

CHAPTER CXXXI

The Trial of Sweeney Todd Continued

This ebullition of feeling upon the part of Sweeney Todd was by some of the spectators looked upon as a vague indication of insanity, while some of the members of the bench looked very mysterious, and asked themselves if it were not the first step in the direction of some very clever defence. But then they were gentlemen who never exactly saw anything as the world in general agrees to see it.

The judge shook his head as if he rather doubted Sweeney Todd's implicit promise that he would not again interrupt the proceedings; and among the whole of the spectators of that most extraordinary trial, the most intense interest was evidently rather on the increase than the diminution.

The judge finding that Todd did not again say anything for a few moments, slightly inclined his head to the Attorney General, as much as to say — "Pray get on, now that there seems an opportunity of so doing;" and that personage, learned in the law, accordingly rose again, and having adjusted his gown, addressed himself again to the case before him, with his usual skill.

"My lords, and gentlemen of the jury —

"If this were only some ordinary everyday proceeding, I should not sit so calmly under the indecorous interruptions of the prisoner at the bar; but when I feel, in common with all here present, that that person has so great a stake as his life upon the issue of this investigation, I am disposed in all charity to allow a latitude of action, that otherwise would not, and could not, be endured.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I yet hope that these unseemly interruptions are over, and that I shall be permitted in peace to make those remarks to you, which it is my duty to make on behalf of the crown, who prosecutes in this serious case.

"Nothing can be further from my wish than to heighten by any strength of phraseology or domestic detail the case against the prisoner at the bar. I shall confine myself to a recital of the bare facts of the case, feeling that, while I cannot detract from them, they are of such a character of horror, as to require no adventitious aid from the art of the orator.

"Gentlemen, it appears that the prisoner at the bar is arraigned for the wilful murder of Francis Thornhill. From what information we have been able to collect, the prisoner, Sweeney Todd, is a native of the north of England. He came to London about eighteen years ago, and was in very great poverty, when he opened a small barber's shop in Crutched Friars. He remained in that shop about seventeen months, and then paid one hundred and twenty five pounds for the lease of a house in Fleet Street, for which he was thus only to pay a rental to the Skinners' Company of seventeen pound ten per annum, he consenting to keep the premises in ordinary repair.

“The lower part of this house had been a small hosier’s; but the prisoner at the bar altered it into a barber’s shop, and he has there continued to reside until his arrest upon the serious charge which we are brought here to investigate.

“What were the pursuits of the prisoner during his occupancy of that house, it is not our province just now to inquire, as all our attention must be directed to a consideration of the one charge, to answer to which he stands at the bar of this court; and I shall, therefore, proceed to detail the evidence upon which the prosecution founds that charge: —

“It appears that upon the third day of August last, a ship of 400 tons burthen, called the *Star*, arrived in the London Docks. On board of that ship was the captain, and a crew of nine seamen, and two boys. As passengers, there was a Colonel Jeffery, and a Mr. Thornhill, whose death is the motive of the present proceedings. There was likewise a large dog named Hector on board the vessel, which was very much attached to Mr. Thornhill.

“Now, gentlemen of the jury, it had so happened that Francis Thornhill had been commissioned, during the progress of a wreck at sea by a young gentleman named Mark Ingestrie, to take a certain String of Oriental Pearls, valued at somewhere about sixteen thousand pounds sterling, to a young lady in London, named Johanna Oakley; and this Francis Thornhill, fully believing that Mark Ingestrie had perished at sea, was most anxious to fulfil his request regarding this valuable and important String of Pearls.

“As early as possible he landed from the ship, taking the String of Pearls with him, and his faithful dog Hector accompanied him on shore.”

At this moment, Hector, who was in court, having for the second time heard his name mentioned, began to think probably that something was going on concerning him, and he set up a loud bark of defiance.

The effect of this was greatly to interest some of the auditory, while it brought a smile to the faces of others. Todd turned deadly pale, and in a voice of alarm, he cried —

“Keep off the dog — keep off the dog, I say!”

“Bow! — Wow! — Wow!” barked Hector again.

“That dog,” said the judge, “must be immediately removed from the court. Officers, see to it.”

“I beg, my lord,” said the Attorney General, “that you will allow him to remain, for I assure your lordship that he is a witness in this most important case.”

“A witness?”

“Yes, my lord; I speak advisedly, and as a favour I hope your lordship will permit him to remain.”

“Will anybody keep him quiet?”

“Oh, yes, your worship,” cried the ostler. “I’ll keep Pison like a mouse as has fainted clean away.”

“Who is that man, and what does he say?” said the judge.

“My lord,” said the Attorney General, “he says he can keep the dog quite quiet if you will allow him to remain.”

“Oh, very well. Pray proceed, Mr. Attorney.”

The Attorney General then resumed.

“With the String of Pearls then, and the dog, which the jury have seen, Mr. Francis Thornhill went into the City to fulfil the request of Mark Ingestrie. The address he had was to Mr. Oakley, a spectacle maker in the City, with whom Miss Oakley, who was to have the String of Pearls, resided.

“Gentlemen of the jury, neither Francis Thornhill nor the String of Pearls ever reach their destination. It appears that on his route, Thornhill went into the shop of the prisoner at the bar to be shaved, and no one ever saw him come out again. The dog though was found sitting at the door of the shop, and when Todd opened his shop door, the dog rushed in and brought out his master’s hat.

“Gentlemen, the captain of the ship and Colonel Jeffery, both became very anxious concerning the fate of Mr. Thornhill, and they made every inquiry. They questioned the prisoner at the bar, who at once admitted that he had shaved him, but stated that he had left his shop when that operation was over. The captain of the Star was compelled to go to Bristol with his ship, but Colonel Jeffery, in conjunction with a friend, pressed his inquiries about Mr. Thornhill without success. The matter appeared to be involved in the most profound mystery, and the only hope of an elucidation of it, consisted in the probability that such a valuable piece of property as the String of Pearls would be sure to turn up some day in some one’s possession. Gentlemen, it did so turn up. It appeared that at Hammersmith resided a Mr. John Mundel, who lent money upon securities, and it will be deposed in evidence, that one evening the prisoner at the bar, magnificently attired, and in a handsome coach, went to this Mr. Mundel, and pawned a string of pearls for some thousands of pounds.

“It is to be regretted that this Mundel cannot be brought before the jury. He is dead, gentlemen; but a confidential clerk of his, who saw the prisoner at the bar, will depose to the facts.

“We thus then, gentlemen of the jury, commit the prisoner with the disappearance of Thornhill, and now we come to the strongest features of this most remarkable case.

“It appears that for a considerable time past, the church of St. Dunstan’s had become insufferable from a peculiar stench with which the whole of that sacred edifice appeared to be constantly filled, and it baffled all the authorities to account for it.

“No one had been entombed in any of the vaults beneath the church for a considerable time, and in fact, there was no apparent reason for the frightful miasmatic odour that upon all occasions filled the edifice, and day by day got worse instead of better. Scientific men, gentlemen of the jury, were consulted with regard to this stench in the church, and various very learned theories were broached upon the subject; but no one thought of making an accurate examination of the vaults beneath the church, until Sir Richard Blunt, the well-known magistrate, privately undertook it.

“Gentlemen, Sir Richard Blunt found that almost every vault was full of the fresh remains of the dead. He found that into old coffins, the tenants of which had mouldered to dust, there had been thrust fresh bodies with scarcely any flesh remaining upon them, but yet sufficient to produce the stench in the church, by the effluvia arising from them, and finding its way into the pews. In one vault, too, was found the contents of which were too horrid for description; suffice it that it contained what butchers, when speaking of slaughtered animals, call the offal. The stench in St. Dunstan’s Church was no longer a mystery.

“Well, gentlemen of the jury, Sir Richard Blunt persevered in his investigations, and found that there was an underground connection from exactly beneath the shaving shop of the prisoner at the bar, and the cellarge of a house in Bell Yard, Temple Bar, which was his property; and which was in the occupation of a female, named Lovett, who this day would have stood at the bar by the side of the prisoner, had she not, despite every vigilance used to prevent such an act, succeeded in poisoning herself, while in prison in Newgate.

“Gentlemen of the jury, it will be shown in evidence that the way the larger portion of the flesh of Todd’s victims was got rid of was by converting it into meat and pork pies upon the premises of Mrs. Lovett.

“Beneath Todd’s shop was found a diabolical contrivance, by which he could make any one he pleased fall through the floor upon the chair they sat on to be shaved, while an empty chair, in all respects similar, took the place of the one that had been occupied by the unfortunate victim. If the unhappy man, thus betrayed in a moment of confidence, was not killed by the fall, he would, at all events, be sufficiently stunned to become an easy prey to Sweeney Todd, when he chose to go down and despatch him.

“And now, gentlemen of the jury, and you, my lord, I may be told that these wholesale murders have nothing to do with the indictment, which simply charges the prisoner at the bar with the wilful murder of Francis Thornhill; but I reply that it was impossible to make apparent to the jury the mode by which Francis Thornhill came by his death, without going into these painful details. Todd’s house was found crammed with property and clothing sufficient for one hundred and sixty people!”

A thrill of horror pervaded the court at this announcement.

“Yes, gentlemen of the jury; and among that clothing is the sleeve of a jacket, which will be sworn to as having belonged to Francis Thornhill; but we have yet more cogent evidence of the fact that Thornhill met his death at the hands of the prisoner at the bar. His hat, gentlemen, will be identified by the dog now in court. But, gentlemen, is that enough? No, the law wisely looks for the body of a murdered man; and I do not call to mind an instance of a conviction following from murder where there has not been some satisfactory identification of the remains of the murdered man. We will produce that proof. Among the skeletons found contiguous to Todd’s premises, was one which will be sworn to as being that of the deceased, Mr. Thornhill. One bone of that skeleton will be produced in court, and sworn to by a surgeon who had the care of it, when once fractured on board ship, and who, from repeated examinations such a surgeon only could make, knows it well.”

This announcement on the part of the Attorney General, produced an enormous amount of excitement in court, for many persons had come, prepossessed with the idea that the nonproduction of the dead body of the alleged murdered man would be a serious hitch in the prosecution.

Todd looked up, and in a loud clear voice he cried —

“No! No!”

“Yes,” added the Attorney General. “Yes. Gentlemen of the jury, that is all I have to say for the prosecution. The facts are as clear as light, and you will hear from the mouths of creditable witnesses the various particulars which it has been my duty on behalf of the prosecution to lay before you this day.”

CHAPTER CXXXII
Todd's Trial Continues and Goes all against Him

The Attorney General sat down.

It was quite clear now to the most superficial observer, that the case against Todd had been just picked out for convenience sake, and was one among many. From the moment that the Attorney General had mentioned what facts he could prove, the fate of the murderer was certain to the minds of all. They looked upon him in every respect as a doomed man.

Of course the remarks of the Attorney General occupied a much greater space than we have felt that, in justice to the other portion of our story, we could give to them; but what we have presented to the reader was the essential portion of what he said.

All eyes were turned upon Todd, to note how he took the statement for the prosecution; but there was little to be gleaned from his face. His eyes seemed to be wandering over the sea of faces in the court, as if he were in search of some one whom he was disappointed in not seeing. There was a pause of some few moments duration, and then the Attorney General called his first witness, who was examined by the Junior Counsel for the prosecution.

This witness's deposition was very simple and concise.

"I was master of the ship, Star," he said, "and arrived in the Port of London on the day named in the indictment against the prisoner at the bar. Mr. Francis Thornhill had mentioned to me and to Colonel Jeffery that he had a valuable String of Pearls to take to a young lady, named Johanna Oakley, and he left the ship with his dog, Hector, to deliver them. I never saw him again from that hour to this. I was anxious about him, and called at the barber's shop in Fleet Street, kept by the prisoner at the bar. The prisoner readily admitted that such a person had been shaved at his shop, and then had left it, but why the dog remained he could not tell. The dog named Hector was at the door of the prisoner's house. He had a hat with him. My name is Arthur Rose Fletcher, and I am forty two years of age."

"Is this the hat that you saw with the dog in Fleet Street?"

The hat was produced.

"Yes, that is the hat. I will swear to it."

"Whose hat is it, or was it?"

"It belonged to Mr. Thornhill, who wore it on the day he left the ship to go into the city with the String of Pearls."

“That is all then, Mr. Fletcher, that we need trouble you with at present.”

The judge now interposed; and in a mild voice addressing Todd, he said —

“It is not too late for you to consent to the appointment of counsel to watch your case. I dare say some gentleman of the bar will volunteer to do so.”

“With the prisoner’s consent,” said a counsel, who was sitting at the table below the judge, “I will attend to the case.”

“Be it so,” said Todd, gloomily.

Upon this the counsel rose, and addressing the captain of the ship, who had not yet left the witness box, he said to him —

“Mr. Fletcher, how is it that you can so positively identify this hat of the alleged murdered Mr. Thornhill, after such a space of time?”

“By a remarkable flaw in the rim of it, sir. An accident occurred on board the ship, by which Mr. Thornhill’s hat was burnt, and this is the same hat. When he left the ship we joked him about it, and he said that perhaps he would buy a new one in the City.”

“Indeed. Then he might have sold this one.”

“He might, certainly.”

“And so the dog seeing it left at some place where it was sold or given away, and not comprehending such transaction, might have taken possession of it.”

“Of that I can say nothing.”

“Very well, Mr. Fletcher. I don’t think I need trouble you any further. This affair of the hat seems to fall to the ground most completely.”

The Attorney General did not say a word aloud, but he whispered something to the junior, who nodded in reply. The next witness called, was John Figgs, the groom at the coach office, who had rescued Hector from Todd’s malevolence. His testimony was as follows: —

“I saw a crowd of people round the door of Todd’s shop, and I went over to see what it was all about. The dog as I calls Pison, but as everybody else calls Hector, was trying to get into the shop. Some one opened the door, and then he came out with a hat in his mouth, after rummaging all over the shop and upsetting no end of things. I tried to coax him away, but he would not come by no means. At last, the next day I found him very bad, and that he had been pisoned, and so I calls him Pison, and took him to the stables and got him over it.”

“What is it he says he calls the dog?” asked the judge, with a very perplexed look.

“Pison, my lord.”

“But what is Pison?”

“He means Poison.”

“Oh, is that it; then why don’t he say Poison? It’s very absurd for anybody to say Pison, when they mean Poison all the while.”

“It’s all the same,” said the groom. “Pison is my way, and the t’other is yourn, that’s all!”

“What became of the hat?” asked the junior counsel for the prosecution.

“I don’t know. When I found the dog, in a very bad state indeed, it was gone.”

“Now, John Figgs,” said Todd’s counsel, “could you identify that hat again among five hundred hats like it?”

“Five hundred?”

“Yes, or a thousand.”

“Well, I should say not. It wouldn’t be an easy matter to do that, I take it. I could tell you a particular horse among any lot, but I ain’t so well known in the way of hats.”

“Is this the hat? Can you deliberately swear that this is the hat in question?”

“I shouldn’t like to swear it.”

“Very well, that will do.”

John Figgs was permitted to go down upon this, and it was quite evident that some faint hope was beginning to quicken in the eye of Sweeney Todd, as he found that his self-appointed counsel began to make so light of the evidence of the hat. For the moment he quite forgot what proofs were still to come to fix the deed of murder upon him.

Colonel Jeffery was now called. He deposed clearly and distinctly as follows: —

“I knew Mr. Thornhill, and much regretted his loss. In company with Mr. Fletcher I went to Todd’s shop to make some inquiry about him, to the effect that he had been shaved there, and had then left. I did not feel satisfied, and when Mr. Fletcher was found to be in London, I got the assistance of a friend of

mine, named Rathbone, and together we prosecuted what inquiries we could. I picked up a hat from Todd's passage, and after putting myself into communication with Sir Richard Blunt, I delivered the hat to him. I have been in constant communication with Sir Richard Blunt upon the subject of this inquiry for a long time. We found that the prisoner at the bar had a sort of apprentice or errand boy in his shop, named Tobias Ragg, and we endeavoured to get some disclosures from that boy, when he suddenly disappeared. I found him again on a doorstep in the City, and he has made certain disclosures which he will repeat in evidence to the court today. On the 4th of last month I accompanied Sir Richard Blunt to a cellar beneath Todd's shop, and he showed me a contrivance in the roof by which any one could be let down. We took workmen with us and made certain alterations. I afterwards accompanied Doctor Steers of the ship *Star* to the vaults of St. Dunstan's, and I saw Doctor Steers take a bone from there."

"Pray look at that hat, Colonel Jeffery. Is it the same you found at Todd's door?"

"It is."

"Did you mark the bone that Doctor Steers took from the vaults of St. Dunstan's?"

"I did, and I may state to save trouble, that I placed upon the hat a private mark by which I am enabled to swear to it."

Todd's counsel rose, and in a very respectful voice, he said —

"Did you ever see this String of Pearls, about which so much fuss is made, colonel?"

"Yes; Mr. Thornhill showed it to me."

"Oh. Do you know a young lady named Johanna Oakley?"

"I had that pleasure."

"You had? Have you not now?"

"I have the honour of her acquaintance since her marriage; she is now Mrs. Ingestrie."

The counsel seemed to be a little staggered by this answer, but after a moment or two, he resumed saying —

"Do you know a young lady named Arabella Wilmot?"

"I did."

“What, colonel, did again? Is she married?”

“Yes; that young lady is now Mrs. Jeffery, my wife.”

The counsel had evidently intended to make some point against the colonel's evidence, which was completely destroyed by the fact of the two marriages. But he resumed the attack by changing his ground.

“Colonel,” he said, “do you know a boy named Tobias Ragg?”

“I do. He is a resident in my house.”

“Will you take upon your self to swear that that boy, or lad, or whatever he may be called, is in his right senses?”

“I will.”

“Will you swear that he was never confined in a lunatic asylum, from which he made his escape raving mad, and that since then you have not kept him to listen to his wild conjectures and dreamy charges against the prisoner at the bar?”

“I will swear that he is not mad, and — ”

“Come, sir, I want an answer, yes or no.”

“Then you will not get one. Your question involves three or four propositions, some of which may be answered in the negative, and some in the affirmative; so how can you get a reply of yes or no?”

“Come — come, sir. Remember where you are. We want no roundabout speeches here, but direct answers.”

“It is impossible to give a direct answer to such a speech as you made. Nothing but ignorance or trickery could induce you to ask such a thing.”

“We cannot allow such language here, sir. I call upon the court for its protection against the insolence of this witness.”

“The court does not think proper to interfere,” said the judge, quietly.

“Oh, very well. Then I am done.”

“But I am not,” said the colonel. “I can inform you, and all whom it may concern, that the proprietor of the lunatic asylum, in which the boy, Ragg, was so unjustly confined, is now in Newgate, awaiting his trial for that and other offences, and that I have succeeded in completely breaking up the establishment.”

The counsel did not think proper to say anything more to the colonel, who was permitted, after firing this last shot at the enemy, to quit the witness box.

Sir Richard Blunt was the next witness called, and as his evidence was expected to be very important indeed, all attention was paid to it.

There was that buzz of expectation throughout the court, which is always to be heard upon such occasions, when anything very important is about to take place, and every one shifted his place, in order the more correctly to hear what was going on.

The Attorney General himself arose to pursue the examination of Sir Richard Blunt.

It was evident that the appearance of this witness roused Sweeney Todd more than anything else had done since the commencement of the proceedings. His eye lighted up, and setting his teeth hard, he prepared himself, with his left hand up to his ear, to catch every word that should fall from the lips of the man who had been his great enemy, and who had wound around him the web in which he had been caught at last.

The appearance of Sir Richard Blunt was very attractive. There was always about him an air of great candour, and the expression of his features denoted generosity and boldness in a most astonishing degree.

CHAPTER CXXXIII
The Trial of Sweeney Todd Continued

The peculiar circumstances under which Sir Richard Blunt had found out all the villany of Todd, and overtook him and Mrs. Lovett in the midst of their iniquities, were well-known to the people assembled in the court, and some slight manifestations of applause greeted him as he stood up in the witness box.

This exhibition of feeling was not noticed by the court, and the Attorney General at once began his examination in chief.

“Sir Richard,” he said, “will you have the kindness to put into the form of a narration, what you have to say concerning the charge upon which the prisoner at the bar is arraigned?”

“I will do so,” replied Sir Richard, and then after a moment’s pause, during which you might have heard a pin drop in the court, so intense was the stillness, the magistrate gave his important testimony against the now trembling wretch at the bar of that solemn court.

“A considerable time ago,” he said, “my attention was drawn to the circumstance that a number of persons had disappeared, who were residents about the neighbourhood of Fleet Street, and its vicinity. Such disappearances were totally and perfectly unaccountable. Not a trace could be found of very many respectable men, who had left their houses upon various objects, and never returned to them.

“The most striking peculiarity of this affair was, that the men who disappeared were for the most part great substantial citizens, who were far from likely to have yielded to any of those temptations that at times bring the young and the heedless in this great City into fearful dangers.

“I saw the Secretary of State upon the subject; and it was agreed that I was to have a *carte blanche*, as regarded expenses, and that I was to give nearly the whole of my time and attention to the unravelling of the mystery. It was then, that after my careful inquiry I found that out of thirteen disappearances no less than ten had declared their intention to be to get shaved, or their hair dressed, or to go through some process which required them to visit a barber. I then, personally, called at all the barber’s shops in the neighbourhood, but never alone. To this fact of having some one waiting for me in the shop, I no doubt owe my life, for I have been eight times shaved and dressed by the prisoner at the bar.”

Todd uttered a deep groan, and looked at Sir Richard as though he would have said —

“Oh, that I had you the ninth time so much at my mercy!”

There was quite a sensation, and a shudder through the court, as Sir Richard then stated how many times he had run the fearful risk of death at the hands of such a man as Todd; and then Sir Richard went on with his narration, which deeply and powerfully interested the judge, counsel, jury, and spectators.

“I did not find anything suspicious in the shop itself of the prisoner at the bar; although each of these times that I was within it, I looked at it narrowly; but I did find that he always made an effort to get the person who was with me to leave the shop upon some pretext or another, which, of course, never succeeded; and then without, in the least, appearing vexed at the failure, he would go on with his shaving in the coolest possible manner.

“This, however, was only suspicion, and I could take no advantage of it, unless something else developed itself likewise; but that was not long in happening. My attention was directed to the peculiar odour in St. Dunstan’s Church, and from the moment that it was so, I in my own mind connected it with Sweeney Todd, and the disappearances of the persons who had so unaccountably been lost in the immediate neighbourhood of Fleet Street. In the midst of all this then, I had a formal application made to me concerning the disappearance of Mr. Francis Thornhill, who had been clearly traced to the shop of the prisoner at the bar, and never seen by any one to leave it.

“From that moment I felt that it was in the prisoner’s shop that the parties disappeared, but the means by which they were murdered remained a profound mystery, and I felt, that unless these means could be very distinctly proved, a conviction would be difficult. I instituted a careful search of the vaults beneath St. Dunstan’s Church, and I found a secret passage communicating with the cellar of the pie shop in Bell Yard, and afterwards I found a similar passage communicating with the cellar under the prisoner’s shop.

“Upon reaching the latter cellar, the first object that presented itself to me was, a chair fixed to the roof by its legs. That chair I at once recognised as identically like the one in the shop, in which I had so frequently sat, and in a moment the whole truth burst upon me. The plank upon which the shaving chair rested, turned upon a centre, and could be so made to turn by a simple contrivance above, so that any unfortunate person could be let down in a moment, and the vacant or supplementary chair would come up and take the place of the one that had been above.

“Prosecuting my researches, I found the skeleton of many persons in the vaults, and much putrid flesh, which fully accounted for the odour in St. Dunstan’s Church. I found likewise that no meat from any butcher or salesman ever found its way to the pie shop in Bell Yard. So upon research actuated by that fact, I found that the supply of flesh was human, and that was the way the prisoner at the bar got rid of a great portion of his victims.

“Measures were taken to prevent any more murders, by some persons in my pay always following any one into the shop; and then, when the evidence was all ready by the finding and identification of Mr. Francis Thornhill’s leg bone, I

took measures to apprehend the prisoner at the bar. I shall, of course, be happy to answer any questions that may be asked of me.”

The Attorney General then spoke, saying —

“Have you found out by what means the shaving chair in the shop of the prisoner was prevented from falling at the moment any one sat in it?”

“Yes. By a simple piece of mechanism which communicated with the parlour, he could release the swinging board or keep it firm at his pleasure. I have had a model of the whole of the apparatus and building, which will be laid before the jury. It is here in the hands of an officer.”

“Here you is,” said Crotchet, coming forward with a large parcel in his hands, which, upon being taken from its case, was found to be an accurate representation of Todd’s house, with the diabolical contrivances he had got together for the purpose of murder.

The model was handed to the jury, and excited immense and well deserved commendation.

“I have no further questions to ask of you, Sir Richard,” said the Attorney General; “but I am sure the court and jury cannot but feel much indebted to you for the very lucid manner in which you have given your evidence.”

“One moment, Sir Richard, if you please,” said Todd’s counsel as the magistrate was about to leave the witness box. “I will not detain you for long.”

“I am quite at your service, sir,” said Sir Richard Blunt.

“How was it then that after you felt convinced of the guilt of the prisoner at the bar, as you state that you were, although I think upon very insufficient grounds, that you did not at once arrest him? Does it not seem very strange that you permitted him for some weeks to go on just as usual?”

“I did not permit him to go on just as usual. I took every precaution to prevent him from adding to the list of his offences. It is well known that a person in my situation must not act upon his own convictions of the guilt of any party. It was absolutely necessary that I should be able to bring satisfactory proof before a jury of the guilt of the prisoner at the bar, and it would have been quite premature to arrest him until I had that proof.”

“And pray, Sir Richard, when did you consider you had that proof?”

“When the surgeon was able to swear to a portion of the remains of Mr. Francis Thornhill.”

“Oh, then I am to understand that you rest the case for the prosecution upon a bone?”

"I do not prosecute."

"But you took the prisoner into custody, sir; and am I to believe that you did so solely on account of the finding a bone in some of the vaults of St. Dunstan's?"

"You can conclude so."

"Oh, I can conclude so? Very well then. Gentleman of the jury, it appears that the whole case against the prisoner at the bar, my worthy and exemplary client, rests upon a bone. That will do, Sir Richard; we will not trouble you any further. Perhaps the court will stop the case, as it only rests upon a bone."

"Not exactly," said the judge.

The next witness was the surgeon, and his evidence was listened to with great attention. He said —

"I was in the vaults of St. Dunstan's church, and I looked over a great quantity of osteological remains. Among those remains I found a male femur."

"A what, sir?" said Todd's counsel.

"It would be better," said the judge, mildly, "if the witness would be so good as to give the vulgar names to what he may have to speak of, as the jury may well be excused for not being in possession of anatomical and scientific nomenclature."

"I will endeavour to do so," said the surgeon. "I beg to assure the court, that it was from no feeling of pedantry that I used the scientific terms; but they are so common professionally, that they are used without thinking that they are other than the terms in common use."

"That is just the way I view it," said the judge, "and the court had not the least idea of anything else. Pray go on, sir, with your evidence."

"I found, then, a large quantity of human bones," said the surgeon, "in the vaults of St. Dunstan's, and among them a male thighbone, which I have with me."

Here he produced from his greatcoat pocket the bone he spoke of, wrapped up in paper, and deliberately untying the string which bound the paper to it, he handed it to the jury. One of that body, more bold than the rest, took it, but several of the jurymen shrunk from it.

"Now, sir," said the Attorney General, "can you upon your oath, without the slightest reservation, take upon yourself to say whose thighbone this was?"

"I can. It was the thighbone of Mr. Francis Thornhill."

"Will you state to the court and jury, the grounds upon which you arrive at that conclusion?"

"I will, sir. Mr. Thornhill met with an accident of a tedious and painful nature. The external condyle or projection on the outer end of the thighbone, which makes part of the knee joint, was broken off, and there was a diagonal fracture about three inches higher up upon the bone. I had the sole care of the case, and although a cure was effected, it was not without considerable distortion of the bone, and general disarrangement of the parts adjacent. From my frequent examination I was perfectly well acquainted with the case, and I can swear that the bone in the hands of the jury was the one so broken, and to which I attended."

"Very well, sir; that is all I wish to trouble you with."

The Attorney General sat down, but Todd's counsel rose, and said —

"Did you ever have a similar case to that of Mr. Thornhill's under your treatment?"

"Never a precisely similar one."

"But you have heard of such cases?"

"Certainly."

"They are sufficiently common, not to be positively rare and curious in the profession?"

"They are not common, but still they do occur sufficiently often to lose the character of rarity."

"Of course. You have no other means of identifying the bone, but by its having been fractured in the way you describe?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, it may be the thighbone of any one who has suffered a similar injury."

With this remark, the counsel sat down, and the surgeon was permitted to retire. The bone was laid upon the counsel's table, and there it reposed a sad memento of poor Thornhill, and a mute but eloquent piece of evidence against the prisoner at the bar. Todd, however, did not seem to be at all moved at the sight of the relict of the murdered victim. Probably he had for too long a time been intimate with the remains of mortality, during the frightful trade he had carried on, for such a circumstance to touch him in any perceptible way.

The next witness called, was another medical man, who merely corroborated the ship's surgeon, as to the fact of the bone produced having been fractured in the way described.

CHAPTER CXXXIV
Todd Entertains some Hopes of an Acquittal

The next witness was the sexton of St. Dunstan's.

"Will you state to the jury, when the last entombment took place in the vaults of St. Dunstan's?" was the question asked of him.

"On the 30th. of January, five years ago," he replied, "a gentleman named Shaw, from Chancery Lane, was placed in a vault, but no one since then. The vaults were considered offensive to the living, and was not used."

"Let the medical men be called again," said the Attorney General.

They were so called; and the question put to them was, as to the age of the bone produced in court. They both swore that it could not have been six months in its present condition. It had all the aspect of a fresh bone, and they entertained no sort of doubt upon the subject, but that the flesh had been roughly taken off it, and then the slight remainder had rapidly dried and decayed.

This, then, was the case for the prosecution, and it will be seen that the evidence or confession of Mrs. Lovett was not at all made use of or attended to, so that even in her dying hope of doing vast injury to Todd, she failed. The case was considered to be good enough without such testimony, and the lawyers, too, were of opinion that it would not be received by the judge, even if tendered, under all the circumstances.

The Attorney General rose again, and said —

"That is the case, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury, for the prosecution; and we leave it in your hands to deal with as you shall think fit."

Todd's counsel now rose to commence the speech for the defence, and he spoke rather ingeniously, as follows —

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury —

"I have, upon the part of my client, the prisoner at the bar, most seriously to complain of the vast amount of extraneous matter that has been mixed up with this case. To one grain of wheat, we have had whole bushels of chaff; and gentlemen have been brought here surely to amuse the court with longwinded romances.

"Gentlemen, the prisoner at the bar is clearly and distinctly charged with the murder of one Francis Thornhill, and instead of any evidence, near or remote, fixing that deed upon him, we have nothing but long stories about vaults, and bad odours in churches, and moveable floorboards, and chairs standing on

their heads, and vaults, and secret passages, and pork pies! Really, gentlemen of the jury, I do think that the manner in which this prosecution has been got up against my virtuous and pious client, is an outrage to your commonsense."

Todd rather looked up at this. It was something to hear even an Old Bailey counsel call him virtuous and pious; and a gleam of hope shot across his heart that things might not be quite so hard with him after all.

"This, gentlemen of the jury," continued the counsel, "is an attempt, I must say, to take the life of a man from a variety of circumstances external to the real charge to which he is called upon here to plead. Let us examine the sort of evidence upon which it has been thought proper to put a fellow creature to this bar upon a charge affecting his life.

"In the first place, we are told that a number of very respectable men went out from their various respectable houses, and never went back again. Pray, what has that to do with the death of one Francis Thornhill? Then we are told that the respectable men went to get shaved; and then that Sir Richard Blunt had a shave no less than eight times at the prisoner's shop, and yet here he is quite alive and well to give his evidence here today, and no one will say that Sir Richard Blunt is not a respectable man. Then we have a bad smell in the church of St. Dunstan's. Really, gentlemen of the jury, you might as well say that the prisoner at the bar committed felony, because this court was not well ventilated.

"We are told, to come more particularly to the evidence, such as it is, bearing upon the case, that Francis Thornhill left a certain shop intending to go into the City to a Miss Oakley, and that on the road he went into the prisoner's shop to be shaved, and from that we are asked to infer that he was murdered there, because nobody saw him come out. Really, this is too bad! Hundreds of people may have seen him come out, and no doubt did do so, but they happened not to know him, and so just because no one was passing who could say, 'Ah! Mr. Thornhill, how do you do? I see, you have had a clean shave today,' the prisoner at the bar is to be declared guilty of murder.

"Then we are told a long story about a bone, and that is declared to be a bone of the deceased. Gentlemen of the jury, what would you think of a man who should produce a brick, and swear that it belonged to a certain house? But this bone is to be identified on account of having been fractured, when the medical witness swears that such fractures are far from rare.

"Then again, a hat said to be the hat of the deceased is sworn to, as belonging to him, because of some injury it had received. Granted that it did belong to him. No doubt he sold it in Fleet Street and bought a new one, and there is no proof that that hat produced is the same one that is said to have been taken out of the prisoner's shop.

"I do think, gentlemen, that you will see upon what a string of sophistry the evidence against the prisoner at the bar rests. Who shall take upon himself to say that Mr. Thornhill is not now alive and well somewhere? We all know that

persons connected with the sea are rather uncertain in their movements. But, gentlemen, the prisoner at the bar has a plain unvarnished tale to tell, which will clear him from any suspicions.”

At this point, the learned counsel hitched up his gown upon his shoulders, and settled his wig upon his head, as though preparing for a grand effort, and then he continued —

“Gentlemen of the jury, my client is a religious man, as any one may see by the mild and gentlemanly look of his amiable countenance. He took the premises in Fleet Street in the pursuit of his highly useful calling; and he had no more idea that there was a moveable board in his shop, and that his shaving chair would go down with any one, than the child unborn. Is it likely that a man who could stoop to such baseness as to make money by murder would occupy himself with such a trivial employment as shaving for a penny? The deceased gentleman, Mr. Francis Thornhill, if he be deceased at all, came into my worthy client’s shop to be shaved, and was, at that time, a little the worse for some small drops that he had indulged himself with, no doubt, as he came along. The prisoner at the bar did shave him; and then he said that he had to go and see a young lady, and that he should buy a new hat as he went along. The dog, about which so much has been said, came into the shop along with his master, and while the shaving was going on found out, and actually devoured, half a pound of tripe, off which the prisoner at the bar was going to make his humble dinner.

“Oh! Gentlemen of the jury, ask yourselves if a murderer is likely to make half a pound of tripe satisfy him for dinner! Ask your own consciences, and your own common sense, that question.

“Well, gentlemen of the jury, when he was shaved, and after my client had had to turn this dog twice out of his shop, Mr. Thornhill left and went towards Fleet Market. The prisoner watched him from his door, and actually saw him begin fighting with a porter at the top of the market; and then as another person came in to be shaved, the prisoner at the bar returned into his shop to attend to that customer, and saw no more of Mr. Thornhill. In the course of a quarter of an hour, however, the dog pushed the door of the shop open, and brought in a hat in his mouth, but the prisoner turned him out again, and that is all he knows of the transaction.

“Gentlemen of the jury, the prisoner at the bar is well known for his benevolence and his piety. Even at a time when the bad odour in St. Dunstan’s induced many of the parishioners to go elsewhere, he always attended his own church, and in the most pious and exemplary manner made the responses. I ask you as men, gentlemen of the jury, if you could do that with the consciousness that you had committed a murder?

“Gentlemen, it is for my client a most unfortunate thing that a person named Lovett, who kept the pie shop in Bell Yard, is not now in the land of the living. If she were so, there is no doubt but that she would have told some true tale of

how the vaults beneath the old church connected with her shop, and so have cleared the prisoner at the bar of all participation in her crimes.

“That murder has been committed in conjunction with that woman, who committed suicide rather than come forward and clear the prisoner at the bar, against whom she had a spite, there can be no doubt; but, gentlemen, it is the wrong man who now stands at this bar. The real murderer has yet to be discovered; and therefore it is that I call upon you, in the sacred name of justice, to acquit my client.”

With this the counsel sat down, and Todd looked positively hopeful. He drew a long breath or two, and ventured a keen glance towards the jury box.

“Do you call any witnesses,” asked the junior counsel for the prosecution?

“No — no — no. Witnesses! Innocence is its own best safeguard.”

“I waive my right of reply, my lord,” said the Attorney General.

Upon this, nothing remained for the judge to do but to sum up the evidence; and after arranging his notes, he proceeded to do so, in that clear and lucid style, for which some of our judges are so famous.

“The prisoner at the bar, Sweeney Todd, stands charged with the wilful murder of Francis Thornhill. It appears that Francis Thornhill left a certain ship for the purpose of proceeding to a Miss Oakley in the City of London, with a String of Pearls, which had been confided to him to deliver to that lady by a Mr. Mark Ingestrie.

“We have it in evidence, that Francis Thornhill on his route down or along the northern side of Fleet Street, went into the shaving shop, kept by the prisoner at the bar, and from that instant he is not again seen alive. The prisoner at the bar takes a String of Pearls, similar to those which were in the possession of Francis Thornhill, and raises upon them a considerable sum of money of a man named John Mundel. It appears then, that the hat of Mr. Francis Thornhill is taken from the premises of the prisoner by a dog; and it further appears, upon the clear testimony of respectable persons, that beneath the prisoner’s shop is a contrivance by which people might be killed; and there or thereabouts contiguous to that contrivance, a certain bone is found, which is proved to be the thighbone of Francis Thornhill.

“Gentlemen of the jury, the sequence of evidence by which it is attempted to bring this crime home to the prisoner at the bar, lies in a very small compass indeed. Firstly, there is the tracing of Francis Thornhill to the prisoner’s shop, and his disappearance from thence. Then there is the hat found there or taken from there, and then there is the thighbone sworn to be that of Francis Thornhill, and certainly found in such contiguity to his premises, as to warrant a belief that he placed it there.

“Gentlemen of the jury, the case is in your hands.”

This was a very short summing up, but the bar quite understood it to mean that the guilt of the prisoner was so clear and transparent, that it was not at all necessary for the judge to go elaborately through the evidence, but merely as a matter of form, leave the facts in evidence to the jury.

And now came that awful moment to Todd, when the question of guilty or not guilty hovered on the lips of those twelve men, who were to decide upon his fate. The jury laid their heads together for a few moments only, and then they turned round and faced the court again.

The clerk of the arraigns rose, and spoke —

“Gentleman of the jury. How say you? Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty of the crime laid to his charge in the indictment?”

“Guilty!” said the foreman.

A cheer burst from the auditors, and the judge raised his hand, saying —

“Officers, repress this unmanly exultation that a fellow creature is found guilty of a dreadful crime. I beg that any person so offending may be brought before me at once.”

The officer could not or would not find anybody so offending, but the judge’s words had the effect of calming the tumult at all events, and then all eyes were turned upon Sweeney Todd, who stood in the dock glaring at the foreman of the jury, as though he had only imperfectly heard what he had said, or if he had perfectly heard him, doubting the evidence of his own senses, as regarded the real, full, and true meaning of the dreadful word “guilty!”

CHAPTER CXXXV
Todd Makes an Attempt on his own Life

In the course of a few minutes the tumult in the court was effectually suppressed, and then as it was known that the judge would sentence Todd at once, all eyes were turned upon the criminal, to note the effect which that awful moment was likely to have upon him.

The judge spoke.

“Sweeney Todd, you have been by an impartial and patient jury, convicted upon the clearest evidence of the murder of Francis Thornhill. Have you anything to say why sentence of death, according to the law, should not be passed forthwith upon you?”

Todd did not seem to understand the question, and the Governor of Newgate repeated it to him. He started then, and glared at the judge, as in a deep hollow voice, he said —

“Death! Death! — Did you say death?”

“Such says the law — not I. If you have anything to say why that sentence should not be pronounced against you, now is your only time in which to say it.”

Todd passed his hand twice across his brow before he spoke, and then, in a vehement voice, he said —

“It is false — all false. I did not kill the man. There is a vile conspiracy against me. I say I did not do it. Who saw me — what eye was upon me? I was at chapel — at prayers, when you say among you that I did it. It is a plot — nothing but a plot from first to last. You would make me the victim of it among you. Who saw me kill him? I know nothing of hidden places in the old house. It is not true, I say. A plot — a vile plot for my destruction.”

“Have you finished?” said the judge.

“Have I not said enough? I know nothing of it. I am a poor man, and strive to get a living as best I might, and among you now you bring a bone from some churchyard to kill me with. You swear anything — I know you all well. If the man you say I killed be really dead, I here at this moment summon his spirit from another world, to come and bear witness for me that I did not kill him!”

These last words Todd yelled out in such a tone of frantic passion, that everybody looked aghast; and more than once, more than commonly superstitious spectators thought that the appeal to the beings of a supernatural world might yet be answered in some way.

There was a deathlike stillness in the court for some few moments, and then the Governor of Newgate in a whisper, said to Todd —

“Have you finished?”

“Finished what?” he cried, in a startling tone. “Finished what? — Finished pleading for my life? Yes, I have, for I know that they have made up their minds to murder me. I have no witnesses — they are all in the grave now. That woman, Lovett, who is dead, you tell me — I cannot say if she be dead or not, she is hard to kill — that woman could exculpate me; but, as I say, my witnesses are in the grave, and there is no truth in spirits visiting this world again, or she and the man you say I murdered would appear here, and yell in your ears, all of you, that I did not do it.”

The judge sat quite patiently. He was evidently resolved to hear quietly what Todd chose to say. It could but occupy a little more time; and as his fate was fixed, it did not matter.

“If you have finished your observations, prisoner,” said the judge, “it will now be my duty to proceed to pass upon you the sentence of the law.”

“But I have said I did not do it. I am not guilty.”

“It does not lie within my power to decide that question. The jury have found you guilty, and all I have to do in my capacity here is, in accordance with that finding, to sentence you according to law. If you could have stated any legal impediment to the passing of the sentence, it would have had effect; but now it is my painful duty to — ”

“Hold! I will, and can state a legal impediment.”

“What is it?”

“I am mad!”

The judge opened his eyes rather wider than usual at this statement, and the jury looked at each other in wonder and amazement. Among the spectators there was a general movement, too, of surprise.

“Mad!” said the judge.

“Yes,” added Todd, holding up his arms, “I am mad — quite mad. Do you think any other but a madman would have done the deeds with which you charge me? I either did not do them, and am saved, or I did do all these murders, the consequences of which you would heap upon my head, and am mad. What is there in the wide world would compensate a man for acting as you say I have acted? Could he ever know peace again? What is madness but an affliction of providence? And dare you take the life of a man, who has acted in a certain

way, in consequence of a disease with which the Almighty has thought proper to visit him? I tell you you dare not, and that I am mad!"

This speech was uttered with a vehemence that made it wonderfully effective; and at its conclusion Todd still held up his arms, and glared upon the judge with the look of one who had advanced something that was utterly and completely unanswerable.

The judge leant over to the recorder, and whispered something to him, and the recorder whispered to the judge.

"Mad! Mad!" shrieked Todd again.

The Attorney General now whispered something to the judge, who nodded; and then addressing Todd, he said in calm and measured tones —

"However great the novelty of a plea of insanity, put in by the party himself, may be, it will yet meet with every attention. I shall now proceed to pass sentence of death upon you; and after you are removed to the jail of Newgate, certain physicians will see you, and report upon your mental condition to the Secretary of State, who will act accordingly."

Todd dropped his arms.

The judge put on the black cap, and continued —

"Sweeney Todd, you have been convicted of the crime of murder; and certain circumstances, which it would have been improper to produce before this court in the progress of your trial, lead irresistibly to the belief that your life for years past has been one frightful scene of murder; and that not only the unhappy gentleman for whose murder you now stand here in so awful a position has suffered from your frightful practices, but many others. It will be a satisfaction, too, to the court and the jury to know that the woman named Lovett, who you say would and could have proved your innocence, had she been in life, made, shortly before her death, a full confession, wherein she inculpated you most fearfully."

"False! False!" cried Todd.

The judge took not the slightest notice of the interruption, but continued his speech —

"It is now my painful duty to pass upon you the sentence of the law, which is, that you be hanged by the neck until dead, and may Heaven have mercy upon you, for you cannot expect that society can do otherwise than put out of life one who, like yourself, has been a terror and a scourge."

"Quite mad!" cried Todd. "Quite mad!"

“Officers, remove the prisoner,” said the judge, who was much disgusted by the attempt of Todd upon their credulity, by stating that he was mad.

The Governor of Newgate laid hold of him by the arm, but Todd raised his voice again, saying —

“One moment. Only one moment. Before I leave this court, I have a great desire to say something to Sir Richard Blunt.”

“If Sir Richard Blunt has no objection,” said the judge, “the court can have none. Is that gentleman present?”

“I am here,” said Sir Richard, as he made his way towards the dock, in which Todd was. “What is it you have to say to me, Sweeney Todd?”

“It is for your private ear.”

“Then, I decline to hear it. If you have anything to say to me, say it out, and openly. I decline any private communications.”

“Nay, but it really interests those whom you love. Come a little closer to me, and I will speak it.”

“Now,” said Sir Richard, as he reached the front of the dock, “speak at once, and say what it is. The court is too indulgent to you.”

“Is it, really!”

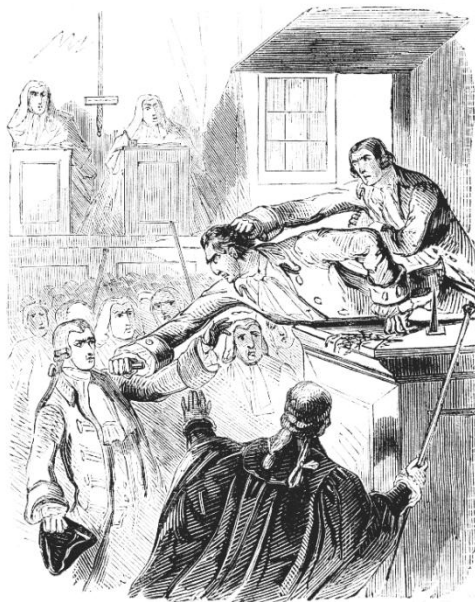
With the rapidity of thought, Todd drew a small table knife from the breast of his apparel, and made a stab at Sir Richard’s neck with it; but the magistrate had had by far too long experience with such men as Todd to be so taken at unawares, and he dropped to the floor of the court before the point of the knife reached him. The Governor of Newgate sprung upon Todd, and disarmed him in a moment.

From seeing Sir Richard Blunt drop, the general impression in the court was, that he was killed, or seriously injured, by Todd; and in a moment a scene of unparalleled confusion arose. Everybody got up from their seats, and the place was full of cries.

“Kill him!” cried some. — “Down with him!” shouted others. — “Hang him at once! A surgeon for Sir Richard!”

Amid this Babel of confusion, Sir Richard Blunt rose again, and sprung upon the barrister’s table, calling out in a loud voice that rose above every other sound —

“I am perfectly unhurt.”



Todd, on his Trial, Attempts to kill Sir Richard Blunt.

Upon this such a cheer arose in the court, that the judge saw that it was perfectly hopeless to attempt to stop it by any ordinary means, and he only held up his hand deprecatingly. The cheer was thrice repeated, and then Sir Richard dismounted from the table, and a deathlike stillness ensued in the court as the judge spoke.

“How was it possible,” he said, “that the prisoner at the bar could be furnished with such a weapon at a time like this?”

The Governor of Newgate felt that this question was addressed to him, and he tremblingly spoke, saying —

“My lord, I have not the most distant idea upon the subject. He was searched this morning carefully before leaving his cell. It is beyond my comprehension.”

“My lord,” said a counsel at the table, rising, “there was a very similar case about five years since, when a notorious criminal attacked a witness for the prosecution with a fork, and it appeared afterwards that as he was brought through some of the dayrooms of Newgate to the bar, he had hastily snatched it up from a table that he passed without the officers noticing him.”

“This is very likely a similar case,” said the judge.

“It may be so my lord,” said the Governor.

Todd yelled with rage, when he found that Sir Richard Blunt had escaped his malice. If he could but have taken his life or inflicted upon him some very serious injury, he would have been satisfied almost to have gone to death; but to fail was almost enough to drive him really mad.

“Curses on ye all!” he cried; and then he burst into a torrent of such frightful invectives, that everybody shrunk aghast from it, and it is quite impossible that we should transfer it to our pages. How long he would have proceeded in such a storm, there is no knowing, had not the officers rushed upon him, and by main force dragged him from the dock and the court into the dark passages leading to Newgate.

His voice was yet heard for several moments, uttering the most dreadful and diabolical curses!

It may be supposed that after what had happened, the officials of the prison were not over tender in the treatment of Sweeney Todd, for they well knew that they would be some time before they heard the last of the knife business, and indeed it was a piece of gross carelessness to allow a man in Todd’s situation, and such a man as Todd too, to have an opportunity of doing such very serious mischief in a moment as he might have done.

There can be very little doubt, that if he had been content to do an injury to any other witness but Sir Richard Blunt, he would really have succeeded; but that personage was too wary to fall in such a way.

It was not thought advisable by the prison authorities to take Todd back to the same cell from which they had brought him. It was an idea of the Governor, and by no means a bad one, that desperate criminals were caused to change their cells now and then, as it baffled and cut up completely any combination they might in their own minds have made for an attempted escape; so Todd found himself in a new place.

“Why is this?” he said. “Why am I placed here? This cell is darker than the one I before occupied.”

“It’s quite light enough for you,” growled a turnkey.

“Yes,” added one of the officers who had been in court. “Folks who are keen and bright enough to pick up knives, and nobody see ’em, mustn’t have too much light in their cell. Oh, won’t it be a mercy when you are settled next Monday morning.”

“The fetters hurt me,” said Todd.

“Oh, they are too light,” said the officer; “and for your satisfaction, I have to tell you that the Governor has ordered you another pair.”

At this moment a couple of blacksmiths came into the cell, carrying with them the heaviest set of irons in the whole prison, which the Governor had determined Sweeney Todd should be accommodated with. Without a word they proceeded to knock off the fetters that he wore.

“So you are not contented,” said Todd, “to cage me as though I were some wild animal, but you must load me with irons?”

“And a good job too.”

“And you think to hang me?”

“Rather!”

“Then thus I disappoint you, and be my own executioner!”

As he spoke, he snatched up one of the smith’s hammers, and made a blow at his own forehead with it, which if it had taken effect, would unquestionably have fractured his skull, and killed him instantly; but one of the officers just managed to strike his arm at the moment and confuse his aim, so that although he did strike himself, it was not with anything like sufficient force to do himself any hurt.

The hammer was wrested from him in a moment, and he was thrown to the floor of the cell, and the heavy irons placed upon him.



Todd’s Second Attempt at Suicide in the Condemned Cell at Newgate.

CHAPTER CXXXVI

Todd Makes an Acquaintance in Newgate, and Tries an Escape

In the course of a quarter of an hour more, Todd was left alone. The irons he wore weighed upwards of a hundredweight, and it was with some difficulty that he managed to get up, and sit upon the stone seat that was in the cell.

It was close upon evening, and the cell was getting very dark indeed, so that the walls, close as they were together, were only very dimly discernable indeed.

Todd rested his head upon his hands, and thought.

“Has it then really come to this?” he said. “Am I truly doomed to die? Oh, what a dreadful thing it is for me now to begin to doubt of what I always thought myself so sure, namely, that there was no world beyond the grave. Oh, if I could only still please myself with an assurance of that! But I cannot — I cannot now. Oh, no — no — no.”

He started, for the cell door opened, and the turnkey brought him in his food for the night, which he placed on the floor. It was not then the custom to sit up with condemned prisoners.

“There,” said the man, “it’s more than you deserve. Good night, and be hanged to you. Here’s the sheriff been kicking up the devil’s delight in the prison about that knife affair.”

“I hope he will discharge you all,” said Todd.

“Do you?”

“Oh, yes. I wish you had all one neck only, and I a knife at it. With what a pleasant gash I would force it in — in — in!”

“Well, you are a nice article, I must say.”

“Bring me two candles, and pens, ink, and paper.”

The turnkey stared with astonishment.

“Anything else,” he said, “in a small way that you’d like? Buttered rolls, perhaps, and a glass of something good? Perhaps a blunderbuss would suit you? I tell you what it is, old fellow, it ain’t very often that anybody goes out from here on a Monday morning to be scragged, that we don’t feel a little sorry for them, but I don’t think we shall any of us cry after you. You may sleep or do what you like now until tomorrow morning, for you have got it all to yourself. Two candles, indeed! Well I’m sure — what next? Two candles! — Oh, my eye!”

The turnkey banged shut the door of the cell, and barred and bolted it in a passion; and then away he went to the lobby, which was the great gossiping place, to relate the cool demands of Sweeney Todd.

Once more the prisoner was alone. For some time he set in silence, and then he muttered —

“All the night to myself. He will not visit this cell until the morning. A long — long night; many hours of solitude. Well, I may chance to improve them. It was well in that scuffle for the hammer, when they threw me down, that I contrived to grasp a handful of tools from the smith’s basket, and hid them among my clothing. Let me see what I have — ay, let me see, or rather feel, for by this light, or rather by this darkness, I can only judge of them by the feel.”

The tools that Sweeney Todd had been clever enough to abstract from the smith’s basket, consisted of two files and a chisel. He ran his fingers over them with some feeling of satisfaction.

“Now,” he muttered, “if the feeling to die were upon me, here are the means; but it has passed away, and even with these small weapons, and in a cell of Newgate, I do not feel quite so helpless as I was. It will be time to die if all should fail else, but yet if I could only for a time live for revenge, what a glorious thing it would be! How I should like yet to throttle Tobias. What a pleasure it would be to me to hold that girl by the throat, who so hoodwinked me as to impose herself upon me for a boy, and hear and see her choking. How I should like to see the blood of Sir Richard Blunt weltering forth while his colour faded, and he expired gradually!”

Todd ground his teeth together in his rage.

“Yes,” he added, while he moved with difficulty under the weight of his iron. “Yes, I have bidden adieu to wealth and the power that wealth would have given me. I have carried on my life of crimes for nothing, and in blood I have waded to accomplish only this world of danger that now surrounds me — to give to myself the poor privilege of suicide; but yet how fain I would live for vengeance!”

His chains rattled upon his limbs.

“Yes, for revenge. I would fain live for revenge. There are some five or six that I would like to kill! Yes, and I would gloat over their death agonies, and shriek in their ears, ‘I did it! I, Sweeney Todd, did it!’ ”

The fetters entangled about his legs, and threw him heavily to the floor of the cell.

He raved and cursed frightfully, until he was too much exhausted to continue such a course, and then he sat upon the floor, and with one of the files he began working away assiduously at the iron, in order to free himself from those clogs to his movements.

As he so worked, he heard the prison clock strike ten.

"Ten," he said. "Ten already. Of a truth I did not think it was so late. I must be quick. Others have escaped from Newgate, and why should not I? The attempt will and shall be made; and who knows but that it may be successful? A man may do much when he is resolved that he will do all he wishes or die."

Todd filed away at the chains.

"Who will stop me," he said, "with the feeling that will possess me? Who will say, 'I will stop this man, or he shall kill me?' No one — no one!"

The file was a good one, and it bit fairly into the iron. In the course of a quarter of an hour Todd had one wrist at liberty, and that was a great thing. He was tired, however, of the comparatively slow progress of the file, and he made a great effort to break the chains from his ankles; but he only bruised himself in the attempt to do so without succeeding.

With a feeling of exhaustion, he paused.

"Oh, that I could find an opportunity of exerting so much force against those whom I hate!" he said.

At this moment he fancied he heard a slight noise not far from him, and every faculty was immediately strained to assist in listening for a repetition of it. It did not come again then.

"It must have been imagination," he said, "or some sound far off in the prison conveyed by echoes to this spot. I will not suffer myself to be alarmed or turned from my purpose. It is nothing — nothing. I will use the file again."

He commenced now upon the other wrist, and by the little experience he had gathered from his practice at the one which he had already filed in two, he got on more quickly with this one. He found that a long light movement of the file did more work than a rapid grating process. In much less time, then, this other wrist manacle was off, and he could lift up both his arm in freedom.

"This is something," he said, "Nay, it is much, very much indeed. I feel it, and accept it as a kind of earnest of success. Where is the man — where are the two or three men, that will dare to stand in my desperate way, when I have one of these files in each hand, and are free from fetters. They will need be mad to do it. Such an amount of zeal is not to be found. No, they will step aside and let me pass."

It now became a matter of great importance with him, to get the other two fetters that bound his ankles undone. He felt as if he should go mad, if he did not quickly release himself from them now.

Sitting upon the floor of the cell, he set to work; but he found that the file he had been using did not bite very well. The work it had done already had dulled its powers; but the other was fresh and keen, and with it he made great progress.

The left-hand shackle was entirely removed, and now only by his right ankle was he connected with that hundredweight of iron, which held him to the ground.

"I shall be free!" he muttered. "I shall be free! Did they think to hold me with these chains? Ha! Ha! No. It may be, that there is a dark spirit of evil that aids men, such as I am; and if it be so, I will consent to be wholly his, if —"

Todd started, for the same noise that had before come upon his ears, now attracted him. It was plainer though than before; and at the moment he thought that it must be in his cell. A cry of terror rose to his lips, but he smothered it in the utterance, and bent again all his faculties to listen.

The sound did not now pass away like an echo as it had done before, but it went on steadily, and he could trace it as localising itself against one of the walls of the cell.

It was a profound mystery. He could not make out what it meant. It was a strange dull scraping noise. At times he thought it was some animal in the cell — a rat, probably; but then the sound was too continuous, and although he stamped once, and said 'Hush!' several times, it steadily continued.

The darkness in the cell was now so intense, that it was in vain to attempt to pierce it. Any straining of the eyes only peopled the palpable black atmosphere with all sorts of strange shapes, conjured up by the imagination; so Todd was glad to close his eyes after a few moments' experience of that character.

"I will know what this is," he said. "I must know what this is, and I will know!"

He held out his arms, and he slowly advanced towards the side of the cell from whence the sound came.

"Speak," he said, "if you are mortal, speak. If immortal, I fear you not. I am now past all such terrors. You can but kill me."

His hands touched the cold stone wall; and then he felt it from the floor upwards, but nothing but the chill surface of the stones was perceptible; and yet the scraping noise continued, and at last he felt convinced that it came from the other side of the wall.

Now he did not know what to think, for he had no means of knowing what was upon the other side of that wall. It might be a corridor of the prison. It might be a room belonging to one of the officials, who was about some work that, if explained, would not appear singular at all.

He placed his ear to the exact spot from whence the noise came, and he listened attentively.

As he so listened, Todd began to have other notions about that noise, and for more than once the square block of stone, against which his ear reposed, shook in its place.

"It must be a cell like this," he said, "that is on the other side of the wall, and that, no doubt, is some prisoner at work, trying to effect his escape. If so, it is fortunate. He must be a bold man, and we can help each other."

Still Todd hesitated what he should do, notwithstanding the hypothesis regarding the noise he heard appeared so very probable. He was resolved to spend a little more time in listening, for he felt that once to commit himself would possibly be to spoil his own chances of escape. He kept his ear to the stone of the wall, then which shook more and more each passing moment.

Suddenly he heard a voice. In a drawling accent, it sang a few lines of a popular thieves' song —

"The beak looked big, and shook his head,
Heigho, the beak!
He wished such family cares were dead,
That honest folks might get their bread,
Heigho, the beak!
The family cove, he grinned a grin,
Heigho, the cove!
Says he, to prig I think no sin;
For sure a Romany must have tin:
Heigho, the cove!"

"It must be all right," thought Todd, "or he would not sing that song; but what good it can do him to get from his own cell into this, I cannot imagine. He would be equally confined here as there, and all his labour thrown away. But together, we may do something. I will speak to him. Yes, I think I will speak to him."

Todd still waited and lingered before he gave any intimation of his presence and knowledge of what was going on, and then the song ceased, and by the renewed vigour with which the tenant of the next cell worked at the stone, it would seem that he had got very impatient at the length of time it took him.

Suddenly, the stone, which was about a foot square, shook so, that Todd withdrew from it, thinking that it would come out of its place altogether; and as it was evidently the object of the prisoner at the other side to push it through into Todd's cell, he thought it better to stand on one side, and let it come.

Suddenly, with a crash, it fell through, and then Todd spoke, for the first time, to the prisoner.

CHAPTER CXXXVII
The Progress of the Operations to Escape from Newgate

"Who's there? Who are you?" cried Todd.

"The deuce!" said a voice, from the adjoining cell. "Sold at last, after all my trouble. Confound you, why didn't you speak before, and save me the last hour's work?"

"What do you mean?" cried Todd. "I am a desperate man. Do not tamper with me. Do you belong to the prison, or do you not?"

"I belong to the prison! I should think not. Don't you?"

"Oh, no — no — no — no."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you are a prisoner?"

"I am, indeed, and condemned to die."

"All's right then. Bravo! This is capital. I thought I was in the end cell, do you know, and that by working through the wall by the assistance of Providence always — Bah! I can't get out of the old trade. I mean to say, that I thought I was working through a wall that would have taken me into one of the corridors of Newgate, and then there would have been a chance of getting off, you know."

"I do not know, and did not know," said Todd; "but if there be really any chance of escape, I am a desperate man, and will risk anything for it. Only say that you will help me."

"Help you? Of course I will. Do you think I am in love with these cold walls? No, I will get a light in a moment, and we can then have a look at each other. Are you in fetters?"

"I was, but I have a file, and have succeeded in freeing myself from them completely. Are you?"

"Yes, but I have muffled them with some pieces of my clothing that I have torn up for the purpose, and please the Lord they will make no noise."

Todd was rather amazed at the religious expressions of the other prisoner; but he forbore to make any remark concerning them, and as something had been said about getting a light, he resolved to wait patiently until it was procured, when he would be able to see who it was that chance had so very strangely thrown him into companionship with.

“You see,” added the other prisoner, “a religious lady left me some tracts, and as I told her they did not allow light here, she was kind enough to smuggle me in some phosphorous matches, in case in the night I should wish to read.”

“Very kind of her,” said Todd.

“Oh, very. Let us praise the — Bother, I shall never get out of the habit of chaunting, I do believe.”

In a moment, now, a faint blue light illumed the cell adjoining to Todd’s, and as the religious lady had been kind enough to bring some little wax ends of candles, the prisoner lit one, and placing it upon the ledge left by the displaced brick in the wall, he put his face close to it, and looked at Todd.

Todd did the same thing, and looked at him.

“Humph,” said the prisoner. “They are not going to hang you for your beauty, whoever you are, my friend.”

“Nor you,” said Todd, who was a little stung by this cool remark, “for I must say a more villanous looking countenance than yours I never saw in all my life.”

“Then you certainly never looked in a glass.”

“Hark you, my friend,” said Todd. “If we are to aid each other in getting out of Newgate, it will not be by railing at each other through a square hole in the wall of our cells. We had better leave all remarks about our looks to other folks, and at once set to work about what is much more important, namely, breaking our way out of this most detestable of all places.”

“Truly,” said the other; “you speak wisdom, and the Lord — Pho! The deuce take it, when shall I get rid of the cant of the conventicle? My dear sir, you see before you a man who has been a great victim.”

“What is your name?”

“Lupin they used to call me. The Reverend Josiah Lupin.”

“Ah,” said Todd. “I heard something of your case. I believe you murdered a woman, did you not?”

“Why, my friend,” said Mrs. Oakley’s old acquaintance, for indeed it was no other, “I don’t mind confessing to you, that a woman met with a slight accident at my place, and they say I did it. But now that I have been so candid, pray who are you?”

“They call me Todd.”

The Reverend Mr. Lupin screwed up his mouth, and whistled.

“Humph,” he said. “The religious lady only this morning told me all about you. You used to polish the people off in your barber’s shop, and then make them into pork pies, I believe?”

“Ha! Ha!” said Todd.

“And you had a charming assistant in the shape of a lady, named Lovett, I have been informed, who used to help you to scrape the bones of the poor devils who had only just slipped in for a shave, and by no means expected such a scrape.”

“Ha! Ha!” said Todd.

“Stop a bit,” said Mr. Lupin, “don’t come that sort of laugh again. It don’t sound at all pleasant. Well, I think we may manage to get out of Newgate, do you know, by a little hard work, if you are willing; but mind you, I don’t want to be made a pork or a veal pie of, if you please.”

“I never ate them myself,” said Todd, “so there is no temptation; but I sincerely hope, my friend, that you do not believe one word of the many calumnies that have been heaped upon my character?”

“Oh, dear no; and you, too, are well aware that I am the most falsely accused and innocent clergyman that ever lived.”

“Perfectly.”

“My dear, sir, you are a very reasonable man, and I don’t see any reason on earth that we should not be capital friends from this moment. Just help me to move another of these stones and I shall be able to creep through the opening into your cell.”

Todd very kindly assisted the Reverend Mr. Lupin, and in the course of a few minutes, another of these large square blocks of stone that formed the wall of the cell being removed, he was able to creep through the aperture with the assistance of Todd.

“All’s right,” said Lupin, as he shook himself. “And now, my new friend, I will borrow the same file with which you released yourself from your fetters, and get rid of mine.”

“Here it is,” said Todd; “you work upon one leg, and I will work upon the other, for I have two files here, although one of them is a little blunted by the work it has already done. Yet it will help, and time is everything.”

“It is,” said Lupin. “Work away, for I am not able to think of anything until I am free of these confounded irons.”

They worked in real earnest, and to such purpose, that in a much less space of time than anybody would have thought it possible to accomplish the process in, the fetters of Mr. Lupin dropped from him, and, like Todd, he stood so far free from restraint.

“Now,” he said, “I have some first-rate picklocks, and if providence — Tush! Tush! I mean if we are lucky, we shall get on capitally. The next thing we have to do is, to get out of here, and by far the shortest way is to work through the wall. Have you any other tools beside the files, for they are not much use now to us?”

“Yes, a chisel.”

“A chisel? Oh, my friend, you are indeed a wonderful man. A chisel? What may not be done with a chisel! A strong, good chisel, too. Oh, if we do not chisel our way out of Newgate now, it will be very hard indeed. Come, you shall see an old hand at work. Perhaps you have not had much experience at prison breaking?”

“Certainly not,” said Todd.

“Well, this will be a good lesson to you. Now you will see how nicely I will get one of these old square blocks of stone out of its place.”

Todd smiled grimly. Perhaps he thought he could have given the Reverend Josiah Lupin a good lesson in some things; but at that time he was only too happy to meet with a companion who promised such great things in the way of immediate escape.

Certainly Mr. Lupin showed great dexterity in handling the chisel, with which he had been furnished by Todd; and in a much less space of time than any one would have thought the work could have been performed in, he had loosened the stone in the wall that he wished to dislodge.

“Let us both push it,” he said, “and we shall get it through easily.”

“But its fall will make an alarm,” said Todd.

“Oh, no. The distance is too short, and it will go down easy. Now for it.”

They pressed upon the stone both of them, and by a skilful joggling movement, Lupin got it to move along until it was beyond its centre of gravity, and then, with a heavy bump, down it went on the other side. They both now paused for some moments, and spoke not a word, for they were anxious to discover if the fall of the stone into the passage beyond the cells had made any noise sufficient to attract the attention of the prison officials.

All was still.

"It's as right as possible," said Lupin. "They are asleep, the greater part of them. The pretended vigilance in this place, and the sleepless watchfulness, is all a fudge. Turnkeys, and police officers, and Governors of Newgate, are but flesh and blood, and they will take things easy if they can."

"You are quite a man of the world," said Todd.

"Oh, yes; I have seen a little of it. But I say, Master Todd, deal candidly with me now. Have you not some secret hoard of cash, upon which we can make ourselves comfortable, when we get out of this mousetrap? I have not a penny piece; but you ought to have something, I should say. I don't mean to say but that I had money, but it was not hidden, and the police have got hold of that. If I were acquitted, they kindly said they would let me have it. But if found guilty, of which they did not entertain the smallest doubt, I could not want it."

"Curses on them!" said Todd; "they had enough of mine to have made us both rich men — very rich men. Oh, that I had been off a month ago!"

"Don't fret about that. We are all in the hands of a gracious provi — Psha! I am forgetting again. Whatever you do, Todd, in this world, don't turn parson to a parcel of old women, for the phraseology will stick to you as long as you live, if you do. But come — tell me now. You do know where to lay your hand upon money?"

Todd thought that it would be very indiscreet to say no to this little proposition, so with a nod and a smile he replied —

"Only a few hundreds. That's all."

"A few hundreds? That is a pretty good all, and will do very well indeed, my dear friend. Is it an understanding that we go halves?"

"Quite, quite."

"Then, if we don't get out of the stone jug pretty soon, it will be a strange thing to me. Now let us work away like bricks, and we will show them that two determined men can laugh at their bolts, and bars, and stone walls."

"How confident you are," said Todd. "You surely forget that we must go through much, before we can see the outside of the walls of this dreadful place. I wish I could be as sure of the result as you are, or as you seem to be."

"It is one half the battle to make sure; there goes another of the stones. Now follow me through this opening in the wall. It leads to a passage from which we can reach one of the smaller inner courts; and from that we shall get on through the chapel to the Governor's house, and if we can't get out there, it's a bad case."

Mr. Lupin, who had, in a great measure, now that he no longer had any sanctified character to keep up, thrown of his timid nature, ventured to scramble through the opening in the wall, and he assisted Todd to follow him.



The Two Murderers, Todd and Lupin, Escaping from the Cell of Newgate.

They both now stood in a narrow vaulted passage, and then they paused again for several minutes to listen if any noise in the prison gave intimation that any one was stirring; but everything was perfectly still, and so deathlike was the silence, that, but that they well knew to the contrary, they might have supposed that they were the only living persons within that gloomy pile of building.

The little bit of wax candle that had been brought to Lupin by the pious lady, and which he had lit in his own cell, for the purpose, at first, of having a good look at Todd, was now upon the point of going out; but he was very well provided with wax candle ends, and he speedily lighted another, as he said in a tone of irony —

“The sheriffs will write a letter of threats to the pious lady, when they find how much she aided us in escaping.”

“They ought,” said Todd. “We will pray for her.”

Lupin laughed, as he with a light step now crept along the vaulted passage, and reached a massive door at the end of it, up and down which he passed the light several times. Then he muttered to himself —

“Good! Only the lock, and it will need to be a good one if it resist me. I used to be rather an adept at this sort of thing.”

“Then you are,” said Todd, “a professional — ”

He paused, for he did not like to say thief; but Lupin himself added the word, cracksman, and Todd nodded.

“Yes,” added Lupin, “I was a cracksman, but I got known, so I thought the chapel dodge would suit me, and it did for a time, and would for some time longer, but that the little accident of which you have heard something took place in the chapel, and that idiot Mrs. Oakley found me out. Ah! You never after all can be a match for a crafty old woman. They will have you at some moment when you least expect it. She regularly sold me.”