

CHAPTER CXXIV

A Luncheon at Sir Richard Blunt's — the Dog and his Old Friend

We willingly leave Todd to his own reflections upon the disastrous state of his affairs, while we solicit the attention of our readers to the private house and office of Sir Richard Blunt again, in Craven Street. The worthy magistrate had quite a party to lunch on that day, and he had fixed the hour as eleven when he wished to see his friends.

Those friends consisted of Johanna Oakley, Mark Ingestrie, Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, Colonel Jeffery, Arabella Wilmot, and Big Ben, who was, at the special request of Johanna, gladly included in the party.

A happier party than that could not very well have been found throughout the whole length and breadth of London; and there was but one slight shade of disquietude upon the face of Johanna, when she at times thought that at one o'clock she would have to attend the police office at Bow Street to give her testimony against Todd the murderer.

"Well," said Ben, "here we are alive — all alive, and as merry as so many grigs; and all I can say is, my tulips, that I will show the wild beastesses to anybody as likes to come to the Tower, free, gratis and for nothing. Take it easy, Mr. Ingestrie, and don't be casting sheep's eyes at Johanna. The little love of a thing ain't at all used to it — indeed, she ain't; and the only person as she lets love her above a bit, and takes it easy with, is me; so don't come any nonsense."

"But, Mr. Ben," said Mark, "I may look sometimes?"

"Yes, now and then, if you take things easy."

Old Mr. Oakley had got on his spectacles, and seemed as if he could not be done looking at Mark Ingestrie; and more than once, or twice, or thrice, the old gentleman would shake hands with him, telling him that he looked upon him quite as one risen up from the dead, in a manner of speaking.

"Yes, sir, you may well, indeed, look upon me as such; but I hope now for long life and happiness."

A glance at Johanna was sufficiently expressive of with whom he hoped for happiness — and that glance was returned with one of those sweet endearing looks that only those who truly love can cast one upon another.

"And I, too," said Colonel Jeffery, "put in my claim to the happiness of the future, for am I not blessed with one whom I feel that I can love!"

"Stop!" said Arabella. "We won't have any conversation of this sort before company, colonel, if you please; so I will trouble you to be quiet."

"I am all submission," said the colonel; "and I hope my humble conduct upon this occasion will be to you all, ladies and gentlemen, a good example of what I shall be when I am married."

This was said in so comical a manner that the whole party laughed amazingly, and then Sir Richard Blunt said rather gravely —

"I expect two old friends here this morning."

"Old friends?" said everybody, in surprise.

"Yes. The one is the captain of the ship which brought poor Mr. Thornhill and his dog home, and who has been to Hamburg with his vessel, and the other is the dog himself."

At this moment an officer, for Sir Richard was quite wholly attended upon by the police at that private office of his, came in to say that a gentleman wanted to see him.

"It is the worthy captain," said Sir Richard; "show him in at once."

"If you please, Sir Richard," added the officer, "there is a man, too, with a great dog who wishes to see you, and the dog has been in the hall once, and walked off with a plate of cheesecakes and a pickled tongue that were coming in to your worship."

A roar of laughter testified to the amusement which this freak of Hector's caused, and Sir Richard said —

"Well, I don't know any one who was so much entitled to be invited to lunch as Hector, and no doubt he thought so too; and as we had not the courtesy to open the door for him, and properly accommodate him, he has helped himself on the road, that's all."

"Shall I admit him, sir?"

"Yes, and the man who is with him. He is one of the witnesses who I trust will help to bring Todd to justice. Show them all in."

In a very few minutes the captain of the vessel, with whom the reader had some slight acquaintance at the beginning of this most veritable narrative, made his appearance, and Colonel Jeffery warmly shook hands with him. The dog knew the colonel and the captain likewise, and was most vociferous in his joy to see them.

It was an affecting thing then to see the creature pause suddenly in his manifestations of delight, and look sad and solemn, after which he uttered a dismal howl, and catching the colonel by the skirt of his coat, he tried to pull him towards the door of the room.

“Poor fellow,” said the captain, “he does not forget his master yet, I see.”

“No,” said Colonel Jeffery, “nor never will. If he had his own way now, and we would follow him, I lay any wager he would take us to Sweeney Todd’s shop.”

“In course he would, sir,” said the ostler. “In course he would. Lord bless you, gemmen, if this here dog as I calls Pison, cos why he was pisoned, was only to get hold of Todd, I would not give much for his chances. You sees, gemmen, as I have kept him in good condition.”

“He does look well,” said the captain.

“Indeed it does you great credit,” said Colonel Jeffery; “but his keep must cost something. There is my guinea towards it.”

The colonel placed a guinea in the ostler’s hand, and his example was followed by all present, so that the ostler found himself growing quite a man of substance when he least expected it.

“Lor’, Pison,” he said, “you’ll be a fortin for a fellow yet, you will. But I hope, gemmen, as you don’t mean to take him away, ’cos if that’s the caper, here’s the money agin, and I’d rather keep Pison. He’s got fond o’ me by this time, poor fellow, and I have got fond on him, as I hav’nt no other brothers and sisters or family of my own.”

“It would indeed be unfair,” said the colonel, “to deprive you of him. But tell me, are you comfortable in your situation?”

“Lor’ bless you, sir, it ain’t much of a situation. Lots of hard work, and werry little for it.”

“Well, if you like to come into my service and bring Hector with you — you are welcome.”

“Oh, won’t I, sir, above a bit. Why, Pison, we is promoted, old fellor. We is a going to a new place, where there will be no end of grub, old chap.”

“You shall not have any complaints to make in that department,” said the colonel.

“So then,” said the captain, “it is quite clear that Mr. Thornhill was murdered by that rascal of a barber?”

“Quite,” replied Sir Richard Blunt, “and it is for that murder we mean to try Todd. If, however, by any chance, he should escape conviction upon that, we will be provided with two more indictments against him, so that he is tolerably well cared for; but the murder of Mr. Thornhill is what we mean ostensibly to go upon.”

“That’s right, sir,” said the ostler, “and I’ll bring Pison as a witness to all the blessed facts. He’ll settle the business, even if the jury is half as stupid agin as usual.”

“He will be committed for trial this morning,” said Sir Richard Blunt, “for the murder of Mr. Thornhill; and that woman, Mrs. Lovett, will be arraigned as an accessory before the fact, so that there can be very little doubt of the fate of both of them; and if ever two notorious criminals deserved that the last dread sentence of the law should be carried out against them, Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett are those two.”

“They could not be worse,” said the captain.

“No, that would be impossible,” remarked the colonel. “I shall be glad when this gloomy tragedy is over though. The public mind will soon be filled with it, and we shall hear of nothing but of Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett, with all their sayings and doings, for the next few months to come.”

“That is true enough,” said Sir Richard Blunt. “But I don’t think you will find any but one feeling upon the subject, and that will be one of universal condemnation.”

“Not a doubt of it.”

“There is another too who will suffer the just reward of his crimes,” aid the magistrate glancing at Mrs. Oakley.

She shook her head and sighed, for she shrunk naturally from the awfully responsible share she was condemned to have in the conviction of Mr. Lupin.

“I will do my duty,” she said, “in that dreadful piece of business. The guilt of Lupin, although not so extensive as Todd’s, is to the full as great.”

“It is indeed, madam.”

“Ah, yes!” said Ben. “They are a bad lot altogether, and the sooner they are hung up like a rope of ingions the better. Bless me, I always was delicate, and so was obliged to take things easy; but I have more than once looked into that horrid pie shop in Bell Yard, and thought I should like a smack of about fifteen or twenty of them, just to stay my stomach till I got home to the Tower; and what a mercy it was I never bought ’em.”

“It was, indeed, my friend,” Sir Richard said.

“Yes, you may say that, my dear, sir — you may say that. With my very delicate stomach, I should have been as good as done brown if I had had ’em. I should have fallen a victim to the wild beasteses, the very next time as I went a

near 'em; and all I can say is, as I shall be uncommon glad to show these creatures to any of this company, as will come to the Tower at feeding time."

Ben had made this liberal offer so often that the company left off thanking him for it; but the ostler whispered to him —

"I'll come and bring Pison."

"No, will you though?" said Ben.

"Yes, to be sure I will. Who knows but he'd like to see them wild beasteses, as perhaps he has only heard of 'em in a wery promiscuous sort o' way."

"Not a doubt of it," cried Ben, "not a doubt of it — only when he does come you must tell him to take things easy, and not be discomposed at any of the roaring and bellowing, as the creatures sets up at times."

"Oh, I'll hold him."

"You needn't go for to hold him. Just you impress upon him afore he comes that easy does it, that's all you need do, and then he'll know very well what to do."

"Won't I!"

The conversation was rather breaking up into small fragments, when the magistrate rose from his seat.

"Now then," said Sir Richard Blunt, "it is time for us to go to Bow Street, where I appear as a witness today, instead of as a magistrate."

As he spoke, the clock in the office sounded the half past twelve.

All the guests of the magistrate rose, for they knew that his duties were imperative. There was a tone of great gravity now about Sir Richard Blunt as he spoke —

"I fully expect," he said, "that Todd will be committed for trial and Mrs. Lovett likewise. Already she has made repeated applications to her attendants in prison, to be permitted to become evidence against Todd."

"Which will surely not be permitted?" said the colonel.

"Certainly not; the evidence against him is quite clear enough without the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, while the proofs of her criminality with him, are of too strong a character for her to be given any chance of escape."

"She is a dreadful woman."

“She is, indeed; but you will all of you soon see how she conducts herself now, for she will be brought up with Todd.”

CHAPTER CXXV

Todd is committed for Trial, and Expects the Worst

By the time the police office at Bow Street opened upon the morning, a wild vague, and uncertain sort of rumour had spread itself over London, concerning the discoveries that had been made at Todd's house in Fleet Street, and at Mrs. Lovett's in Bell Yard, Temple Bar.

Of course, the affair had lost nothing from many-tongued rumour, and the popular belief was, that Todd's house had been found full of dead bodies from the attics to the cellars, while Mrs. Lovett had been actually detected in the very act of scraping some dead man's bones, for titbits to make a veal pie of.

A dense crowd had assembled in Fleet Street, to have a look at Todd's now shut-up house, and that thoroughfare very soon, in consequence, became no thoroughfare at all. Bell Yard too was so completely blocked up, that the lawyers who were in the habit of using it as a short cut from the Temple to Lincoln's Inn, were forced to take the slight round of Chancery Lane instead; and the confusion and general excitement in the whole of the neighbourhood was immense.

But it was in Bow Street, and round the doors of the police office, that the densest crowd, and the greatest excitement prevailed. There it was only with the greatest difficulty that the officers and others officially connected with the public office could get in and out of it as occasion required; and the three or four magistrates who thought proper to attend upon that occasion, had quite a struggle to get into the court at all.

By dint of great perseverance, our friends, with Sir Richard Blunt, at length succeeded in forcing a passage through the crowd, to the magistrates private entrance, and having once passed that, they were no longer in the smallest degree incommoded.

"Well, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, as he encountered that individual, "Have you been to Newgate this morning?"

"Rather, Sir Richard."

"Any news?"

"No. Only that Todd has been a trying it on a little, that's all."

"What do you mean?"

"Why he's only petikler anxious to save Jack Ketch any trouble on his account, that's all, Sir Richard; so he's been trying to put himself out o' this here world, and shove himself into t'other, without going through all the trouble of being hung, that's all, sir."

"I fully expected that both Todd and Mrs. Lovett would make some such attempts; but I hope the governor of Newgate has been sufficiently careful to prevent the possibility of either of them succeeding."

"It's all right," added Crotchet. "I seed 'em both, and they is as lively as black beetles as has been trod on by somebody as isn't a very light weight."

The doors of the court had not been opened, but when they were, the struggle for admission was tremendous, and it required the utmost exertions of the officers of the establishment to keep anything like a semblance of order. The few night charges were rapidly disposed of, and while a gentleman who looked very foolish, was fined five shillings for being drunk and disorderly the evening previous, a roaring shout from the mob in the street proclaimed the arrival of the two important prisoners from Newgate.

Up to some time after his arrest, Todd, notwithstanding some stray words that would indicate a contrary state of things, fully believed that he had succeeded in murdering Mrs. Lovett, and it was not until the morning that he became aware of her escape from drowning in the Thames.

It did not require a conjuror to tell the authorities that there would be some trouble in getting the prisoners to Bow Street, so it was thought better to make one job of it, and to place Todd and Mrs. Lovett in the same coach along with four officers.

With this intent the coach was brought close to the wicket gate of Newgate, and Todd and Mrs. Lovett, well guarded, were brought to the lobby at the same moment. The moment Todd caught sight of Mrs. Lovett, a kind of spasm seemed to shake his frame, and pointing to her, he cried —

"Does that woman indeed live, or is she but some fiend in the shape of such a one come to torment me?"

"That is Mrs. Lovett," said the Governor.

"Oh, no — no — no," added Todd, "it is not so — it cannot be. The dark rolling river cannot so give up its dead."

"You were well disposed that it should not," said Mrs. Lovett, bending upon Todd a most ferocious glance.

"She is saved!" gasped Todd.

"Yes, I am saved to your confusion. I call you all to witness," she then added in a loud voice, "that I had no idea of the extent of Todd's iniquity; but what I do know I will freely tell as evidence for the crown against him."

Mrs. Lovett looked peculiarly at the Governor while she uttered these words, for she was anxious to know what he thought of them, but that functionary took not the remotest notice.

At this moment one of the warders announced the sheriff, and one of the Sheriffs of London with his gold chain of office on, appeared in the lobby. To him Mrs. Lovett immediately turned, saying —

“Sir, I offer myself as king’s evidence. Do you understand me?”

“Perfectly, madam; but I have nothing to do with the matter.”

“Nothing to do, sir? Then why do you wear that bauble?”

“My office, so far as you are concerned, madam, will be to keep you in safe custody, and see that the sentence of the law is carried into effect upon you, in case you should be convicted of the crimes laid to your charge.”

“But I turn king’s evidence. It is quite a common thing that you have all heard of that often enough.”

“Now, madam, the coach is ready,” said a turnkey.

“Where are you going to take me? Is not this Newgate?”

“Yes, but you must undergo an examination at the police office in Bow Street.”

Without any further ceremony, Mrs. Lovett was handed into the coach, and Todd after her. She was at first placed in the seat immediately opposite to him, but she insisted upon changing it, saying, that she could not bear to look at him all the way that she went, and as it was a matter of no moment which way she sat, the officers so far indulged her as to permit her to change her place.

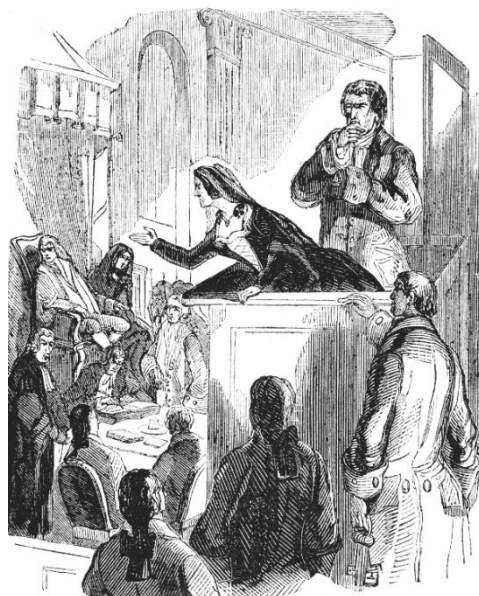
In this way then, both of them upon the same seat, while three officers sat opposite to them, and one with them, dividing them, they arrived at Bow Street, and were met by that roaring shout, that everybody had heard, from without the court.

Of course every precaution had been taken to prevent the mob from wreaking their vengeance upon the criminals, which they were well disposed to do. A number of people were knocked down and some of the officers rather roughly treated; but the result was, that Todd and Mrs. Lovett were got into the office in safety.

Sweeney Todd, as he ascended the steps of the office, turned his head for a moment, and looked at the sea of angry faces that was in the street. He shuddered and passed on. Mrs. Lovett did not look round at all.

With great difficulty the door of the office was closed, and then in a few moments Todd and Mrs. Lovett were placed side by side at the bar of justice.

There was one person sitting on the bench near to Sir Richard Blunt, upon whom Todd fixed his eyes in amazement. That person was Johanna Oakley. The features came at once to his recollection, and as though he really doubted if he were awake or not, he more than once pressed his hand upon his eyes.



Todd and Mrs. Lovett at Bow Street Police Office.

His and every one else's attention were, however, speedily taken up by the conduct of Mrs. Lovett. The moment comparative order was restored in the crowded court, so that what she said could be distinctly and clearly heard, she spoke —

"I am willing to turn king's evidence upon this occasion, and to declare all I know of Todd's nefarious transactions. I am quite willing to tell all — I don't perhaps know the full extent of Todd's guilt, but I repeat I will turn king's evidence, and tell all I do know."

A gentleman, plainly dressed in black, rose new, and in a calm, assured voice, said —

"Upon the part of the crown I reject the offer of the female prisoner. Anything she may say will be used as evidence against her, if it bear that construction."

"Reject?" cried Mrs. Lovett. "And pray, sir, who are you that you dare reject such a proposition for furthering the ends of justice?"

"That, madam, is the Attorney General," said an officer.

"Oh," said Mrs. Lovett, "and am I to understand that I am accused of any participation in Todd's crimes?"

"You will find by the evidence that will be adduced against you of what you are accused," said the magistrate. "You, I believe, Sir Richard Blunt, give these people in charge?"

"Yes," said Sir Richard rising. "I charge them with, in the first place, the wilful murder of Francis James Thornhill. If your worship should think fit, from the evidence that will be brought forward, to commit them upon that charge, I shall not at present trouble you with any others, although I am fully prepared with several."

"What is the meaning of all this?" cried Mrs. Lovett. "I will be heard."

Sir Richard Blunt paid no manner of attention to her, but brought before the magistrate quite sufficient evidence to warrant him in committing both the prisoners for trial.

The only great effect that the proceedings seemed to have upon Todd consisted in his surprise when Johanna Oakley came forward, and to her examination he listened attentively indeed. When she related how, under the name of Charles Green, she had taken the situation of errand boy at Todd's shop, and been in daily communication with Sir Richard Blunt, Todd dashed his clenched fist against his own head, crying —

"Dolt — idiot — idiot! And I did suspect it once!"

Johanna went on then to state how in hunting over Todd's shop and house for some vestige of Mark Ingestrie, the sleeve of a seaman's jacket was found, which she had thought belonged to him, but which would be identified by the captain of the ship as having been part of Mr. Thornhill's apparel when he went on shore upon that fatal morning of his murder, no doubt by Todd.

The evidence against Mrs. Lovett consisted of the fact of there being an underground communication all the way from the cellars of Todd's house to her cooking concern; and Mark Ingestrie had quite enough to tell of that to make it tolerably clear they acted in concert.

Of course there could be but one opinion in the minds of all present of the guilt of the prisoners; but it was necessary that that guilt should be legally as well as morally proved, and hence the evidence was very carefully arranged to meet the exigencies of the case.

"Have you any legal adviser?" said the Magistrate to Todd.

"No," was the brief response.

The same question was put to Mrs. Lovett, but she did not answer, and the deathlike paleness of her countenance sufficiently testified that it was out of

her power to do so. In another moment, overcome by dread and chagrin, she fainted.

“Is she dead?” said Todd.

No one replied to the question, and he added —

“Look to her well or she will yet baffle you. If ever the spirit of a fiend found a home in any human brain it is in that woman’s. I say to you, look to her well, or she will still baffle you all by some rare device you little dream of.”

Mrs. Lovett in her insensible state was carried from the court, and a surgeon was in prompt attendance upon her. It was found that there was nothing the matter with her; she had merely fainted through sheer vexation of spirit at finding that her overtures to be evidence against Todd were not attended to in the way she had wished; for now, with the loss of everything but life, how glad she would have been to back out of those odious transactions which clung to her.

Todd was asked if he had anything to say.

“Really,” he said. “I do not know what it is all about. I am a poor humble man, who get but a scanty living by shaving any kind customer, and all this must be some desperate conspiracy against me on the part of the Roman Catholic, I think.”

“The Roman Catholics?”

“Yes, your worship. I never would shave or dress the hair of a Roman Catholic if I knew it, and more than one of that religion have sworn to be avenged upon me.”

“And is this your defence?”

“Yes, exactly; it is all I can say; and if I perish, it will be as one of the most innocent of men who ever was persecuted to death.”

“Well,” said the magistrate, “I have heard many a singular defence, but never one like this.”

“It’s — it’s truth,” said Todd, “that staggers your worship.”

“Well, you can try what effect it will have upon a jury. I commit you for trial on the charge of wilful murder.”

“Murder of whom?”

“Francis James Thornhill.”

“Oh, your worship, he is alive and well, and now in Havannah. If I have murdered him, where is the body?”

“We are prepared,” said the Attorney General, “with that objection. At the trial we will tell the jury where the body is.”

Mrs. Lovett, now having sufficiently recovered, was brought into court to hear that she was committed for trial, but she made no remark upon that circumstance whatever; and in the course of a few moments another shout from the multitude without announced that the prisoners were off to Newgate.

CHAPTER CXXVI
A Large Party Visits Big Ben and the Lions in the Tower

On the morning following the committal of Mrs. Lovett and Sweeney Todd to Newgate for trial, a rather large party met at the office of Sir Richard Blunt, in Craven Street, Strand. The fact was that after the proceedings at the police office, Big Ben had earnestly besought them all to name the day to visit him and the lions in the Tower, and as no day was so convenient to Sir Richard as that immediately following, it was arranged that they were all to meet at the private office in Craven Street, and go there by water to the Tower.

The sun shone beautifully; and to look at that party no one would have supposed that there had ever been such persons as Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett in the world.

The party consisted of Colonel Jeffery, Tobias, Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, Minna Gray, Johanna, Mark Ingestrie, Arabella Wilmot, and the fruiterer's daughter from Fleet Street, who had been so kind to Johanna during that very sad and anxious time that she had passed while in the temporary service of Todd.

So happy-looking and smiling a party surely could not have been found in all London, as they made up. It will be seen that there were no less than three couples intent upon matrimony, for although it was understood that Tobias was to wait two years yet before he married, he looked as happy as the rest.

A large eight-oared barge was at the stairs at the bottom of the street to convey them, and as they all walked to it arm in arm, and in couples, everybody who met them would have it that it was a wedding, and many jocular remarks were made to them by the way.

"Upon my word," said Sir Richard, "I shall be considered a matchmaker, and folks will say that I keep this office of my own only as a matrimonial speculation."

"You certainly," said the colonel, "have been the cause of two or three matches, at all events, for, but for you, I doubt if any of us would have felt as we feel to day, Sir Richard."

"He has restored Mark Ingestrie to me," said Johanna.

"And my Johanna to me," said Ingestrie.

"And my dear Minna to me," cried Tobias.

"Stop — stop!" cried Sir Richard.

"And I am quite certain," said the colonel, "that I owe to him the joy of calling Arabella mine."

Sir Richard Blunt came now to a halt, as he said —

“Stop, all of you, or I will not go one step further. If we get into this kind of talk, who is to say where it will end? Let us enjoy ourselves, and make it a rule to say anything but revert to the past. It has its joys and its sorrows, but it had better upon this occasion be left to itself.”

“Agreed — agreed,” said everybody.

The barge was a very handsome one. Indeed Sir Richard Blunt had borrowed it of one of the city companies for the occasion, and beneath the gay awning they could all sit with perfect ease.

And now in the course of another five minutes they were going down the river, quite at a slashing pace, towards the old Tower; and as they were animated by the many pleasing sights upon the river, their conversation soon became animated and spirited.

“What is that? — A wherry coming towards us from the Temple Stairs,” said the colonel.

All eyes were bent upon the wherry, which shot out from the little landing place by the side of the Temple Gardens, and presently they, with one accord, cried out —

“It’s Hector!”

In truth Hector was there, but with him was the colonel’s new groom, the late ostler, who had been so efficient a protector to the dog, and the captain of the ship, whom he knew so well.

“Barge ahoy!” cried the captain.

“Ay — ay!” shouted Ingestrie in reply, and the wherry shot alongside the barge.

“Well,” said the captain, “I do think for you all to go on such a party as this, and not ask me and Hector, is too bad.”

“But,” said Sir Richard Blunt, “you told me you were going to be very busy at the docks.”

“So I did, but I found our owner had not come to town, and I have nothing to do today. I called at your house, colonel, hoping to be in time to come with you, but you had gone. Hector, however, saw me, and made such a racket I was forced to bring him.”

“And no one can be more glad to see you and Hector than I,” cried the colonel.

“And I didn’t like, sir,” said the ostler, “not for to come for to go, when Pison said as he’d like to come.”

“Very good,” said the colonel smiling. “Come on board.”

The waterman who was with the wherry laid it alongside the barge, and having been liberally paid for his freight, rowed off again, leaving with the barge party, his two customers and the dog.

The Tower was soon in sight, for at that time there were not by any means so many obstructions to the navigation of the River Thames as are to be found now, and the stream too was very much clearer than now it can boast of being. The host of manufactories that have since risen upon its banks were not then thought of.

“I do think,” said Colonel Jeffery, “that I can see our friend Ben at the landing place. Look, Mr. Oakley, is that not Ben?”

“Bless you, sir,” said Mr. Oakley, “I couldn’t see so far if you would make me king of England for doing so. Johanna, my love, you have young eyes, and know Ben well.”

“Yes, pa, it is Ben, and he is waving his hand to us, and looks so pleased.”

“He is a most worthy honest fellow,” said Sir Richard Blunt. “I like him very much, from what little I have seen of him. He has the simplicity of a child.”

“Yes,” added the colonel, “and the candour and honesty of a lover of human nature. I believe a better heart than Ben’s never beat in human bosom.”

“I am quite sure of it,” said Johanna. “I love Ben very much indeed. He has been ever a kind and indulgent friend to me.”

“Do you hear that, Mr. Ingestrie?” said Arabella.

“Yes,” laughed Mark, “but I decline investing Ben with any of the attributes of a rival. Now, I love you, Miss Wilmot very much indeed, because you have always been such a dear kind friend to Johanna; and I daresay the colonel will permit me to do so.”

“To be sure I will — at a distance,” said the colonel.

Everybody laughed at this, and then, as the rowers increased their exertions to come in to the Tower stairs with some eclat, the barge soon was safely moored at the landing place.

“Here you are all of you,” cried Ben, capering in his huge delight. “Here you all are. Come along. Oh, how hungry I am.”

“That sounds as if you meant to eat us, Ben,” said Sir Richard, as he stepped from the barge.

“Oh, dear no. Only I have got a little bit of lunch ready for you all, and as I helped to place it on the table it made me so hungry that I’ve been half mad ever since, and I’m as thirsty too as can be. Oh, Mr. Jeffery, I often think if the Thames were only strong ale, what a place the Tower would be.”

“You may depend,” said Sir Richard, “if it were, the government would pretty soon bottle it all off.”

Johanna was going to step on shore, but Ben made a dash at her, and lifting her up as you would some little child, he seated her on his left arm, and so fairly carried her into the Tower.

“You wait, Miss Arabella,” he cried. “I’ll come for you.”

This so alarmed Miss Wilmot that she sprang on shore in a moment, and all the party laughed heartily to see Mark Ingestrie flying along after Ben, and shouting as he went —

“Put her down — put her down! Ben! — Ben! She’d rather walk. Put her down!”

Ben paid no manner of attention to any of these remonstrances, but carried Johanna right into the Tower before he set her upon her feet again, which he then did as tenderly as though she had been some infant, only just learning to walk.

“Mind how you go,” he said. “Take it easy. Easy does it.”

“But I can walk, Ben.”

“Very good. Mind how you does, you nice little thing. Oh, I likes you a great deal better in the petticoats and not the breeches.”

“Well, Ben,” said Mark Ingestrie, “I am certainly very much obliged to you — very much, indeed.”

“Don’t mention it, my boy,” replied Ben, totally oblivious of the manner in which Mark Ingestrie uttered the words — a manner which betrayed some little pique upon the occasion. The laughter of Johanna and his friends, however, soon chased away the temporary cloud.

“Where’s the t’other little one?” said Ben.

“I am here,” cried Arabella, laughing.

“Oh, you got on without me, did you? Very good: only if you had only waited, I shouldn’t have thought it no trouble at all, whatsomedever. Easy does it, you know.”

“Thank you, Ben. I’d just as soon walk, and a little rather, perhaps, of the two. It was quite amusing enough to see you carry Johanna.”

“Well — well, there ain’t much gratitude in this world. Come on, all of you, for you must be famished; and as for me, I haven’t had a bit of anything to eat for a whole hour and a half, and then it was only a pound and three quarters of beefsteak, and a half quartern loaf!”

“But we are none of us hungry,” said Johanna.

“Never mind that,” replied Ben, “you don’t know what you may be; so always eat when you can get it. That’s my maxim, and I find it answers very well. Plenty to eat and drink, and taking things easy, is how I get through the world, and you’ll all on you find it the best in the long run.”

“There are worse philosophies than that going,” said Sir Richard Blunt to Colonel Jeffery.

“Very much worse,” laughed the colonel.

Ben now led the way along a narrow arched passage, and through two rather gloomy corridors to a stone room, with a grand arched roof, in the ancient fortress; and there, sure enough, they found the little snack, as he called it, laid out very nicely for their reception.

A table ran along the centre of the room, and at one end of it there was placed an immense round of corn beef. At the other was a haunch of mutton, weighing at least thirty pounds. Somewhat about the middle of the table was an enormous turkey; and those dishes, with a ham and four tongues, made up a tolerable repast.

Six half gallon flagons, filled with old Burton ale, stood at regular distances upon the table.

“It’s only,” said Ben, “a slight snack, after all; but I hope you will be just able to find enough.”

“Enough!” cried Sir Richard. “Why, there’s enough for fifty people.”

“There’s almost enough for a regiment!” said the colonel.

“Oh, you are joking,” said Ben; “but come, sit down. You, father Oakley, sit here by this little bit of mutton, and I’ll cut up the beef.”

After considerable laughing they were all seated; and then Ben, finding that Johanna was on one side of him, and Miss Wilmot on the other, declared that he was quite satisfied.

He cut, first of all, a cold tongue in halves down the middle lengthways, and placed one half upon a plate for Johanna, and the other on a plate for Arabella. Then upon the tongue in each plate, he placed about a pound of ham.

“Take that, my little dears,” he said, “to begin with, and don’t be sparing now, for there’s the turkey and the mutton, you know, to fall back upon. Easy does it.”

The room resounded with shrieks of laughter at the looks of utter distressful dismay which Johanna and Arabella cast upon their plates; and Ben looked from one face to another in perfect astonishment, for he could not see any joke for the life of him.

“Dear Ben,” said Johanna, “do you really imagine we can eat a tenth part of all this?”

“Do I imagine? — In course I does. Only you begin. Lord bless you, that ain’t much. Come — come, you want your ale, I suppose. So here it is.”

Upon this, Ben poured them each out about a quart of the strong ale, and requested them to take an easy pull at that.

They found that it was of no use requesting Ben to diminish the quantity he helped them to; so they just, as he advised, took it easy, and ate what they had a mind to do.

As for Ben himself, he cut one large slice off the round of beef, and then placed upon it two slices of ham, so that the thickness — for he was not a delicate carver — was about three inches; and so he set to work, every now and then taking up one of the half gallon ale flagons, and pledging the company all round.

Probably, rough and homely as was Ben’s lunch, not one of them present had ever enjoyed such a meal more than they this did; and if we might judge by the loud laughter that echoed about the old arched roof, a merrier hour was never spent than in the Tower with Big Ben.

But it was a sadness to Ben to find that such little progress was made in the consumption of his eatables and drinkables; and he uttered many groans as he watched Johanna and Arabella.

CHAPTER CXXVII
The Beasts at the Tower

All good things must have an end, and Ben's lunch in the Tower was not any exception to the rule. At last even he was satisfied that nobody would eat any more, although he was very far indeed from being satisfied that they had had enough.

"Won't anybody be so good," he said, "as just to try and pick a little bit of something?"

"No — no!" was the general response.

"Indeed, Ben," said Colonel Jeffery, "if we take any more we shall positively be ill, and I'm sure you don't wish that."

"Oh, dear, no," groaned Ben; "but it's quite clear to me, of course, that you don't like the lunch, or else you could not have took it so very easy."

With one accord upon this, everybody declared that they had liked it amazingly well.

"Then you will all try a drop more ale?"

Upon this, they rose from the table, for they had a well-grounded suspicion that if they staid any longer, Ben would try to force something down their throats, whether they would or not.

"Ah, well," said Ben, with a sigh, when he found that they would not be prevailed upon to take anything else. "Then we may as well go and see the lions in the Tower."

"Oh, yes," added Johanna, "I have heard so much of them, that I quite long to see them."

"Should you, my duck?" cried Ben; "then come along."

Here Ben would have carried Johanna again, for somehow he had got the idea fixed in his head that the kindest thing he could possibly do as regarded Johanna was to prevent her from using her feet; but Mark Ingestrie interposed, saying —

"Ben, she would much rather walk. You forget, my kind friend, that she is no longer now a child."

"Oh, dear," said Ben, with a look of profound wisdom, "if you come to that, we are all children. Look at me, I'm only a fine baby."

Everybody laughed at this sally of Ben's, as well they might; and then, being fully convinced that no more eating nor drinking was at all practicable, Ben proceeded to lead the way to the lions.

"Is there any danger?" said Arabella. "I hope you will not let any of them out of their cages, Mr. Ben."

"Oh, dear, no, there's no danger, and we don't let any of them out. We only pokes them up a bit with a long pole, to make 'em rather lively to visitors."

"And have no accidents ever happened?" said Johanna.

"Lord bless you, no. To be sure one of the warders, who was rather a new hand, would put his hand in between the bars of the lion's den and get it snapped off; and once a leopard we had here broke loose, and jumped on the back of a sentinel, and half eat him up; but we haven't had any accidents."

"Why, what do you call them, Ben?"

"Oh, nothing at all."

"I dare say," said Sir Richard Blunt, "that the poor warder and the sentinel would have called those little incidents something."

"Well, perhaps they might," said Ben. "In course people will think of themselves before anybody else; but, howsomever, don't you be after going to be afeard, my little dears; and if any of the beasteses was to get out, always recollect that easy does it, and it's no use making a fuss."

"I suppose you think, Ben, that if we are to be eaten up by a lion or a leopard, there's no such thing as avoiding our fate," said the colonel. "Is that your idea?"

"Well, I hardly know," said Ben. "But one day we had a young chap — a new warder — who came here out of the country, and he said he had had a dream the night before he came that he should be devoured by a wolf. Now we hadn't a wolf in the Tower collection at all, so, in course, we all laughed at him, and told him he would have to go to foreign parts to bring his dream true. But you'd hardly believe it, that very day afore the young fellow had been one hour in the Tower, there comes a boat to the stairs, with an officer, and he asks to see the keeper of the beasts, and he says to him — 'My ship is lying at the Nore, and we have brought from Friesland one of the largest wolves as ever was known for the Tower collection,' says he, 'and he's in a large bag we made on purpose to hold him in the boat.'

"Well, when the young warder heard this he said — 'That's my wolf. He has come for me!' and off he set a trembling like anything. The wolf was brought in in a coal sack, and we got him into an empty den that was shut up with a chain and a staple only; but as all the fastenings were out of his reach, he could not interfere with it if he was ever so cunning. Well, night came, and we all took it

easy, and went to bed; but in the middle of the night what should we hear but the most horrid howling that ever you could think of, and when we ran to the Lion Tower, where it came from, we found the iron door of the wolf's den open, and the young warder lying, half in and half out of it, stone dead. The wolf had had him by the throat."

"And what became of the wolf?" said Johanna.

"He was gone, and we never so much as heard of him from that day to this."

"Well, Ben," said the colonel, "that is a very good story of the lions in the Tower, and here we are, I think, close to them."

A terrific roar at this moment proved the colonel's words to be tolerably true.

"Ah, they are feeding some on 'em," said Ben. "It just the time, and they will not be convinced as easy does it."

"It is hard enough, Ben," said Sir Richard Blunt, "to convince human beings of that piece of philosophy, to say nothing of lions and tigers."

"Oh, but," said Ben, with great gravity, "lions and tigers is generally much more reasonable than human beings."

Another roar from the menagerie joined in as bass to the laugh with which this piece of philosophy from so unlikely a person as Ben was received.

"Come on," he said; "come on. They can make a noise, but that's just about all they can do. Come on, my little dears — and if you fell at all afeard, all you have got to do is to take hold of the lion by the nose, and then you'll find he looks upon you as one of them as takes things easy, and he won't say another word to you anyhow."

"We will leave that to you, Ben," said Johanna, "and in the meantime, I will keep close to you, you know."

"Do, my little duck; and I'll just carry you."

"No — no — no!"

Johanna darted away; for if she had not done so, Ben would inevitably have had her up in his arms by way of showing his affection for her. It was a fixed idea of his, and was not to be shaken by any denials or remonstrances.

And now in a few minutes, after traversing the highly picturesque and antique passages of the Tower, the little party arrived at where the lions were kept.

The colonel gave a caution to the late ostler of the inn in Fleet Street to keep an eye over Hector, who not being accustomed to an introduction to such animals as he was about to see, might fancy himself called upon to do something out of the way upon the occasion.

“Oh, I’ll watch him, sir,” said the man. “Come here, Pison, will you? And don’t you be after going and interfering with wild beasteses. Lor’ bless you, sir, he’ll be quite glad to see ’em, and will go on speaking of ’em for ever afterwards — I know he will.”

“Here you are,” said Ben, as he halted opposite the door of a lordly lion. They all looked at the immense creature with a vast amount of interest, for such creatures were rather rarities at that time in London.

While our friends are thus examining the king of the forest, as he crunches a huge beef bone with his formidable jaws, we may give a brief account of the wild creatures that in old times were kept in the tower. There was Pedore, a beautiful lioness, brought from Senegal, and presented to the king by Governor V. Harora.

Caesar, brother to Pedore, brought from the same place, and presented to his majesty, by Captain Haycraft. He has been in the Tower about eight months, is three years and a half old, and supposed to be the finest lion ever seen in England. His looks strike the stoutest beholder with astonishing awe. His head is large, being covered with a long shagged mane that reaches to his shoulders, and adds rather to the terror than majesty of his countenance; for his eyes being very fiery, and darting, as it were, a kind of red flame through his long, shaggy, and dishevelled hair, raises such an idea of fierceness as cannot be excited in a mind unaccompanied with fear, nor can we conceive it possible for human courage to encounter a creature of such a dreadful aspect, without the intervention of some lucky circumstance, notwithstanding the stories that have been related of men killing lions in equal combat. His mouth opens wide, and discovers a frightful set of teeth; and when he roars he may be heard at a great distance.

Miss Jane, a beautiful lioness, about six years old, brought from the coast of Barbary, by Sir Jacob Wyatt.

Phillis, a large wolf, brought from Boulogne, in France, and presented to his majesty by Colonel Hollingworth. It is in form not unlike a dog of a mixed breed, and has been in the Tower about five years. These are very ravenous creatures, which inhabit the immense forests in France and other parts, and are a terror to men and cattle. In the severe season of the year they come from the woods and fall ravenously upon every living thing they meet, and have been known to enter houses in search of food.

Sukey, a North American bear, brought over by Lord Bruce. She has been in the Tower about twelve months.

Hector, a most beautiful lion, sent from the Emperor of Morocco as a present to his majesty. He is fourteen years old, and has been in the Tower about ten. He greatly resembles Caesar.

Helena, companion to Hector, a very handsome lioness, and presented also by the Emperor of Morocco.

Miss Gregory, a beautiful leopardess, about twenty years of age. She was sent to his late majesty by the Dey of Algiers, and presented by the late Algerine Ambassador.

Sir Robert, a fine leopard, of a shining yellow colour intermixed with bright spots. He was brought from Senegal by — Touchit, Esq. He has been in his present situation about eight years, during which he has had seven young ones by two different leopardesses. The young, however, all died soon after being whelped, except one which lived about ten months.

Miss Nancy, a very beautiful lioness, brought from Senegal, and presented to his majesty by — Brady, Esq. She has been here only about nine months, is not quite two years old, and seems very tractable.

A lion monkey. This beast is of a black colour, with very shaggy hair. It was brought from the Cape of Good Hope, and has been here about four months.

An American black bear, lately brought over by Colonel Clarke.

A racoon, brought from Norway by Colonel Clarke. This is a very small beast, and exceedingly harmless. It lives on the sea sands, and chiefly on shell fish, which it takes in a very safe and dexterous manner; for whenever the fish opens its shell to receive either air or nourishment, this creature, we are told, puts a small pebble in, so that the shell may not close again, and picks out the fish with its claws.

Rose, a large Norway wolf, presented about four years since by Herr Widderman. He is about six years old, and appears very fierce and ravenous.

Miss Sally, a beautiful leopardess, presented by the Emperor of Morocco, and brought over in the same ship with Hector.

These were the principal inhabitants of what was called the Lion's Tower; and Ben, who was never so much in his glory as when he was describing the creatures and commenting upon them, went through the list of them with commendable accuracy.

It was quite impossible but that the party should very much admire these wild inhabitants of the woods and wastes of nature, and Ben was wonderfully gratified at the fearless manner in which both Johanna and Arabella approached the dens.

The inspection of the beasts lasted more than an hour, and then, as Sir Richard Blunt had no more time at his disposal, they all again proceeded to the barge that was waiting for them. Ben accompanied the party from the Tower, as the Oakleys had invited him to dine with them.

“Ah,” he said, “by the time we get to your house, cousin Oakley, I shall be half famished. Thank goodness! I have ordered something to eat to be put on board the barge, in case we should be sharp set.”

CHAPTER CXXVIII
Returns to Newgate, and the Proceedings of Mrs. Lovett

While those persons, in whose happiness we and our readers, no doubt, likewise feel a kindly interest, are thus in the happy society of each other, compensating themselves for many of the mischances and deep anxieties of the past, some events were taking place in Newgate of a character well worth the recording.

Mrs. Lovett, when she found that her proposition to turn evidence against Todd would not be listened to, but that it was the fixed determination of the authorities to include her in the prosecution, became deeply despondent. Upon being taken back to Newgate, she did not say one word to any one; but when she was placed in her cell, she paced to and fro in its narrow confines with that restless perturbed manner which may be noticed in wild animals when caged.

After about an hour, then, she called to one of the attendants of the prison, saying —

“I wish to speak to some one who has authority to hear what I may choose to relate.”

“The chaplain will come,” was the reply.

“The chaplain!” repeated Mrs. Lovett with a burst of rage, “what do I want with chaplains? Do I not know perfectly well that when a person is found too idiotic for ordinary duties he is made a chaplain of a jail? No! I will not speak to any of your chaplains.”

“Well, I never!” said the turnkey. “Our chaplain for certain ain’t a conjuror, but I never heard afore that he was sent here on account of being weak in the upper story. It’s likely enough though for all that. Perhaps Mrs. Lovett, you’d like to see the Governor?”

“Yes, he will do much better.”

“Very good.”

Such a prisoner as Mrs. Lovett could command an interview with the Governor of Newgate at any reasonable period; and that functionary having been apprised of her wish to see him, together with what she had said of the chaplain, repaired to her cell with an ill concealed smile upon his face, for in his heart he perfectly agreed in Mrs. Lovett’s estimation of jail chaplains.

“Well, madam,” he said. “What have you to say to me?”

"In the first place, sir, I am here without other clothing then that which I now wear. Is it inconsistent with your regulations for me to have a box of clothes brought me from my home?"

"Oh no — you can have them. I will get an order from the committing magistrate for you to have your clothes brought here. Of course they will be scrupulously examined before they reach you."

"What for?"

"It is our custom, that's all."

"You are afraid that I should escape?"

"Oh, no — no! No woman ever yet escaped from Newgate, and I don't think any man ever will again."

"Perhaps not. For my part, I care not how many men escape, so that you take good care Sweeney Todd does not."

"You may make yourself easy upon that score."

"Good — then when I get my clothes here, I will make a full confession of all I know, regarding Todd's crimes."

"And your own?"

"Yes, if you like. And my own. Be it so. But mark me, I will have no pettifogging, prying, canting parsons in the cell. If you bring your chaplain here I am mute."

"Very well, I will say as much. Of course, if you are inclined to make a confession, you can make it to whom you please."

"I should presume so."

With this, the Governor left Mrs. Lovett, and she commenced again her uneasy pacing of the cell. In about two hours, a large box was brought to her with nearly the whole of her clothes from her house in Bell Yard. She selected a dress, with a number of heavy flounces, and put it on, appearing to be much better satisfied than she had been.

"Ah," said the turnkey, "that's the way with women. Give them dress, and even in Newgate they feel comfortable, but make 'em go shabby, and you had much better hang them outright."

Another hour passed, and then the Governor, with a magistrate and writing materials, came to the cell of the wretched woman.

"If Mrs. Lovett," he said, "you still think proper to persevere in your intention of making a confession, this gentleman, who is a magistrate, will in his official capacity receive it, and I will witness it; but you do it entirely at your own risk and peril."

"I know it," replied Mrs. Lovett, "and I likewise do it to the risk of the peril of Sweeney Todd."

"You can make what statement you please. How far it will be taken as evidence against another, will depend entirely upon how it is in essentials corroborated by others," said the magistrate.

"I am content. Now, sir, will you listen to me?"

"Most certainly."

The Governor arranged his writing materials, and while the magistrate listened, Mrs. Lovett said in a calm clear voice —

"Believing that I am upon the brink of the grave, I make this statement. Todd first connived the idea of that mutual guilt which we have both since carried out. He bought the house in Bell Yard, as likewise the one in Fleet Street, and by his own exertions, he excavated an underground connection between the two, mining right under St. Dunstan's church, and through the vaults of that building. When he had completed all his arrangements, he came to me, and cautiously made his offer; but he did not tell me that those arrangements were then complete, as that he doubtless thought would have placed him too much in my power, in the event of my refusing to cooperate with him in his iniquity. He need not have given himself that amount of trouble; I was willing. The plan he proposed was, that the pie shop should be opened, for the sole purpose of getting rid of the bodies of people, whom he might think proper to murder, in or under his shop. He said that fearing nothing, and believing nothing, he had come to the conclusion, that money was the great thing to be desired in this world, inasmuch as to it he had found that all people bowed down. He said that after the murder of any one, he would take the flesh from the bones quickly, and convey to the shelves of the bakehouse in Bell Yard the pieces, as materials for the pies. Minor arrangements he left to me. He murdered many. The business went on and prospered, and we both grew rich. He refused me my share of the spoil; and so I believe we both fell to our present state."



Mrs. Lovett Makes her Confession to the Governor of Newgate.

“Have you any more to add?” said the magistrate.

“Nothing. But I will answer you any question you may choose to ask of me upon the subject.”

“No. It is not my province to ask anything. This is clearly a voluntary statement and confession. No questions need be, or ought to be, asked concerning it at all.”

“Very well.”

“You are aware that it will be used against you.”

“And against Todd?”

“Yes, it is a strong corroboration of the evidence against him; and as such, if there had been any doubt, would have gone far towards making his conviction certain.”

“Then I am satisfied, sir.”

The magistrate slightly inclined his head and left the cell with the Governor. When they were outside he said to the latter —

“I would advise you to keep a sharp watch upon that woman. My firm opinion is, that she contemplates suicide, and that this statement is merely made for the purpose of damaging Todd as much as possible.”

“No doubt, sir. You may depend upon our keeping a good watch upon her. It is quite impossible she can do herself a mischief. There is literally nothing in

the cell for her to convert to any such use; besides, I doubt if really great criminals ever have the courage to die by their own hands."

"Well, it may be so; of course your experience of these people is very considerable. I only tell you my impression."

"For which, sir, I am much obliged, and will be doubly cautious."

Mrs. Lovett, when she was once more alone, paced her cell in the same restless manner that she had done before. It was not then so much as it is now the custom in Newgate to keep such a strict watch upon prisoners before conviction, and with the exception that there was a man in the passage close at hand, boxed up in a sentry box, and whose duty it was now and then to open the small square wicket in the cell door, and see that the prisoner was all right, Mrs. Lovett had no surveillance over her.

As she paced to and fro, she muttered to herself —

"Yes, I will do it. They think that I would go through the formal parade of a trial. They think that I will stand in one of their courts shrinking before a jury; but I will not — I will not. Oh no, Todd may do all that. It is fitting that he should; but I, having failed in my one great enterprise, will bid adieu to life."

She paused, for the man was at the wicket.

"Do you want anything?" he said.

"No, my friend. Only the poor privilege of being alone."

"Humph! I thought I heard you speaking."

"I was only rehearsing my defence."

"Oh, well; that's a new dodge anyhow. You take it easy, Ma'am Lovett, if anybody ever did."

"Innocence, my friend, should be composed."

The turnkey stared at her through the little bars that crossed even that small orifice in the door, and then closed it without another word. He was scarcely used to such an amount of cool effrontery as he found exhibited by Mrs. Lovett.

"Alone again," she said. "Alone again. I must be cautious, or they will suspect my purpose. I must only converse with myself in faint whispers. I would not be thwarted willingly in this my last and boldest act; and I am resolved that I will not live to look upon the light of another day. I am resolved, and wound up to my purpose. Oh, what poor fools they are to fancy they can prevent such a one as I am from dying when and how I wish! They have unwittingly supplied me with the ready means of death today."

These words were spoken so low, that if the turnkey had been listening with all his might on the other side of the door he could not possibly have overheard them. The recent visit of that functionary, if the peep through the little opening in the door could be called a visit, had taught Mrs. Lovett to be more cautious how she trusted the air of her cell with the secret resolves of her teeming brain.

But now that she had really and truly made up her mind to commit suicide, all the worst passions of her nature seemed to be up in arms and to wage wild war in her heart and brain; while amid them all was the intense hatred of Todd, and the hope that she should be revenged upon him, by his being brought to death upon the scaffold, triumphant over every other.

"I had hoped," she said; "oh, how I had hoped, that I might have had the satisfaction of witnessing such a scene — but that is past now. I must go before him; but still it is with the conviction that die he must. I feel, I know that he will not have the courage to do as I am about to do, and if he had, I am certain he has not provided himself with the means of success as I have provided myself."

These last words she scarcely whispered to herself, so very fearful was she that they might be overheard by the turnkey who was so close at hand.

And now a fear came over her that he was watching her through some little hole or crevice of the door, and the very thought was sufficient to make her wonderfully uneasy. If it were so, there was quite sufficient reflected light in the cell to make every one of her actions easily observable, and so her cherished design of taking her own life would be defeated completely.

In lieu of a piece of whalebone in the back of her dress, there was a small tin tube, soldered perfectly tight against the escape of any fluid, and made fast at each end. That tin tube had been in the dress she now selected for many months, and it was filled with a subtle liquid poison, a very few drops of which would prove certainly fatal.

She dreaded that she should be observed to take this ingenious contrivance from her dress and pounced upon before she could break it open and make use of its contents.

She sat down on the miserable kind of bench which served as a bed, and in a very low whisper to herself she said —

"I must wait till night — yes, I must wait till night!"

She knew well that the indulgence of a light would be denied to her, and she smiled to herself, as she thought how that mistaken piece of prison policy would enable her to free herself from what now was the bitter encumbrance of existence.

“The twilight,” she muttered, “will soon creep into this gloomy place, and it will be my twilight, too — the twilight of my life before, and only just before, the night of death begins. That night will know no dawn — that long, long sleep which will know no waking! Yea, I will then escape from this strong prison!”

CHAPTER CXXIX

Mrs. Lovett Sees some Twilight Spectres in her Cell

After she had sat for some time in this state of feeling, and just before the darkness got so apparent that but little could be seen of the few articles that the place contained, she heard the door open.

A flash of light came into the place.

“Who is that?” she cried.

“Oh, you needn’t think as it’s robbers — it’s only me,” said a voice. “You are quite safe here, ma’am. That’s one good of being in the stone jug: you needn’t be afraid of thieves breaking into your place.”

She saw that it was the turnkey whose duty it was to keep watch in the passage outside her cell.

“What do you want here?” she said, “Cannot I have the poor privilege of being left alone?”

“Oh, yes, only it’s your rations’ time, and here’s your boiled rice and water, and here’s your loaf, mum. In course, that ain’t exactly the sort of thing you have been accustomed to; but it’s all the county allows — only between you and me and the post, Mrs. Lovett, as they say you have got a pretty heavy purse, you can have just what you like.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, in a moderate way you know. You have only to pay, and you can have anything.”

“Then even Newgate is like the rest of the world. Money rules even here, does it?”

“Why, in a manner of speaking, a guinea is worth twenty one shillings here, just the same as it is outside, ma’am.”

“Then how much will purchase my liberty?”

The turnkey shook his head.

“There, ma’am, you ask for an article that I don’t deal in. My shop don’t keep such a thing as liberty. What I mean is, that you may have just what you like to eat and drink.”

“Very well. In the morning you can bring me what I order.”

“Oh, yes — yes.”

“I will pay handsomely for what I do order, for I have, as you say, a heavy purse. Much heavier, indeed it is, than any of you imagine, my friends.”

“Your humble servant, ma’am. I only wish Newgate was full of such as you.”

“Ah, I hear a footstep. Who is it that is about to intrude upon me tonight?”

“It’s the chaplain.”

“The chaplain? I thought he understood that I declined his visits completely.”

“Why, you see, ma’am, so you did, but it’s his duty to go the round of all the cells before the prison shuts up for the night, so he will come, you see; and if I might advise you, ma’am, I should say be civil to him whatever you may think, for he can do you an ill turn if he likes in his report. He has more underhanded sort of power than you are aware of, Mrs. Lovett; so you had better, as I say, be civil to him, and keep your thoughts to yourself. Where’s the odds, you know, ma’am?”

“I am much obliged to you for this advice, and I will pay you for it. There is a couple of guineas for you as a slight remembrance of me, and let others say what they will, you at least will not accuse me of ingratitude for any benefit conferred upon me.”

“That I won’t, ma’am; but here he comes. Mum is the word about what I have said, or else my place would not be worth much, I can tell you.”

“Depend upon me.”

The turnkey, with a great show of respect, backed out of the cell as the chaplain entered it.

“Well, Mrs. Lovett,” said the pious individual, “I hope to find you in a better frame of mind than upon my last visit to you.”

“Sir,” said Mrs. Lovett, “if you will come to me at your own hour in the morning, I shall then present myself to you in a different manner, and I shall no longer object to anything you may be pleased to say to me.”

“What a blessed conversion. Really, now, this is very satisfactory indeed. Mrs. Lovett, of course you are a very great sinner, but if you attend to me, I can warrant your being received in the other world by ten thousand angels.”

“I thank you, sir. Half the number would be quite sufficient, I feel assured, for my poor deserts.”

“Oh no, ten thousand — ten thousand. Not one less than that number. But if you have any doubts about the reality of flames everlasting, I shall have great satisfaction in removing them, by holding your hand for a few moments in the flame of this candle.”

“You are very kind,” said Mrs. Lovett, “but I shall be quite as well convinced if you hold yours, as I shall then I hope see the agony depicted in your countenance.”

“Humph! — ah! No, I would rather not exactly. But quite rejoicing that you are in so very pious a frame of mind, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you tomorrow morning at eleven o’clock.”

“That will do very well,” said Mrs. Lovett.

The chaplain, thinking he had made quite a wonderful convert in Mrs. Lovett, and with serious thoughts of getting somebody to write a tract for him on the subject, left the cell, little suspecting how he was to be duped.

“Well, you did gammon him,” said the turnkey, “I will say that for you.”

“Can you not leave me a light?”

“Agin the rules. Can’t do it; but I’ll wait till you have put the mattress to rights, if you like.”

“Oh, no. It will do very well. Good night.”

“Good night, Ma’am Lovett, and thank you for me. They may say what they likes about you, but I will stick up for you, so far that you are liberal with your tin, and that’s a very good thing indeed. I ain’t quite sure that it isn’t everything, as this here world goes.”

The door of the cell was closed, and the last rays of the turnkey’s candle disappeared. Mrs. Lovett was alone again in her dreary cell.

The darkness now was very intense, indeed: for during the few minutes that she had been conversing with the chaplain, the twilight had almost faded away, dropping quite into night, so that not an object was visible in the cell. She heard the turnkey’s footsteps die away in the distance, and then indeed she felt truly alone.

“And I shall not see the sunlight of another day,” she said. “My pilgrimage is over.”

She pronounced these words with a shudder, for even she could not at such a moment feel quite at ease. She held in her hands the means of death, and yet she hesitated — not that she had the remotest intention of foregoing her fixed

resolve; but feeling that at any moment she had it in her power now to carry it out, she lingered there upon the shores of life.

“And it has come to this,” she said. “After all my scheming — after all my resolves, it has come to suicide in a felon’s cell. Well, I played a daring game, and for heavy stakes, and I have lost, that is all.”

She covered her eyes with her hands for several minutes, and slowly rocked to and fro.

Who shall say what thoughts crossed that bold bad woman’s soul at that time? Who shall say that in those few moments her memory did not fly back to some period when she was innocent and happy? — for even Mrs. Lovett must have been innocent and happy once; and the thought that such had been her blessed state, compared to what it was now, was enough to drive her mad — quite mad.

When she withdrew her hands from before her eyes she uttered a cry of terror. Memory had conjured up the forms of departed spirits to her; and now so strong had become the impression upon her mind in that hour of agony, that she thought she saw them in her cell.

“Oh, mercy — mercy!” she said. “Why should I be tortured thus? Why should I suffer such horrors? Why do you glare at me with such fiery eyes for, horrible spectres!”



Mrs. Lovett in Newgate — is Conscience Stricken.

She covered up her eyes again; but then a still more terrible supposition took possession of her, for instead of fancying that the spectres were in the darkness of the cell at some distance from her, she thought that they all came crowding up to within an inch of her face, gibing and mocking.

“Off — off!” she cried, as she suddenly stretched out her arm. “Do not drive me quite mad.”

Her eyes glared in the darkness like those of some wild animal. They looked phosphorescent, and for some time such was the agony and the thralldom of her feelings, that she quite forgot she had the means of death in her hands.

She began to question the spirits that fancy presented in the darkness as thronging her cell.

“Who are you?” she said. “I know you not. I did not kill you! Why do you glare at me? And you, with your face matted with blood, I did not kill you. Who are you, too, with those mangled limbs? I killed none of you. Go to Sweeney Todd — go to Sweeney Todd!”

She kept her hands stretched out before her, and she fancied that it was only by such an action that she kept them from touching her very face. Then she dropped upon her knees, and in the same wild half screaming voice she spoke again, crying —

“Away with you all! Todd it was that killed you — not I. He would have killed me, too. Do you hear, that he tried to kill me? But he could not. What boy are you? Oh, I know you now. He sent you to the madhouse. You are George Allan. Well, I did not kill you. I see that there is blood upon you! But why do you all come to me and leave Todd’s cell tenantless, except by himself? For you cannot be here and there both! Away, I say! Away to him! Do not come here to torture me!”

Tap — tap — tap came a sound on the door of the cell.

“Hush!” she said. “Hush!”

“What’s the matter?” said the turnkey.

“Nothing — nothing.”

“But I heard you calling out about something.”

“It is nothing, my friend. All is right. I was only — only praying.”

“Humph!” said the turnkey. “If you were, it is something rather new, I reckon. She can’t do any mischief, that’s one comfort; and many of the worst ones as comes here don’t pass very nice, cosy, comfortable nights. They fancies they sees all sorts of things, they does. Poor devils! I never seed nothing worse than myself or my wife in all my time, and I don’t think I ever shall.”

Mrs. Lovett did not now utter one word until she was sure the turnkey was out of hearing. That slight interruption had recalled her to herself, and done

much to banish from her disturbed imagination all those fancied monsters of the brain which had disturbed her.

“Why did I yield even for a moment,” she said, “to such a load of superstition? I thought that even at such a moment as this I should be free from such terrors. How I should have smiled in derision of any one else who had been weak enough to give way to them — and yet how real they looked. How very unlike the mere creations of a disturbed brain. Could they be real? Is it possible?”

Mrs. Lovett shook a little as she asked herself these questions, and it was only at such a moment that she could or was at all likely to ask them, for our readers may well believe that such a woman could have had no sort of belief in a providence, or she never, with her active intellect, could have fallen into the mistake of supposing that she was compassing happiness by committing crime.

For a while now the doubt that she had suggested to herself shook her very much. It was the very first time in all her wicked life that anything like a perception of a future state had crossed her mind; and each minute how fearfully to her the possibility, and then the probability, that there really was another world than this, began now to grow upon her.

That thought was more full of agony than the appearance of the spectres had been to her — those spectres which were only called into existence by her own consciousness of overpowering guilt and deep iniquity.

“I am going now,” she said. “I am going. World that I hate, and all upon thee, farewell!”

She broke the tin case containing the poison, and applying one of the broken ends to her lips, she swallowed two drops of the deadly liquid, and fell dead upon the floor of her cell.

CHAPTER CXXX

Sweeney Todd is Placed upon his Trial

It was about eight o'clock in the morning that the officials of Newgate found their way to the cell of Mrs. Lovett. At first they thought that she was sleeping upon the floor of her prison, but when they picked her up, they soon became aware of what had really happened, and the alarm spread through the prison.

The governor was vexed, and the chaplain was vexed, and when the sheriff was sent for, he, too, was vexed, so they all revenged themselves upon the turnkey, whose duty it was to be in the passage adjoining the cell, and they fancied they met the justice of the case by discharging him.

Of course, in a very few hours the news of Mrs. Lovett's suicide became known all over London, with very many exaggerations; and there was not one person in the whole of the vast population of the great city who did not know the fact, save and except that man who would feel most interested in it. We, of course, allude to Sweeney Todd.

He, in his cell in Newgate, saw no newspapers, and held no conversation with the world without; and as none of the persons in any way connected with the prison chose to inform him of what had happened, he had not the least idea but that Mrs. Lovett was, along with him, suffering all the terrors of suspense antecedent to her trial upon the serious charge impending over her.

Of course when the day of his, Todd's, trial should arrive, the fact could no longer be kept secret from him; and that day come at last to wither up any faint hopes that he might cling to.

Scarcely ever in London had such an amount of public excitement been produced by any criminal proceedings, as by the trial of Sweeney Todd. While he pursued a monotonous life from day to day in his cell, haunted by all sorts of fears, and the prey of the most dismal apprehensions, the public appetite had been fed by all sorts of strange and vague stories concerning him.

The most hideous crimes had been laid to his charge; and in the imagination of the people, the number of his victims was quadrupled, so that when the morning of his trial arrived, so great was the excitement, that business in the City was almost at a stand still, and sober minded men who did not see any peculiar interest in the sayings and doings of a great criminal, were of course disgusted that the popular taste should run that way.

As regarded Todd himself, he had gone into Newgate with a fixed determination in his own mind to commit suicide if he possibly could; but he had not taken the precaution that Mrs. Lovett had long before, in providing the means of so doing; and consequently he was thrown upon the scanty resources that might present themselves to him in the prison.

That those resources would be few and limited enough, may be well imagined, for the most special instructions had been given by Sir Richard Blunt to prevent Todd from committing suicide; and since Mrs. Lovett had so disposed of herself despite the authorities, those precautions had been redoubled; so that Todd, after two or three abortive attempts, and thinking the matter over in every way, saw that there was no chance for him in that way, and he made up his mind to abide his trial, with the hope that he might, during the course of it, be able to say enough to make Mrs. Lovett's conviction certain, while he felt certain that he could not possibly make his own situation worse than it was.

He thought, too, that perhaps after conviction he might behave so cunningly as to deceive his jailer into an idea that he was full of contrition and resignation, and so, at some ungarded moment, achieve the object that now he felt to be impossible.

With these hopes and feelings, then, little suspecting that Mrs. Lovett had already removed her case to a higher tribunal, Sweeney Todd awaited his trial.

Probably he had no idea of the amount of excitement that his case had created outside the prison. The customary calm of the officials of the jail, had deceived him into a belief, that after all it was no such great matter; but he quite forgot that that was a professional calm, with which the people had nothing to do, and in which it was not at all likely they would participate.

The Governor came into his cell about a quarter before nine o'clock on the morning fixed for his trial.

"Sweeney Todd," he said, "you are wanted in court."

"I am ready," said Todd.

He rose with alacrity, and accompanied the Governor and two turnkeys. It was the custom then to place prisoners accused of such heavy offences as fell to Todd's charge in irons, and if the authorities had any suspicion of violent intentions upon the part of such prisoners, the irons accompanied them to the bar of the Old Bailey. Todd was so accompanied; and as he walked along, his irons made a melancholy clank together.

His imprisonment preceding his trial had been uncommonly short, but yet it had been sufficient to bring him down greatly in appearance. He had never been one of the fat order of mortals, but now he looked like some great gaunt, ghost. Every patch of colour had forsaken his cheeks, and his eyes looked preternaturally lustrous.

Those who had not been accustomed to the sight of him during his imprisonment in Newgate, shrunk from him as he followed the Governor through the gloomy passages of the prison. Two well-armed officers kept close upon his heels, so that Todd could not complain of a want of attendants.

Even he recoiled when he was brought into the court of the Old Bailey, for it was a complete sea of heads; and from the dock he could hear the roar and the shout, and the shrieks of people outside, who were still struggling for admission.



Todd goes to take his Trial.

It was then that the idea first seemed to strike him that the public, in him, had recognised one of those notorious criminals, that awaken in no small degree popular indignation by their acts. Indeed, upon his first appearance in the court, there was a strange kind of groan of execration, which was tolerably evident to all, and yet not defined enough for the judge to take any notice of.

The strife continued at the door of the court, and it was quite evident that the officers were engaged in a severe struggle with the crowd outside.

“Let the doors be closed,” said the judge; “the court is already inconveniently crowded.”

Upon this order, the officers redoubled their exertions; and being assisted by some of the spectators already within the court, who were fearful of being trampled to death if the crowd should once get in, the doors were made to shut, and fastened.

A yell of rage and disappointment came from the mob; and then a loud voice, that towered above all other noises, shouted —

“Bring Todd out and we will hang him at once without any further trouble. We only want Todd!”

The countenance of the prisoner turned as white as paper, and his glaring eyes were fixed upon the doors of the court.

"It is quite impossible," said the judge, "that the business of the court can be carried on under these circumstances; I hope that the civil power will be sufficient to repress this tumult without, otherwise it will be my duty to send for a guard of military, and then bloodshed may be the consequence, from which those who create this riot alone will be in any way answerable."

"Bring him out!" cried a hundred voices. "Out with him! Todd — Todd! We want Todd."

There was then such a furious hammering at the doors of the court, that it was quite impossible to hear what any one said. Sir Richard Blunt suddenly appeared on the bench, and leaning over to the judge, he said —

"My lord, I am collecting a force with which I shall be able to clear the entrances to the court."

"I wish you would, Sir Richard. This riot is most disgraceful."

"It is, my lord; but it shall be suppressed now with as much speed as may be."

With this, Sir Richard immediately retired. He collected together a force of fifty constables, and forming them into a sort of wedge, he suddenly opened a side door, and attacked the mob. The fight, for a hand to hand fight it now was, did not last more than ten minutes, when the mob gave way, and "every one for himself" became the cry. In five minutes more the party of officers had possession of all the avenues to the court, and a profound silence succeeded to the riot that had taken place.

"I think now," said the judge "we may proceed to business. This riot has been a most disgraceful one, and if the officers will bring anyone before me who has taken part in it, I will commit him to prison at once."

"They are all dispersed, my lord," said Sir Richard.

"The court thanks you, sir," said the judge. "Let the proceedings commence at once."

Todd now glared about him, and his lips kept moving as though he were repeating something to himself in a whisper. The Governor of Newgate leant forward, and said —

"Do you wish to say anything?"

"Yes. Where is *she*?"

"Mrs. Lovett do you mean?"

"I do. Why am I here, and she not? Where is she? If she be innocent, why then so am I. I do not see her."

"She will not be here."

"Not here? How — why?"

"She is dead."

Todd nearly dropped to the floor, and from that moment a great portion of his courage, small as it was, departed, and he looked like a ghost rather than a living man. At times, he kept muttering to himself the word — "Dead — dead — dead!"

The usual formalities were gone through, and then Todd was roused up to plead to the indictment, charging him with the murder of Francis Thornhill.

The governor touched him on the shoulder.

"Plead to the indictment," he said.

"Dead!" cried Todd. "Why is she dead?"

"Prisoner at the bar," said the clerk of the arraign. "Do you plead guilty or not guilty to the charge here made against you?"

"Not guilty!" cried Todd, as he roused himself up, and glared at the judge like an enraged tiger.

Government had entrusted the prosecution to the Attorney General of the time being, and that functionary was in court. He rose to open the case, and spoke as follows, amid the most breathless silence —

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury —

"The prisoner at the bar was originally indicted along with a female named Lovett — "

"Where is she?" said Todd.

"Prisoner," said the judge, "at the proper time you will have an opportunity of making any observation you may think fit, but it is scarcely necessary for me to inform you that this is not the time."

"She is not dead!" cried Todd. "She has been let escape by some juggling, in order that all the vengeance of the law might be directed against me. It is not true that she is dead. Some of you are chargeable with allowing that woman to escape. I tell you that she is a fiend and not a woman. But she has had gold at her disposal, and she has bribed you all — I say she has bought you all."

“Prisoner,” said the judge, “this cannot be permitted. You only deeply prejudice your own case by this conduct.”

“That is impossible. I know that you are all in one large conspiracy against me, and you have let that woman escape, in order that the last drop should not be wanting to fill my cup of bitterness to the overflowing.”

“It will be impossible,” said the Attorney-General, “to proceed with the case, if the prisoner at the bar continues these interruptions.”

“Prisoner,” said the judge, “I, and all here present, are disposed to give any allowance and indulgence to a man in your situation; but let me beg of you to be silent.”

“I am done,” said Todd, “but it is false to say that she is dead. That fiend cannot die. She is a devil, I tell you all, and if there be any here who fancy that she is dead, I tell them that they are mistaken. She cannot be killed. I know that well. Go on with what you call your proceedings; I have no more to say to you.”