the heartache.

"I will so contrive," said the cook, "that before I leave for ever the land of my birth, I will once more look upon her. Yes, I will once again drink in, from a contemplation of her wondrous beauty, most delicious poison; and then when I have feasted my eyes, and perchance grieved my heart, I will at once go far away, and beneath the sun of other skies than this, I will wait for death."

The more the poor cook thought of this unknown beauty of his, who surely had behaved to him very ill, or he could not have spoken of her in such terms, the more sorrow got upon his countenance, and imparted its sad sweetness to his tones. Surely the time had not been very far distant when that young man must have been in a widely different sphere of life to that limited one in which he now moved.

Suddenly, however, he was recalled to a consciousness of what he had to do, by the clock striking seven. He counted the strokes, and then pausing before one of the large ovens, he said —

"The time has now come when I must cease to be making preparations to obey the mandate of my imperious mistress. She will not now be content merely to have issued her orders, but she will keep an eye upon me to see that they are being executed, and unarmed as I am, and without the knowledge of what power of mischief she may have, I feel that it would not be safe yet to provoke her. No — no. I must seem to do her bidding."

With this, the cook set about the manufacture of the pies; and as it would really have been much more troublesome to sham making them than to make them in earnest, he really did manufacture a hundred of them.

But it was after all with a very bad grace that the poor imprisoned cook now made the pies; and probably so very indifferent a batch of those delicious pieces of pastry had never before found its way into the ovens of Mrs. Lovett. The cook was not wrong in his idea that his imperious mistress would take a peep at him before nine o'clock. At about eight, the little grating in the high-up door was tapped by something that Mrs. Lovett had in her hand, with which to attract the attention of the cook. He looked up, and saw her dimly.

"Are you busy?" she said.

"Yes, madam, as busy as the nine o'clock batch usually makes me. Do you not hear the oven?"

"I do — 'tis well."

“Ah, madam,” said the dissembling cook, “it will be well, indeed, if you keep your word with me, and set me tonight at freedom.”

“Do you doubt it?”

“I have no particular reason to doubt it, further than that the unfortunate are always inclined to doubt too good news. That is all, madam.”

“If you doubt, you will be agreeably disappointed, for I shall keep my word with you. You have done for me much better than I ever expected, and I will be grateful to you now that you are going. I have said that you shall not go without means, and you shall have a purse of twenty guineas to help you on your way wherever you wish.”

“How kind you are, madam! Ah, I shall be able now to forgive you for all that I have suffered in this place — and, after all, it has been a refuge from want.”

“It has. No one can be better pleased than I am to find you view things so reasonably. Send up the nine o’clock batch; and then wait patiently until I come to you.”

“I will.”

“Till then, good night!”

Mrs. Lovett left the grating; and as she went up to the shop, she muttered to herself —

“They will, when they find him here, suspect he is an accomplice. Well, let them hang him, for all I care. What can it matter to me?”

CHAPTER CXVI

Mrs. Lovett Finds that it is Easier to Plan than to Execute

It wants five minutes to nine, and Mrs. Lovett's shop is filling with persons anxious to devour or to carry away one or more of the nine o'clock batch of savoury, delightful, gushing gravy pies.

Many of Mrs. Lovett's customers paid her in advance for the pies, in order that they might be quite sure of getting their orders fulfilled when the first batch should make its gracious appearance from the depths below.

"Well, Jiggs," said one of the legal fraternity to another, "how are you today, old fellow? What do you bring it in?"

"Oh! I ain't very blooming. The fact is, the count and I, and a few others, made a night of it last evening; and somehow or another I don't think whisky and water, half-and-half, and tripe, go well together."

"I should wonder if they did."

"And so I've come for a pie just to settle my stomach; you see I'm rather delicate."

"Ah! You are just like me, young man, there," said an elderly personage; "I have a delicate stomach, and the slightest thing disagrees with me. A mere idea will make me quite ill."

"Will it, really?"

"Yes; and my wife, she —"

"Oh, bother your wife! It's only five minutes to nine, don't you see? What a crowd there is, to be sure. Mrs. Lovett, you charmer, I hope you have ordered enough pies to be made tonight? You see what a lot of customers you have."

"Oh, there will be plenty."

"That's right. I say, don't push so; you'll be in time, I tell you; don't be pushing and driving in that sort of way — I've got ribs."

"And so have I. Last night I didn't get a pie at all, and my old woman is in a certain condition, you see, gentlemen, and won't fancy anything but one of Lovett's veal pies; so I've come all the way from Newington to get one for —"

"Hold your row, will you? and don't push."

"For to have the child marked with a pie on its —"

“Behind there, I say; don’t be pushing a fellow as if it were half price at a theatre.”

Each moment added some newcomers to the throng, and at last any strangers who had known nothing of the attractions of Mrs. Lovett’s pie shop and had walked down Bell Yard, would have been astonished at the throng of persons there assembled — a throng that was each moment increasing in density, and becoming more and more urgent and clamorous.

* * * * *

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine! Yes, it is nine at last. It strikes by old St. Dunstan’s church clock, and in weaker strains the chronometrical machine at the pie shop echoes the sound. What excitement there is to get at the pies when they shall come! Mrs. Lovett lets down the square moveable platform that goes on pullies in the cellar; some machinery, which only requires a handle to be turned, brings up a hundred pies in a tray. These are eagerly seized by parties who have previously paid, and such a smacking of lips ensues as never was known.

Down goes the platform for the next hundred, and a gentlemanly man says —

“Let me work the handle, Mrs. Lovett, if you please; it’s too much for you I’m sure.”

“Sir, you are very kind, but I never allow anybody on this side of the counter but my own people, sir. I can turn the handle myself, sir, if you please, with the assistance of this girl. Keep your distance, sir, nobody wants your help.”

“But my dear madam, only consider your delicacy. Really you ought not to be permitted to work away like a negro slave at a winch handle. Really you ought not.”

The man who spoke thus obligingly to Mrs. Lovett, was tall and stout, and the lawyers clerks repressed the ire they otherwise would probably have given utterance to at thus finding any one quizzing their charming Mrs. Lovett.

“Sir, I tell you again that I don’t want your help; keep your distance, sir, if you please.”

“Now don’t get angry, fair one,” said the man. “You don’t know but I might have made you an offer before I left the shop.”

“Sir,” said Mrs. Lovett, drawing herself up and striking terror into the hearts of the limbs of the law. “Sir! What do you want? Say what you want, and be served, sir, and then go. Do you want a pie, sir?”

"A pie? Oh, dear no, I don't want a pie. I would not eat one of the nasty things on any account. Pah!" Here the man spat on the floor. "Oh, dear, don't ask me to eat any of your pies."

"Shame, shame," said several of the lawyers clerks.

"Will any gentleman who thinks it a shame, be so good as to step forward and say so a little closer?"

Everybody shrunk back upon this, instead of accepting the challenge, and Mrs. Lovett soon saw that she must, despite all the legal chivalry by which she was surrounded, fight her battles herself. With a look of vehement anger, she cried —

"Beware, sir, I am not to be trifled with. If you carry your jokes too far, you will wish that you had not found your way, sir, into this shop."

"That, madam," said the tall stout man, "is not surely possible, when I have the beauty of a Mrs. Lovett to gaze upon, and render the place so exquisitely attractive; but if you will not permit me to have the pleasure of helping you up with the next batch of pies, which, after all, you may find heavier than you expect, I must leave you to do it yourself."

"So that I am not troubled any longer by you, sir, at all," said Mrs. Lovett, "I don't care how heavy the next batch of pies may happen to be, sir."

"Very good, madam."

"Upon my word," said a small boy, giving the side of his face a violent rub with the hope of finding the ghost of a whisker there, "it's really too bad."

"Ah, who's that? Let me get at him!"

"Oh, no, no, I — mean — that it's too bad of Mrs. Lovett, my dear sir. Oh, don't."

"Oh, very good; I am satisfied. Now, madam, you see that even your dear friends here, from Lincoln's Inn — Are you from the Inn, small boy?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Very good. As I was saying, Mrs. Lovett, you now must of necessity perceive, that even your friends from the Inn, feel that your conduct is really too bad, madam."

Mrs. Lovett was upon this so dreadfully angry, that she disdained any reply to the tall stout man, but at once she applied herself to the windlass, which worked up the little platform, upon which a whole tray of a hundred pies was wont to come up, and began to turn it with what might be called a vengeance.

How very strange it was — surely the words of the tall stout impertinent stranger were prophetic, for never before had Mrs. Lovett found what a job it was to work that handle, as upon that night. The axle creaked, and the cords and the pullies strained and wheezed, but she was a determined woman, and she worked away at it.

“I told you so, my dear madam,” said the stranger; “it is more evidently than you can do.”

“Peace, sir.”

“I am done; work away ma’am, only don’t say afterwards that I did not offer to help you, that’s all.”

Indignation was swelling at the heart of Mrs. Lovett, but she felt that if she wasted her breath upon the impertinent stranger, she should have none for the windlass; so setting her teeth, she fagged at it with a strength and a will that if she had not been in a right royal passion, she could not have brought to bear upon it on any account.

There was quite an awful stillness in the shop. All eyes were bent upon Mrs. Lovett, and the cavity through which the next batch of those delicious pies were coming. Those who had had the good fortune to get one of the first lot, had only had their appetites heightened by the luxurious feast they had partaken of, while those who had had as yet none, actually licked their lips, and snuffed up the delightful aroma from the remains of the first batch.

“Two for me, Mrs. Lovett,” cried a voice. “One veal for me. Three porks — one pork.”

The voices grew fast and furious.

“Silence!” cried the tall stout man. “I will engage that everybody shall be fully satisfied; and no one shall leave here without a thorough conviction that his wants in pies has been more than attended to.”

The platform could be made to stop at any stage of its upward progress, by means of a ratchet wheel and a catch, and now Mrs. Lovett paused to take breath. She attributed the unusual difficulty in working the machinery to her own weakness, contingent upon her recent immersion in the Thames.

“Sir,” she said between her clenched teeth, addressing the man who was such an eyesore to her in the shop. “Sir, I don’t know who you are, but I hope to be able to show you when I have served these gentlemen, that even I am not to be insulted with impunity.”

“Anything you please, madam,” he replied, “in a small way, only don’t exert yourself too much.”

Mrs. Lovett flew to the windlass again, and from the manner in which she now worked at it, it was quite clear that when she had her hands free from that job, she fully intended to make good her threats against the tall stout man. The young beardless scions of the law, trembled at the idea of what might happen.

And now the tops of the pies appeared. Then they saw the rim of the large tray upon which they were, and then just as the platform itself was level with the floor of the shop, up flew tray and pies, as if something had exploded beneath them, and a tall slim man sprung upon the counter. It was the cook, who from the cellars beneath, had laid himself as flat as he could beneath the tray of pies, and so had been worked up to the shop by Mrs. Lovett!



Mrs. Lovett's Cook Astonishes her Customers, rather.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I am Mrs. Lovett's cook. The pies are made of *human flesh!*"

* * * * *

We shrink, we tremble at the idea of attempting to describe the scene that ensued in the shop of Mrs. Lovett contingent upon this frightful apparition, and still more frightful speech of the cook; but duty — our duty to the public — requires that we should say something upon the occasion.

If we can do nothing more, we can briefly enumerate what did actually take place in some instances.

About twenty clerks rushed into Bell Yard, and there and then, to the intense surprise of the passers-by, became intensely sick. The cook, with one spring, cleared the counter, and alighted amongst the customers, and with another spring, the tall impertinent man, who had made many remarks to Mrs. Lovett

of an aggravating tendency, cleared the counter likewise in the other direction, and, alighting close to Mrs. Lovett, he cried —

“Madam, you are my prisoner!”

For a moment, and only for a moment, the great — the cunning, and the redoubtable Mrs. Lovett, lost her self-possession, and, staggering back, she lurched heavily against the glass case next to the wall, immediately behind the counter. It was only for a moment, though, that such an effect was produced upon Mrs. Lovett; and then, with a spring like an enraged tigress, she caught up a knife that was used for slipping under the pies and getting them cleanly out of the little tins, and rushed upon the tall stranger.

Yes, she rushed upon him; but for once in a way, even Mrs. Lovett had met with her match. With a dexterity, that only long practice in dealings with the more desperate portion of human nature could have taught him, the tall man closed with her, and had the knife out of her hand in a moment. He at once threw it right through the window into Bell Yard, and then, holding Mrs. Lovett in his arms, he said —

“My dear madam, you only distress yourself for nothing; all resistance is perfectly useless. Either I must take you prisoner, or you me, and I decidedly incline to the former alternative.”

The knife that had been thrown through the window was not without its object, for in a moment afterwards Mr. Crotchet made his appearance in the shop.

“All right, Crotchet,” said he who had captured Mrs. Lovett; “first clap the bracelets on this lady.”

“Here yer is,” said Crotchet. “Lor’, mum! I had a eye on you months and months ago. How is you, mum, in yer *feelin’s* this here nice evening? — Eh mum?”

“A knife — a knife! Oh, for a knife!” cried Mrs. Lovett.

“Ex-actly, mum,” added Crotchet, as he with professional dexterity slipped the handcuffs on her wrists. “Would you like one with a hivory handle, mum? or would anything more common do, mum?”

Mrs. Lovett fell to the floor, or rather she cast herself to it, and began voluntarily beating her head against the boards. They quickly lifted her up; and then the tall stranger turned to the cook, who, after leaping over the counter, had sat down upon a chair in a state of complete exhaustion, and he said —

“Do you know the way to Sir Richard’s office, in Craven Street? He expects you there, I believe?”

“Yes, yes. But now that all is over, I feel very ill.”

“In that case, I will go with you, then. Crotchet, who have you got outside?”

“Only two of our pals, Muster Green; but it’s all right, if so be as you leaves the lady to us.”

“Very well. The warrant is at Newgate, and the governor is expecting her instant arrival. You will get a coach at the corner of the yard, and be off with her at once.”

“All’s right,” said Crotchet. “I knowed as she’d be nabbed, and I had one all ready, you sees.”

“That was right, Crotchet. How amazingly quick everybody has left the shop. Why — why, what is all this?”

As the officer spoke, about half a dozen squares of glass in the shop window of the house were broken in, and a ringing shout from a dense mob that was rapidly collecting in the yard, came upon the ears of the officer. The two men whom Crotchet had mentioned, with difficulty pressed their way into the shop, and one of them cried —

“The people that were in the shop have spread the news all over the neighbourhood, and the place is getting jammed up with a mob, every one of which is mad, I think, for they talk of nothing but of the tearing of Mrs. Lovett to pieces. They are pouring in from Fleet Street and Carey Street by hundreds at a time.”