

CHAPTER CXLV
Shows how Todd Made Up his Mind to Vengeance

Sir Richard drew bridle opposite the house of Mr. Ingestrie, and called to an urchin who was passing to ring the bell for him.

The boy complied and in a few moments a servant made an appearance, to whom Sir Richard said —

“If your master is stirring, pray tell him that a gentleman wishes to speak to him for a few moments.”

These words were hardly past the lips of the magistrate, when someone, with a bunch of flowers in her hand, and one of the prettiest of pretty morning dresses, came to the door. It was our old, dear, young, kind friend, Johanna! We cannot help calling her Johanna still, although, perhaps, it would be more proper for us to name her Mrs. Ingestrie; but it seems so odd to append that title of “Mrs.” to our gentle, youthful Johanna, whose dangers in Todd’s shop we have watched and trembled at so often in times past.

“Ah! My dear friend,” she cried, when she saw who it was. “I am so glad to see you!”

“And I am equally glad to see you,” said Sir Richard, “particularly as you look so well and so happy.”

“Yes, I am happy. Mark! Mark! Here is Sir Richard come to breakfast with us.”

“Nay, I did not think of dismounting.”

“Oh, but you must. I will hold the bridle of the horse, and you will have to ride over me if you attempt to go away. Mark — Mark! Where are you!”

Upon these repeated calls, Mark Ingestrie made his appearance at the door, and looked pleased enough to see Sir Richard, who, finding that they would take no sort of denial, he felt that he could not do otherwise than dismount and enter the house. A servant of the Ingestries took charge of his horse, and he was soon in the breakfast room of the pretty house, inhabited by the young couple.

It did not escape the observation of Johanna that there was a cloud of seriousness upon the countenance of Sir Richard Blunt; but she did not make any remark, although each moment she felt more and more convinced that it was some matter of business that called the magistrate to their abode so early;

for it will be remembered that although he had transacted a good quantity of business, the day was yet very young.



Sir Richard Blunt pays a Visit to Johanna, at Chelsea.

Mark Ingestrie did not appear to have any idea beyond the fact that it was very kind of the magistrate to visit them; but the reader will easily excuse him for not being so acute an observer as Johanna.

“I hope,” said Mark, “that you will often take a canter over here, Sir Richard, before the business of the day commences, and breakfast with us. I know how very hopeless it is to expect you often at any other time.”

“It is rather so,” replied Sir Richard, “and my stay now must be very limited indeed. How do you both like your new house?”

“It is charming,” said Johanna, “and the view from the windows is full of animation for the greater part of the day.”

“It’s the view indoors,” smiled Mark, “that to me is so delightful and so full of animation.”

“That is just what I should have supposed,” said the magistrate, glancing at Johanna with a smile.

“Now, positively, I must go and take my breakfast in some other room,” said Johanna, “if there are to be any compliments. They are quite absurd, you know, among married folks.”

“And a little unfair,” said Sir Richard, “at meal times, I think, above all others.”

“Indeed?” said Mark.

“Yes, to be sure,” added Johanna, “for you know one is either obliged to hear the compliments, which feed noone but with false viands, or leave the table upon which there may be something much more substantial and decidedly more palatable.”

“I give in,” said Mark, “I give in. I don’t for one moment profess to be a match for you alone, my dear; but when you get Sir Richard to side with you, I feel that I had better say as little as possible.”

“A graceful defeat,” said Sir Richard, “is almost as good as a clumsy victory.”

“Much better,” said Johanna, “a great deal better. But now, Sir Richard, you have not ridden over here to help us at our breakfast, or to talk badinage.”

Mark opened his eyes very wide indeed, and looked from Johanna to the magistrate, and from the magistrate to Johanna, with evident surprise. An expression of great anxiety was each moment gathering over the face of Johanna, which Sir Richard saw, and with all that tact which with him was a kind of second nature, he said —

“I have had the pleasure of seeing your father this morning, and they are all well at the old house, and as comfortable as can be.”

Johanna drew a long breath of relief, and then Mark Ingestrie cried in a voice of surprise —

“What? Do you mean to say you have been in the city before you came here, sir?”

“I have, my friend, and I have been to Colonel Jeffery’s, too, before I came here. If I had not, I should not be able to indulge myself with the pleasure of staying here for even the short time that I have been beneath your roof. I must, however, go.”

“Something has happened!” said Johanna.

“So there has,” said the magistrate with a smile, “but it cannot be anything very serious, you know, as all our dear friends are well. Anything falls light in comparison with the health and happiness of those whom we love.”

“Oh, yes — yes,” said Johanna. “You are right, and you are very good to preface bad news in so kind a manner, Sir Richard. It is good, and kind, and grateful, and like you in all respects. I thank you from my heart.”

“But what’s it all about?” cried Mark Ingestrie. “Good gracious, what’s it all about? Who talks of bad news? If all our friends are well, how can there be bad news? Do not keep us in suspense, Sir Richard!”

“No — no,” said Johanna.

“I will not.”

Both Johanna and Mark Ingestrie looked most intently at the magistrate, as he said in his quiet way —

“Sweeney Todd has escaped from Newgate, and is now at large!”

Mark Ingestrie sprang to his feet, and Johanna, for a moment, turned rather pale.

“The villain!” cried Mark.

“Hush!” said Johanna. “Oh, hush, Mark!”

“It was of the utmost importance,” continued Sir Richard Blunt, speaking quite calmly, “that all who were in any way comprehended in the list of what Sweeney Todd would call his enemies, should be speedily informed of this fact, and that is what has brought me to Chelsea at so early an hour in the morning.”

“We thank you from our hearts,” said Johanna.

“We do, indeed,” said Mark. “But let him beware of me. He dare not, villain as he is, come within the reach of my arm. The spirit of my poor murdered friend, Thornhill, will cry aloud for vengeance, and nothing should save the murderer from death.”

“Oh, Mark — Mark!” said Johanna, “Do not speak in such a strain. You do not know Todd. You know nothing of the character and of the capabilities of that man. He is not only one of the most wicked, but he is likewise one of the most crafty and unscrupulous.”

“That is true,” said the magistrate. “He does not know him. Do you suppose for one moment, Mr. Ingestrie, that I would have ridden over here to give you such a special warning concerning this man, if I apprehended any open attack? No — that I could have trusted to you to ward off. Your life has been one of danger and adventure; but not you, nor I, nor all the world, can be prepared against what Todd may, in the profound depths of his imagination, attempt.”

“All that is true,” said Johanna, “most true.”

“You now really alarm me!” said Mark.

“Then I did not mean to do so. All I wished was that you should be made aware of the real extent of the possible danger. For myself, I look upon all such men as Sweeney Todd as madmen, to a certain extent; and now that he is deprived of his money, there is no knowing but he may be willing to sacrifice

his life for the gratification of, no doubt, one of the most powerful feelings of his mind, which is revenge!”

“No doubt,” said Johanna.

A flush of colour came over the cheek of the young husband, and he took the hand of Johanna in his, as he said —

“Oh, Sir Richard, only tell me now I may best secure this treasure against the machinations of that monster in human shape.”

“Nay, now, Mr. Ingestrie,” said Sir Richard, “do not fall into the other extreme, and make too much of this danger. We are very apt to pet some peril, until we make it to our imagination assume a much larger shape than really belongs to it. I hope that Todd will be in custody again soon.”

“Is it likely, sir?”

“I fancy so. From this day I abandon all other objects and pursuits, and devote myself to that task alone.”

“Then there is a hope,” said Johanna.

“Yes,” added Sir Richard. “My impression is that he has no money, and that I shall soon apprehend him; but if, unknown to me, he has any secret funds, he may make an attempt to leave the kingdom, and so foil me.”

“And if he does?”

“I follow him, for I am determined that sooner or later, dead or alive, Todd shall be given up to the law.”

“But you will advise us what to do,” said Mark Ingestrie. “In your experience you can suggest to us the best mode of proceeding in this emergency.”

“I have been thinking of that as I came along, and my advice is that you leave London immediately. I do not think that the danger, admitting that there is any at all, is immediate. Todd for some days will be far too intent upon evading pursuit and recognition to think of much else, besides his personal safety, so that you will have ample time to leave.”

“We will do so,” said Johanna, “at once. Where would you advise us to go?”

“There is a little fishing village on the south coast, called Brighthelmstone. It lies in a pleasant enough valley stretching to the sea. There you can remain quite unsuspected of Todd, and enjoy the fair sea breezes that make the place delightful, without a thought of danger, for it is not that way he will go, as the place is not a port from which he could take shipping if he wished to leave England; and if he did not wish to leave at all, nothing could be further from

his thoughts than going so far from London, and the spot upon which all his revenge could alone be attempted to be gratified."

"We will go," said Johanna, appealingly looking at Mark Ingestrie as she spoke.

"Certainly," he replied.

"Well, then," said Sir Richard, "since that is so far settled, I have a favour to ask of you both."

"You have but to name it," said Ingestrie. "You ought rather to say that you have a command to give us both."

"Yes," said Johanna, "that is so."

"No. If I thought that, I should not like to mention it. But I appeal to your candour to say 'yes' or 'no' to the request, according as you really feel inclined when you hear it. You know how anxious Todd has been to take the life of the poor lad, Tobias, who has suffered so much at his hands."

"Oh, yes — yes," said Johanna.

"Well. Have you any objection to take him with you?"

"None in the least," cried Mark.

Johanna turned to him with a smile, as she said —

"Mark, I thank you with all my heart for that ready reply and acquiescence with the proposal of Sir Richard Blunt, and I echo it by likewise saying, 'None in the least.'"

"You have met the proposal as I anticipated you both would," said the magistrate, "or I should not have made it. You will find poor Tobias one of the most gentle and inoffensive of beings; but his nature has been so acted upon by Todd, that it would drive him to the verge of madness if he thought that the villain were at large; so I do not wish that he should know as much until it can be coupled with information of his recapture."

"The secret shall be kept."

"Then my business is concluded, and I am sorry to say my pleasure also; for it has been a real one to visit you both; and I must be off at once. I will communicate with Colonel Jeffery about Tobias, and manage how he shall come to you. A post chaise will take you in six hours to the place I have mentioned, which you will find marked on the map."

"I know it," said Ingestrie.

“That is well. And now good day.”

The Ingestries took a warm and affectionate leave of Sir Richard, who, in ten minutes more, was on his road to London.

CHAPTER CXLVI
Returns to Todd in the Wood at Hampstead

While all this was going on, contingent upon his elopement from Newgate, Todd was still in the wood at Hampstead — that wood in which he had committed so barbarous a murder, in ridding the world of almost as great a rascal as himself, in the shape of Mr. Lupin.

Todd was as anxious as possible to leave the wood, but he felt that to do so in daylight would be jeopardising himself much too seriously. He was not without money, as the reader is aware; and after placing some distance between himself and the dead body of Mr. Lupin, he sat down upon the roots of an old tree to think.

It was not that Todd had any particular terrors connected with the dead body of Mr. Lupin that induced him to get away from the neighbourhood of the body, but he thought it was just possible some people might come into the wood, and in such a case he did not wish to be connected with the deed in consequence of any contiguity to it.

“What shall I do?” said Todd, after he had rested for some time with his head upon his hand. “That is the question — what shall I do? I have some money, but not enough. Oh, that I had but a tithe of the amount that once was mine! I would yet leave England for ever, and forego all my thoughts of vengeance, unless I could contrive from a great distance to do some mischief, and that might be done if very cunningly contrived; but they have taken from me all — all!”

Here Mr. Todd indulged in a few expletives, with which we do not think proper to encumber our pages; and after swearing himself into a state of comparative calmness again, he held up his left hand, and separating the fingers, he began to count upon them the names of people.

“Let me see,” he said. “Let me see, how many throats now it would give me a very special pleasure to cut — humph — ha. Sir Richard Blunt — one; Tobias Ragg — two; Colonel Jeffery — three; Johanna Oakley — four; and her husband, that is, I suppose, by this time, five — confound him! Ah! Those make up the five that I most specially should like to sacrifice! A whole handful of victims! After they were comfortably despatched, no doubt, I could think of a few more; but it is better to confine one’s attention to the principals for a time. The others may drop in afterwards, when one has nothing more important to do.”

He thought he heard a noise in the wood, and he stooped his head to listen. It was nothing, or if it had been anything, it quickly ceased again, and he was tolerably satisfied that he was alone.

“What a delightful thing, now, it would be,” he muttered, “if I could poison the whole lot of them at once, with some drug that would give them the most

excruciating agony! And then I should like to go round to them all, and shout in their ears — ‘I did it! — I, Sweeney Todd, did it!’ That would be glorious, indeed! Ha! Ha!”

“Ha!” said a voice behind him, following up his hideous laugh most closely in point of tone.

It was almost with what might be called a yell of terror that Todd sprang to his feet, and turned round, fully expecting to see some one; but not the slightest vestige of the presence of any human being met his eyes.

After gazing for a moment or two, he thought that surely some one must be hiding behind one of the trees, and he sprang forward, crying —

“Disclose yourself, villain! Crafty wretch, you or I must die!”

There was no reply to this; and he could find no one, although he looked narrowly about, for the next quarter of an hour, all over the spot. He felt quite convinced that no one could have slipped away without him hearing something of the footfall, however light it might be; and he was left, by this extraordinary circumstance, in a complete maze of terrified conjecture. He trembled in every limb from positive fright.

No man was probably more generally free from what might be called superstitious terrors, than Sweeney Todd. At least, we may certainly say, that no guilty man ever could be more free from them. Had such not been the case, it is quite impossible that he could have carried on the career that he did; but of late, two or three things had happened to him to give his imagination a kind of jog upon such subjects.

He might well be excused for a little kind of nervousness now, when he felt quite confident that a laugh from no mortal lungs had sounded within a few inches of his ears, at so strange a moment.

“What can it be?” he said, in a voice of terror. “What can it be? Have I all along been mistaken; and is there such a thing as an invisible world of spirits about us? Oh, what can I think? — what excuse can I now give myself for an unbelief, without which I should have gone quite mad long — long ago?”

The heavy drops stood upon his brow, and he was forced to stagger back, and hold by a tree for support. After a few moments of this condition, however, the determined spirit of the man triumphed over the fears that beset him, and raising his voice, he said —

“No — no; I will never be the slave of such wild fancies! This is no time for me to give way to a belief in these things, which all my life I have laughed to scorn! If I had believed what the world pretends to believe, I must have been stark staring mad to load my soul with guilt in the way I have done, if my recompense had been the accumulated wealth of all the kingdoms of the earth; for death

would, despite all that, come and rob me of all, leaving me poor as any beggar who lays him down by the road side to die!”

While he spoke, he glared nervously and apprehensively about him, and then he drew a long breath, as he added —

“I take shame to myself now to have one particle of fear. Have not I, at the hour of midnight, many and many a time threaded the mazes of the dark vaults of St. Dunstan’s, when I knew that I was all but surrounded by the festering, gaunt remains of heaps of my victims? And shall I here, with the open sky above me, and only the known neighbourhood of one dead villain, shake in such a way? No — no!”

He stamped upon the ground to reassure himself; and then, as though willing to taunt the unseen laughter into a repetition of the mocking sound, he again cried —

“Ha! — Ha!”

There was no response to this, and it was rather a disappointment to Todd that there was not, for a hope had been growing upon his mind to the effect, that it was only some echo in the wood, to which he had been indebted for his fright; but now, when it did not occur again as it ought to have done, if it had been a result from any natural cause, he was thrown back upon his strength of mind merely to shake it off as best he might.

“Fancy! Fancy!” he cried. “It was but fancy after all;” but he did not believe himself when he so spoke.

Todd remained in the wood tolerably free from any more alarms, until the sun sunk in the west; and while there was positive darkness in that place where he was hiding, a sweet twilight still lingered over the fair face of nature.

“I must not venture forth yet,” he said, “but in another hour it will be dark alike upon the heath as in the wood, and then I will go into the village and get some refreshment, after which, I rather think, that London, with all its dangers, will be the best place for me. I have heard of people hiding there for many a day. I wonder, now, if a lodging in the Old Bailey would be a good thing? Surely they would never think of looking for me there.”

Todd rather chuckled over this pleasant idea of a lodging in the Old Bailey. It was just one of the notions that, for its practical extravagance, rather pleased him than otherwise, but although it had something to recommend it, it required rather more boldness than even he was master of to carry it out.

But such thoughts sufficed to amuse him until darkness was upon the face of the land, and to withdraw his thoughts from other and more tormenting matters; so that for a time he even forgot the seemingly supernatural laugh that had sounded so oddly behind him, and produced in him such a world of alarm.

He heard the clock of Hampstead Church proclaim the hour of nine, and then he thought that he might venture from his place of concealment; and yet it will be seen that Todd had not been able to concoct any definite plan of operations. Then he was wishing to do many things, and yet unable in that anxious state of his fortunes to do anything at all.

Truly, Sir Richard Blunt was right enough, when he said that Todd, for a time, would be much too busy with his own affairs to take any active step for the accomplishment of any of his revenges.

In the wood, now, the darkness was so great, that literally you could not see your hand before your face; and the only plan by which he could leave it was by blundering right on, and trusting to get out at any point to which his chance steps might lead him. In about a quarter of an hour he came to a rather precipitous bank, which he clambered up, and then he found himself on the outskirts of the wood, and not far from the village.

He heard some one coming along the roadway, and whistling as he came. The moon was struggling against the shadowing influence of a mass of clouds in the horizon, and Todd felt that in a little time the whole place would be light enough.

"Am I sufficiently unlike myself," he said, "to trust an appearance in the village? I want food, and most of all, I want drink. Yes, now more than ever; I cannot pretend to live without stimulants. Yes, I will risk it, and then I will go to London."

He sprang down into the road, and in as careless a manner as he could, he walked on in the direction that he thought would take him to the village.

The man who was whistling as he came along, rather increased his pace, and to the great alarm of Todd, overtook him, and said —

"A fine night, sir, we shall have? The moon is getting up nicely now, sir!"

Todd breathed a little more freely. After all, it was not an enemy, but only one of those people so common in places a little way out of town, who are talkative to any one they may meet, for the mere love of talking. For once in his life, Todd determined upon being wonderfully gracious, and he replied quite in a tone of serenity —

"Yes, it is a nice night; and, as you say, the moon is rising beautifully."

"Yes, sir," added the man, who was carrying something that Todd could not, for the life of him, make out. "Yes, sir, and I am not sorry to get home, now. I have been all round by Hendon, Golders Green, and Finchley, sticking bills."

"Bills?"

“Yes, sir, about the murderer Todd, you know!”

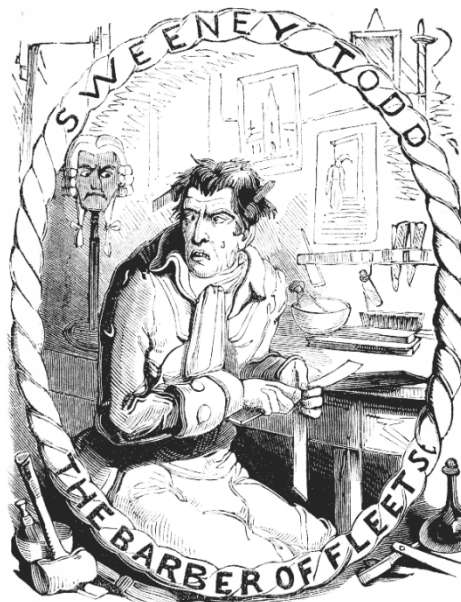
“Oh, ah!”

“You know, sir, he has got out of Newgate, and there’s five hundred pounds reward offered by the *govement* for him. A nice little set up that would be, sir, for any one, wouldn’t it, sir?”

“Very.”

“All the billstickers round London have had a job in putting up the bills, and they say that if it costs a million of money they intend to have him.”

“And very proper too,” said Todd. “Can you spare a bill, my friend?”



[From a rare old Painting by Reading, in the British Museum.]

“Oh, yes. There’s hand ones as well as posters. Here’s one, sir, and you’ll find a description of him. Oh, don’t I only wish I could come across him, that’s all; I’d make rather a tidy day’s work then, I think. That would be a little better, sir, than the paste pot, wouldn’t it?”

“Rather,” said Todd; “but he might be rather a dear bargain; for such a man, I should think, would not be very easily taken!”

“There’s something in that, sir, as you say, but yet I would have a try. Five hundred pounds, you know, sir, is not to be picked up everyday on the roadside.”

“Certainly not! Is that Hampstead where the lights are, to the left, there?”

“Yes, right on. I live at west-end, and my way lays this way. Good night, sir!”

“Good night,” said Todd. “I hope you may have the luck of meeting with this Todd, and so earning the five hundred pounds you mention; but I am afraid, after all, there is not much chance, for I heard he had gone down to the coast, and had got on board a vessel and was off by this time. That may not be true, though. Good night!”

CHAPTER CXLVII

Todd Takes a Look at his old Quarters in Fleet Street

The village of Hampstead was, at the time of which we write, really a village. It still retains many of its old houses and picturesque beauties, but it is not quite such a little retired spot as it was. If ever any one walked through Hampstead, however, who was less inclined than another to pause and speculate upon its beauties, certainly that man was our doubtful acquaintance, Sweeney Todd.

He did not think it quite prudent to stop in the High Street to solace himself with any worldly comforts, although he saw several public houses very temptingly open, but passing right on, he descended Red Lion Hill, and paused at a little inn at the foot of it, that is to say, on the London side of the pretty village.

Brandy was Todd's request, and he was met by a prompt, "Yes, sir;" but Todd had, among his varied experiences, to find out what Hampstead brandy was, and the moment he placed a portion of it in his mouth, his eyes goggled furiously, and spitting it out, he said, in a voice of anger —

"This is some mistake."

"Mistake, sir?"

"Yes; I asked for brandy, and you have given me the rinsings of some bottles and dirty glasses."

"Oh, dear no, sir; that brandy is the very best that you will get in all Hampstead."

"The best in all Hampstead!" repeated Todd, with a groan; "what must the worst be, I wonder?"

"I assure you, sir, it is considered to be very good."

"Considered?" said Todd. "Then, my friend, there's your money, and as the brandy is considered to be so good, you can drink it; but having some respect, from old companionship, for my inside, I decline it. Good evening."

With these words, Todd laid a shilling upon the bar, and strode away.

"Well," said the publican, "how singular! That's the eighth person who has refused that one quartern of brandy and paid for it. Here, wife, put this back into the bottle again, and shake it up well."

Todd pursued his route down Haverstock Hill, until he came to the then straggling district of Camden Town, and there he did find a house at which he

got just a tolerable glass of brandy, and feeling very much invigorated by the drop, he walked on more rapidly still; and a thought took possession of him, which, although it was perhaps not unattended with danger, might turn out to be a very felicitous one.

During his career in the shop in Fleet Street, he had collected a number of watches from the pockets of the murdered persons, but he had always been afraid to attempt the disposal of the best of them.

The fact was, that at that time everybody had not a watch as at present. It was an expensive article, and Mr. So-and-so's watch was as well known as Mr. So-and-so himself; so that it would have been one of the most hazardous things possible for Todd to have brought suspicion upon himself by going about disposing of the watches of his victims. It was the same, too, with some other costly articles, such as rings, locketts, and so on; and as he had realised as much money as he could previous to his arrangements for leaving England, Todd had left some of this description of property to perish in the fire, which he hoped to be the means of igniting in old Fleet Street upon his departure.

Now, as he crept along by Tottenham Court Road, he mused upon the state of things.

"If," he muttered, "I could only get into my late house in Fleet Street, I know where to lay my hand upon portable property, which was not worth my consideration while I had thousands of pounds in gold, but which now would be a fortune to me in my reduced circumstances. If I could but lay my hand upon it!"

The more Todd thought over this proposition, the more pleased he was with it; and by the time he had indulged himself with two more glasses of brandy, it began to assume, to his mind, a much more tangible shape.

"It may be done," he said, "it surely may be done. If I could only make my way in the church it might be done well, and surely one of these picklocks that I have about me might enable me to do that."

The picklock he alluded to was one that he had put in his pocket to accommodate Mr. Lupin, when they were both so intent upon their escape from Newgate, and when Mr. Lupin was foolish enough to believe that Todd really had two thousand pounds buried in Caen Wood, Hampstead. There was one thing, however, which made Todd pause. He did not think he was sufficiently disguised to venture into the locality of his old residence, and, unfortunately for him, he was rather a peculiar looking man. His great chance, however, was, that in Fleet Street surely no one would now think of looking for Sweeney Todd.

"I must be bold," he said, "I must be bold and resolute. It will not do to shrink now. I will buy a knife."

This was a pleasant idea to Todd. Buying a knife seemed almost like getting halfway to his revenge, and he went into an obscure cutler's shop, and bought a long double-edged knife, for which he gave two shillings. He then carefully concealed it in his clothing.

After this, he hit upon a plan of operations which he thought would have the effect of disguising him. At that period, wigs were so commonly worn that it was nothing at all particular for a person to go into a wigmakers, and select one — put it on — pay for it — and go away!

"Yes," said Todd, "I will buy a wig; for I have art enough and knowledge of wigs to enable me to do so — as shall produce the greatest possible change in my appearance. A wig, a wig will be the thing."

Todd had hardly well made this declaration than he came upon a wigmakers, and in he went. Pointing to a wig that was on a block, and which had a very clerical kind of look, he inquired the price of it.

"Oh, my dear sir," said the wigmaker, "that is much too old looking a perriwig for you. Let me recommend you a much younger wig. Now, sir, here's one that will take a matter of ten years off your age in a moment."

Todd had discretion enough to know well that he could not make up young, so he merely pointed to the wig again and enquired the price.

"Well, sir, it is a couple of guineas, but — "

Without another word, Todd laid down the couple of guineas, and putting the wig upon his head he left the shop, certainly having given the wigmaker an impression that he was the oddest customer he had had for some time; but little did he suspect that that odd customer was the criminal with whose name all London was ringing, and upon whose head — with or without a wig — so heavy a price was set.

After this, Todd made his way to a shop where secondhand clothing was bought and sold, and there he got accommodated with an old grey coat that reached down to the calves of his legs, and he bought likewise a very voluminous white cravat; and when he got into the street with these articles, and purchased at another shop a walking cane, with a great silver top to it, and put one hand behind his back and stooped very much, and moved along as if he were afflicted with all the corns and bunions that his toes could carry, and by bending his knees, decreased his height six inches, no one could have known him.

At least, so Todd flattered himself.

In this way he tottered on until he got to the immediate neighbourhood of Fleet Street. To be sure, with all his coolness and courage, he could not help shaking a little when he came to that well remembered neighbourhood.

“And I,” he thought to himself, “and I by this time hoped and expected to be far over the sea, instead of being such a wretch as I am now, crawling about, as it were, amid pitfalls and all sorts of dangers! Alas! Alas!”

He really shook now, and it was quite astonishing how, with his old wig, and his old grey coat and his stick, and his stooping posture, old and venerable, yes, positively venerable, Sweeney Todd actually looked.

“Ain’t you well, sir?” said a respectable man, stepping up to him. “Can I assist you?”

Todd perpetrated about half a dozen wheezing coughs, and then, not sorry for an opportunity of trying his powers of imitation of age, he replied in a tremulous voice —

“Ah, sir! Yes — old age — old age, sir — eugh! — Eugh! — Oh, dear me, I feel that I am on my last legs, and that they are on the shake — old age, sir, will come on; but it’s a comfort to look back upon a long life well spent in deeds of charity!”

“Not a doubt of it,” said the stranger. “I was only afraid, sir, you were taken suddenly ill, as you stood there.”

“Oh, no — no — eugh! — No. Thank you, sir.”

“Good evening, sir.”

“Good evening, my good sir. Oh, if I had you only in my old shop with a razor at your throat, wouldn’t I polish you off!” muttered Todd, as the stranger left him.

In the course of another minute, Todd was on the Fleet Street side of Temple Bar.

He could almost see his old house — that house in which he had passed years of deep iniquity, and which he had hoped, ere that time, would have been a heap of ruins. There it was, tall, dismal, and gaunt looking. The clock of St. Dunstan’s struck eleven.

“Eleven,” he muttered. “A good hour. The streets are getting deserted now, and no one will know me. I will stoop yet more, and try to look older — older still.”

Todd a little over acted his part, as he tottered down Fleet Street, so that some individuals turned to look after him, which was a thing he certainly did not wish, as his great object was to escape all observation if possibly he could; so he corrected that, and went on rather more strongly; and finally he came

exactly opposite to his own house, and getting partially into a doorway, he looked long and fixedly at it.

What thoughts, at that time, chased each other through the guilty mind of that man, it is hard to say; but he stood like a statue, fixing his regards upon the house for the space of about a quarter of an hour.

Once only he clapped his teeth together, and gave a sort of savage growl.

It was lucky for Todd that no one saw him just then, or they would have thought him rather an extraordinary old man.

The house was perfectly dark from top to bottom. The shutters of the shop, of course, were all up, and the shutters of the first floor windows were likewise closed. The other windows had their old dingy blinds all down; and, to all outward appearance, that den of murder was deserted.

But Todd could not believe such to be the case. In his own mind, he felt fully sure, that Sir Richard Blunt was not the man to leave the house without some sort of custody; and he quite settled with himself, that there was some one or more persons minding it, and, no doubt, by order, sitting there in one of the back rooms, so that no light should show in front.

“Curses on them all!” he muttered.

“Ah! You are looking at old Todd’s house, sir?” said a voice.

Todd started; and close to him was a person smoking a pipe, and looking as jolly as possible.

“Yes — yes,” stammered Todd, for he was taken by surprise rather. “Oh, yes, sir. I am amazed at the great wickedness of human nature.”

“You may well, sir — you may well! Lord bless me! I never thought him a good looking man, but I never thought any ill of him neither, and I have seen him lots of times.”

“Indeed, sir? Pray, what sort of man was he? I never saw him, as I live in Soho; and I am so much in years now, that in the bustling daytime I don’t care to come into streets like this; for you see, sir, I can’t move about as I could sixty years ago; and the people — God help them — are all in such a hurry now, and they push me here and there in such a way, that my failing breath and limbs won’t stand it; and — and — eugh! — Eugh! Oh, dear.”

“Poor old gentleman! I don’t wonder at your not liking the crowds. How old may you be, sir?”

“A matter of eighty nine, sir. It’s an old age to get to, but I — I am younger than my brother, yet — Ha! Ha! Oh dear, if it wasn’t now for the rheumatism

and the lumbago and a pain in my shoulder, and a few other little things, I should get on very well."

"Not a doubt of it. But you asked me what Todd was like, and I'll tell you, sir. He was nigh upon six feet high, and his face was two feet of it. He was just as ugly as any one you would wish to see for a pattern in that way, and that's his house where he murdered all the people."

"Peace be to their souls!"

"Amen! And there are underground places that lead right away through the vaults of St. Dunstan's to Bell Yard, where Mrs. Lovett's pie shop was, you know, sir."

"I have heard. Ah, dear — dear, I have heard. A very wicked woman, indeed — very wicked; and yet, sir, it is to be hoped she has found mercy in another world."

"There would need be plenty of it," said the man with the pipe, "if Mrs. Lovett is to be accommodated with any."

"My friend," said Todd, "don't be profane; and now I must go, as I don't like being out late."

"And so must I, for my pipe's out. I shall turn in, now. Good night, sir, and a pleasant walk home to you."

"Thank you, sir, thank you — eugh! Eugh! I think if it were not for my cough, I should do very well."

Todd hobbled away, and the man, who lived in Bouverie Street, went home. Todd had not got any real information from this man; but the brief conversation he had had with him, had given him a sort of confidence in his disguise, and in his power of acting, that he had not had before, so that, upon the whole, he was not sorry for the little incident.

And now it was quite evident that the streets were getting very much deserted. During the whole length of Fleet Street there was not half a dozen persons to be seen at all, and Todd, after casting a rapid glance around him to note if he were observed, suddenly crossed the way, and boldly went up to the door of old St. Dunstan's Church.

When once close to the door of the old building, he was so much in shadow that he felt tolerably secure from observation, but still he lingered a little, for he did not want to do anything so hastily as to rob it of its caution.

With his back against the church door he glanced right and left, and then for the space of five minutes he bent all his faculties to the one task of ascertaining

if any one was sufficiently near to watch him, and he got perfectly satisfied that such was not the case. He stood securely against the old church door.

“So far,” he muttered, “I am safe — quite safe.”

CHAPTER CXLVIII

Todd Makes his Way into his own House

When Todd was satisfied that he was not watched or even observed by any one, he turned and commenced operations upon the door of the church. The cunning person who had put on the lock, had had a notion in his necromantic head, that the larger you made a lock the better it was, and the less likely to be picked; and the consequence of this was, that Todd found no difficulty in opening the church door.

The moment he felt the lock yield to the false key he employed, he took another keen glance around him, and, seeing no one, slipped into the sacred edifice and closed the door behind him. Feeling, then, up and down the door until his hand touched a bolt, he shot it into its socket, and then a feeling of great security took possession of him, although the interior of the church was most profoundly dark, and any one would have thought that such a man as Todd — in such a place — could hardly have been free from some superstitious terrors. An overbearing selfishness, however, mingled with the most vengeful and angry feelings, kept Todd above all these sensations, which are mostly the result of vacant mindedness.

The church felt cold, and the silence had about it a character such as the silence of no other kind of place has. It may be imagination, but the silence of a church deserted, always appears to us to be a silence different from any other, as the silence in a wood is entirely different from any other description of stillness.

“All is quiet enough here,” whispered Todd. “I and the dead have this place to ourselves now, and so we have often had it. Many a time have I waded about this building in the still hours of the night, when all London slept, and opened some little window, with the hope of letting out the stench from the dead bodies before the morning should bring people to the building; but it would not do. The smell of decomposition lingered in the air, and it is here still, though not so bad. Yes, it is here still! I can smell it now, and I know the odour well.”

Todd was sufficiently familiar with St. Dunstan’s church almost to go over it even at that hour, and amid that darkness, without running against anything; but yet he was very careful as he went, and kept his arms outstretched before him. He dreaded to get a light, although he had the means of doing so, for Mr. Lupin had, at his request, given him some of the matches and little wax candle ends that the pious lady had supplied him with. Yet Todd knew how small a light would suffice to shine through some of the richly stained glass windows of the church, and therefore he dreaded to give himself a light.

He felt confident that he should have no sort of difficulty in getting into the vaults, for in consequence of recent events the stone that covered up the entrance could not be fast, and he knew from past experience that his strength

was sufficient to raise it if he once got hold of it, and if it were not fastened down by cement, which, no doubt, was not the case now.

“I shall yet get,” he said, “into my old house. The time has been rather short, and the goods there deposited by me in old times may there remain; and if so, I will carry away enough with me to keep me far above the necessities of life, and when once I have achieved that much, I will from some obscure place meditate upon my revenge.”

In the course of about ten minutes he found the flat stone that led into the vaults, and to his satisfaction he found that it was merely laid crosswise over the aperture, in order to prevent any one in day time from heedlessly tumbling in, but at night it was not, of course, expected that any one would be there to fall into such a danger.

With one effort Todd removed it.

“Good,” he said. “Now I can make my way, and once below the level of the floor of the church, there will be no danger in at once accommodating myself with a light, which will be useful enough in the vaults.”

Getting upon his hands and knees now, Todd, for fear of a fall down the stone steps, cautiously got down the first few of them, and then he paused to light one of the bits of taper with which he was provided. In the course of a few moments the tiny flame was clear and bright, and shading it with his hand, Todd carefully descended the remainder of the stairs.

How still everything was in those vaults of old St. Dunstan’s. Were there no spirits from another world — spirits of the murdered, to flit in horrible palpability before the eyes of that man who had cut short their thread of life? Surely if ever a visitant from another world could have been expected, it would have been to appear to Todd to convince him that there was more beyond the grave than a forgotten name and a mouldering skeleton.

When he reached the foot of the stairs and was satisfied that the little light was burning well, he held it up above his head and bent a keen glance around him.

“Ha! Ha!” he laughed, “so they have been doing their best — poor fools as they are to meddle with such rubbish — to rid the family vaults of some of the new tenants that I took occasion to introduce into them. Well, let them, let them! I did play a little havoc with the gentility of the dead, I must admit!”

With this highly jocose remark, Todd passed on, taking a route well known to him, which would conduct him to the cellar that it will be recollected was immediately underneath his shop. It was from this that he hoped to get into the house.



Todd in the Scene of his Murders.

It took Todd much less time than it would have taken any one else to make his way to that cellar; but then no one was or could be so well acquainted with all the windings and turnings of the excavation that led to it as he, and finally he reached it, just as he found the necessity of lighting up another little piece of wax candle, as the one he had already lit had burnt right to his hand. He found a piece of wood, into which he stuck the new one securely, so that it was much handier to hold.

Todd now felt the absolute necessity of being much more cautious than before, for he did know who might be in the shop above, and he did know that a very small sound below would make itself heard. Holding up the light, he saw that his nice little mechanical arrangement regarding the two chairs, remained just as it had been as he used to use it.

“Ah!” he cried, “It will be some time in London again before people will sit down in a barber’s chair with anything like confidence, particularly if it should chance to be a fixture. Ha!”

Todd was getting quite merry now. The sight of the old familiar objects of that place had certainly raised his spirits very considerably, and no doubt the brandy had helped a little. Setting the light down in a corner of the cellar, he placed himself in an attitude of intense listening, which he kept up for about five minutes, at the end of which time he gave a nod, and muttered —

“There may be some one in the parlour — that I will not pretend to say no to; but the shop is free of human occupants. And now for the means of getting into it. If anybody can, I can, and that with tolerable ease, too.”

The apparatus by which Todd had been in the habit of letting down his customers, consisted of a slight system of lever, which he could move from the parlour, but provided he could reach so high, he could just as easily release the

loose plank from where he was; in which case the chair that was above would have a preponderating influence, as that was on the heaviest arm of the plank from the centre upon which it turned.

"I can manage that," he said; and then taking the knife from his pocket, he found that by its aid he could just reach high enough to touch the lever that acted as a kind of bolt to keep the plank in its place. The moment he removed that bolt the plank slowly moved, and then Todd caught the end of it in his hand, and pulled it right down, so that it assumed a perpendicular aspect completely. Holding then the piece of wood to which he had attached the wax light in his mouth, he climbed carefully and noiselessly up into his old shop; and when there he replaced the plank, and on the end of the board which was the counterpoise to the chair, he placed a weight, which he knew where to lay his hands upon, and which kept the chair in its place, although a very little would have overcome the counterpoise, and sent it down to the cellar below.

Todd extinguished his light, and the moment he did so, he saw a very faint illumination coming from the parlour through a portion of the door, into which a square of glass was let in, and through which he, Todd, used to glare at poor Tobias.

The sound of voices, too, came upon his ears, and he laid himself flat down on the floor, close to the wall, under a kind of bench that ran along it for a considerable distance.

"I am certain I heard something," said a voice, and then the parlour door was opened, and a broad flash of light came into the shop. "I am quite sure I heard an odd noise."

"Oh, nonsense," said someone else. "Nonsense."

"But I did, I tell you."

"Yes, you fancied it half an hour ago, and it turned out to be nothing at all. Lord bless you, if I were to go on fancying things out of what I have heard since I have been in this house, minding it for Sir Richard Blunt, I should have been out of my mind long before this, I can tell you."

"But it was very odd."

"Well, the shop is not so large: you can soon see if Todd is in it. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"No, no, I don't expect to see Todd there exactly, I confess; it would not be a very likely place in which to find him."

"Well, is there anything now?"

"No — no. It all seems much as usual, and yet I thought I did hear a noise; but I suppose it was nothing, or a rat, perhaps, for there are lots, they say,

below. It might have been a rat. I did not think that before, and I feel all the easier now at the idea.”

“Then, come and finish our game.”

“Very good — all’s right. You make a little drop of brandy and water, and we will just have this game out before we go to rest, for I am getting tired and it’s late.”

“Not quite twelve yet.”

“Ain’t it? There it goes by St. Dunstan’s clock.”

Todd counted the strokes of the clock, and by the time they ceased to reverberate in the night air, the man who most unquestionably had heard a noise in the shop, had gone into the parlour again, half satisfied that it was a rat, and sat down to the game at cards that had been interrupted.

These were two men that had been put into the house to mind it, until the authorities should determine what to do with it, by Sir Richard Blunt. They were not officers of any skill or repute, although they were both constables; but then Sir Richard did not consider that anything in the shape of great intelligence was required in merely taking care of an empty house — for the idea of Todd ever visiting that place again, had certainly been one that did not even enter the farseeing brain of the magistrate.

“It’s my deal,” Todd heard one of them say, “but you go on, while I mix the brandy and water.”

“Indeed!” muttered Todd, as he gathered up his gaunt form from under the bench. “Indeed! So there are two of you, are there? Well, if there is another world, you can keep each other company on your road to it, for I am not going to let your lives stand in the way of my projects. No — no, I shall yet polish off somebody in my old place, and it is a pleasure that it should be two friends of that man Blunt, whom I so hate, that I have no words in which to express it!”

Todd crept up to the parlour door with the long knife in his hand that he had bought at the cutler’s in Camden Town, and putting his eyes close to the pane of glass in the door, he looked in at the two men.

They really seemed to be quite comfortable, those two men. A bright fire was burning in the grate, and a kettle was singing away upon the hob at a great rate. A pack of cards, some pipes, and some glasses, were upon the table that they had dragged up close to the fireside; and they were, take them altogether, about as comfortable as anybody could well expect to be in that gloomy parlour of Todd’s, at his house of murder in Fleet Street.

They were stout strong men though, and as Todd looked, he thought to himself, that with all his strength, and with all his desperate fighting for life, as

he would do, it was not a desirable thing for him to come into personal contact with them.

“Cunning,” he muttered, “will do more than strength. I must bide my time — but I will kill them both if they are in my way, and that they will be, is nearly past a doubt!”

“There,” said the man who was mixing the brandy-and-water, “there, you will find that a stiff comfortable glass; lots of brandy, and lots of sugar, and only water enough to make it hot and steamy.”

“You know how to mix, Bill,” said the other, as he took a drop and then was obliged to cough and wink again, it was so strong and hot.

“Ah!” thought Todd, “if it would only choke you!”

The other man then took his drink at the brandy, and he too coughed and winked, and then they both laughed and declared how precious strong it was, and one of them said —

“The fun of it is, that it was old Todd’s; and when he laid in such good stuff as this, he little thought that we would be enjoying it. I wonder where he is?”

“Oh, he’s far enough off by this time, poking about at some of the seaports to try to get away, you may depend.”

“Is he,” muttered Todd; “you will find, my kind friend, that I am near enough to cut your throat, I hope.”

CHAPTER CXLIX

Todd has a Narrow Escape, and has a Bit of Revenge

It was quite a provoking thing, and gall and wormwood to Todd in a manner of speaking, to see those two boisterous men enjoying themselves in his parlour. There could be no doubt in the world, but that if he had had the means then and there to do so, he would have hurled destruction upon them both forthwith; but he could only look at them now, and wait for a better opportunity.

The fact was, that now, for the first time, Todd found that the architecture of his old place of residence was far from being of the most convenient order; inasmuch as you could not reach the staircase leading to the upper part of the residence, without going through the parlour; so that he was a prisoner in the shop.

"I tell you what it is, Bill," said one of the men, assuming quite a philosophical look. "That fellow, Todd, as used to live here, after all, was some use to society."

"Was he?"

"Yes, to be sure. Can't you guess?"

"Not I. I can't see what use a fellow can be to society who cuts folks' throats."

"Can't you?"

"No, nor you neither, if you come to that."

"Yes I can. Don't it make folks careful of going into a strange barber's shop, let me ask you that?"

"Oh, you idiot. That's always the way with you. You begins with looking as wise as an owl as has found out something wonderful, and then when one comes to find out what it is, it's just nothing at all to nobody. I tell you what it is, old fellow, it strikes me you are getting a drop too much."

"No — no; but I have got something on my mind."

"It stands on a very small place, then. What is it?"

"Just you listen and I'll tell you. I did think of not saying anything about it, because you see I thought, that is to say, I was afraid if I did, you would go off at once."

"Off? Off?"

"I don't mean dead — I mean out of this place, that's all, not out of this world; but now I feel as if I ought to tell you all about it, you know, and then you can

judge for yourself. You know you slept here last night on that large sofa in the corner?”

“Yes, in course.”

“Very good; you had had what one may call just the other drop you know, and so — ”

“No I hadn’t, but you had. I recollect quite well you dropped your light, and had no end of trouble to get it lighted again, and kept knocking your head against the mantelshelf and saying ‘Don’t’ as if somebody was doing it to you.”

“Go along with you. Will you listen, or won’t you, while I tell the horrid anecdote?”

“Horrid, is it?”

“Above a bit. It’s enough to make all your hair stand on end, like quills on a guinea hen, as the man says in the play; and I expect you’ll dream of it all night; so here goes, and don’t you interrupt me any more, now.”

“Go on. I won’t.”

“Well, you know we had a pretty good fire here, as we have now; and as twelve o’clock went ding-dong by old St. Dunstan’s, we thought it was time to have some sleep, and you lay down on the sofa, saying as you could see by the fire light, while I took the candle to go upstairs to bed with, you know — old Todd’s bed, I suppose it is, on the second floor, and rather damp and thin, you know.”

“Goodness, gracious! Tell me something I don’t know, will you? Do you want to drive a fellow out of his mind?”

“Well — well, don’t be hasty! I’m getting on. I took the light, and shading it with one hand, for there’s always a furious draught upon the stairs of this house; up I went, thinking of nothing at all. Well, in course, I had to pass the first floor, which is shut up, you know, and has all sorts of things in it.”

“Yes; go on — go on!”

“Is it interesting?”

“It is; only you go on. I’ll warrant now it’s a ghost you are coming to.”

“No, it ain’t; but don’t percipitate, and you shall hear all about it. Let me see, where was I? — Oh, on the first floor landing: But, as I say, I was thinking of nothing at all, when, all of a sudden, I heard a very odd kind of noise in the front room of the first floor.”

“I wonder you didn’t fall headlong down stairs with fright, candle and all.”

“No, I didn’t. It sounded like the murmur of people talking a long way off. Then I began to think it must be in the next house; and I thought of going up to bed, and paying no attention to it, and I did get up two or three steps of the second floor stairs, but still I heard it; and it got such a hold of my mind, do you know, that I couldn’t leave it, but down I went again, and listened. I thought of coming to you; but, somehow, I didn’t do so.”

“Now, go on!”

“Well, after listening with my ear against the door for some time, I was certain that the sound was in the room; and I don’t know how I screwed up courage enough to open the door very gently, and look in!”

“You did?”

“I did; and the very moment I did so, out went the light as clean as if you had taken your fingers and snuffed it out; but in the room there was a strange pale kind of light, that wasn’t exactly like twilight, nor like moonlight, nor like any light that I ever saw, but you could see everything by it as plain as possible.”

“Well — well?”

“The room was crammed full of people, all dressed, and looking at each other; and some of them were speaking; and upon all their clothes and faces there was blood, sometimes more, and sometimes less; and all their eyes looked like the eyes of the dead; and then one voice more loud than the rest said — ‘All murdered! — All murdered by Todd! The Lord have mercy upon his soul!’ ”

“Oh, gracious! What did you do?”

“I felt as if my breath was going from me, and my heart kept swelling and swelling till I thought it would burst, and then I dropped the candle; and the next time I come to my senses, I found myself lying on the bed in the second floor, with all my clothes on!”

“You dreamt it?”

“Oh, no — no. It’s no use telling me that. I only wish I thought so, that’s all.”

“But, I tell you, you did.”

“You may tell me as much as you like; but in the morning when I came down, there was the candle on the first floor landing, just as I had dropped it. What do you think of that? Of course, after I drew out my head again from the first floor front room I must have gone up stairs in the middle of my fright, and I dare say I fainted away, and didn’t come to myself again till the morning.”

“Oh, stuff! Don’t try to make me believe in your ghost stories. If — if I thought it was true, I should bolt out of the house this minute.”

“You would, really?”

“Yes, to be sure; is a fellow to stay in a place with his hair continually standing on end, I should like to know? Hardly. But it’s all stuff. Take another drop of brandy! Now I tell you what, if you have the courage to go with me, I will take the light now and go up to the first floor, and have a good look all about it! What do you say to that, now? Will you do it?”

“I don’t much mind.”

“Only say the word, and I am quite ready.”

“Well, I will. If so be they are there, they won’t do us any harm, for they took no more notice of me than as if I had been nothing at all. But how you do shake!”

“I shake? You never were more mistaken in all your life. It’s you that’s shaking, and that makes you think I am. You are shaking, if you please; and if you don’t like the job of going up stairs, only say so; I won’t press it upon you!”

“Oh, I’ll go.”

“You are sure of it, now? You don’t think it will make you ill? Because I shouldn’t like that. Come now, only say at once that you would rather not go, and there’s an end to it.”

“Yes, but I rather would.”

“Come on, then — come on. Courage, my friend, courage. Look at me, and be courageous. You don’t see me shivering and shaking and shrinking. Keep up your heart, and come on!”

“You wretches,” muttered Todd. “It shall go hard with me, now, but I will play you some trick that shall go right to drive you out of your shallow wits. Go! It is the very thing I would, of all others, have wished you to do.”

It was quite clear that the man who had proposed going up stairs to explore the first floor, was much the more alarmed of the two; and now that he had made the proposal, he would gladly have seized upon any excuse for backing out of it, short of actually confessing that his fears had got the better of him. No doubt he had been greatly in hopes that his companion, who had told the ghost story, would have shrunk from such an ordeal; but as he did not do so, there was no resource but to carry it out or confess that it was but a piece of braggadocio, which he wanted the firmness to carry out. He strove now to talk himself out of his fears.

“Come on — come on! Ghosts, indeed! There are no such things, of course, as any reasonable man knows; and if there are, why, what harm can they do us? I say, what harm can they do us?”

“I don’t know!”

“You don’t know? No, nor nobody else! Come on, I say. Of course providence is providence, and if there are ghosts, I respect them very much — very much indeed, and would do anything in the world to oblige them!”

The valiant proposer of the experimental trip to the first floor uttered these last sentences in a loud voice, no doubt with the hope that if any of the ghostly company of the first floor were within hearing, they would be so good as to report the same to their friends, so that he might make his way there with quite a good understanding.

They trimmed the candle now; and having each of them fortified himself with a glass of brandy that Todd had laid in for his own consumption, they commenced their exploit by leaving the parlour and slowly ascending the staircase that led to the upper portion of the house.

Of course, Todd knew well the capabilities of that house, and long before the two men had actually left the parlour he had made up his mind what to do. The door of communication between the shop and the parlour was not fastened, so that he could open at the moment; and when the men left that latter room he at once entered it. Todd’s first movement, then, was to supply himself with a good dose of his own brandy, which he took direct from the bottle to save time.

“Ah!” he whispered, drawing a long breath after the draught, “I feel myself again, now!”

In order to carry out his plan, he knew that he had no time to spare; for he did not doubt but that the two men would make their visit as short as possible to the first floor; so — with cautious but rapid footsteps — he slipped into the passage and at once commenced the ascent of the staircase after them. The light they carried guided him very well. How little they imagined that any of its beams shone upon the diabolical face of Sweeney Todd!

“Can’t you come on?” said one of the men to the other. “Damme, how you do lag behind, to be sure. Any one would think you were afraid.”

“Afraid? Me afraid! That is a good joke.”

“Well, come quicker, then.”

“You will both of you,” thought Todd, “come down a little quicker, or I am very much mistaken indeed.”

The distance was short, and the landing of the first floor was soon gained by the men. He who had seen, or dreamed that he had seen, the strange sight in the room upon a former occasion, was decidedly the most courageous of the two. Perhaps, after all, he was the least imaginative.

"I think you said it was the front room?" said the other.

"Oh, yes, I heard not a sound in the back one. Here's the door. You hold the light while I listen a little."

"Yes — I — I'll hold it. Keep up your courage, and don't shake now. Oh, what a coward you are!"

"Well, that's a good one. You are shaking so yourself that you will have the light out, if you don't mind. Do try and be a little steady with it; and your teeth chatter so in your head, that they are for all the world like a set of castanets."

"Oh, how you do talk. Come, listen at the door; I must say I don't hear anything; but I have the greatest respect for ghosts, I have. I never say one word against the dead — God bless 'em all!"

While this man held the light — or rather waved it to and fro in his agitation — the other, with his ear placed flat against the panel of the door, listened attentively. All was perfectly still in the first floor, and he said —

"Perhaps they haven't begun yet, you know."

"Perhaps not; — shall we go away, now?"

"Oh, no — no. There's no end of curious things in the room; and now that we are here, let's go in, at all events, and have a little look about us. Don't be afraid. Come — come."

"Oh — I — I ain't exactly afraid, only, you see, I don't see much the use of going in, and — and, you know, we have already heard an odd noise in the shop, tonight."

"But that was nothing, for I looked, you know."

"Yes — yes, — but — but I'm afraid the fire will go out below, do you know."

"Let it go, then. If you are too much of a coward to come with me into this room, say so at once, and you can go downstairs while I have a look at it by myself. You can't have the candle, though, for it is no use my going in by myself."

"What! Do you expect me to go in the dark? Oh dear, no, I could not do that; open the door, and I will follow you in; I ain't a bit afraid, only, you see, I feel very much interested, that's all."

“Oh, well, that’s quite another thing.”

With this, the most courageous of the two men opened the door of the front room on the first floor, and peeped into it.

“All’s right,” he said. “There ain’t so much as a mouse stirring. Come on!”

Highly encouraged by this announcement, the other followed him; and they allowed the door to creak nearly shut after them.

While this hesitation upon the stairs was going on, Todd had been about half way up from the passage, crouching down for fear they should by chance look that way, and see him; but when he found that they had fairly gone into the front room, he made as much speed to the top of the stairs as was consistent with extreme caution, and laying his hand upon the handle of the lock of the door of the back room on that floor, he noiselessly turned it, and the door at once yielding, he glided in.

The two rooms communicated with each other by a pair of folding doors, and the light that the men carried sent some beams through the ill-fitting junction of the two, so that Todd could see very well about him.

CHAPTER CL

There is a Fire in Fleet Street after all — Todd Escapes

When once he had gained that back room, Todd considered that his design against the peace of mind of the two men was all but accomplished; and it was with great difficulty that he kept himself from giving a hideous chuckle, that would at once have opened their ears to the fact that some one was close at hand, who, whether of this world or the next, was a proficient in horrid noises.

He controlled this ebullition of ill-timed mirth, however, and listened attentively.

“There don’t seem much else beside lots of clothes,” said one of the men, “and hats, and sticks, and umbrellas.”

“Ah!” said the other, “And they all belong to the murdered men that Todd cut up to make pies of!”

“Horrible! — Horrible!”

“You may say that, old friend. It’s only a great pity that Sir Richard has so expressly forbid anything to be touched in the old crib, or else there’s some nice enough things here, I should say, that would make a fellow warm and comfortable in the winter nights.”

“Not a doubt of that. Here’s a cloak, now!”

“A beauty — quite a beauty, I say. He can’t know what is really here. Do you think he can?”

“What, Sir Richard?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, don’t he. I wouldn’t venture to touch so much as an old hat here, for I should feel, as sure as fate, he’d find it out.”

“Oh, nonsense, he couldn’t; and as for the ghosts, they don’t seem at all likely to interfere in the matter, for there’s not one of them to be seen or heard of tonight.”

“No, I defy the ghosts — ahem! I begin to think, do you know, that ghosts are all a sham. Why here we are, two men as brave as lions, or we should not have come here, and yet the deuce a ghost is to be seen. I tell you what I’d do if one was to come. I’d say, ‘Old fellow, was this your cloak?’ and then if he said ‘yes,’ I’d say, ‘well, old fellow, it’s of no use to you now, you know; will you give it to me?’ ”

“Ha! — Ha! Capital! Why you have quite got over all your fears.”

“Fears? Rubbish! I was only amusing myself to hear what you would say.”

“Was you, though? Only acting, after all?”

“Precisely.”

“Well, then, I must say you did it remarkably well, and if you take to the stage you will make your fortune. Oh, here’s a nice brown suit now, that would be just my size. I should feel inclined to say to the ghosts what you would say about the cloak.”

“Well, let’s say it, and if nobody says anything to the contrary, we will take it for granted. I will take the cloak, and you the brown suit; Sir Richard will be none the wiser, and we shall be a little the richer, you know. ‘Mr. Ghost, may I have this cloak, if you please, as you can’t possibly want it?’”

“Upon my life you are a funny fellow,” said the other; and then holding up the brown suit, he said, “Mr. Ghost who once owned this, may I have this brown suit, as it is of no use to you now?”

It was at this moment that Todd dashed open the two folding doors, and with one of the most frightful, fiendish yells that ever came from the throat of man, he made one bound into the front room.

The effect of this appearance, and the sound that accompanied it, was all that Todd could possibly wish or expect. The two men were almost driven to madness. They dropped the light, and with shrieks of dismay they rushed to the door — they tore it open, and then they both fell headlong down the staircase to the passage below, where they lay in a state of insensibility that was highly amusing to Todd.



Todd Alarms the two Bow Street Officers.

“Ha! Ha!” he laughed, as he stood at the head of the stairs; “Ha! Ha!”

He listened, but not so much as a groan came from either of the men, and then he clapped his huge hands together with a report like the discharge of a pistol, and laughed again. Todd had not been so well pleased since his escape from Newgate.

He slowly descended the stairs, and more than once he stopped to laugh again. The passage was intensely dark, so that when he reached it he trod upon one of the men, but that rather amused him, and he jumped violently upon the body.

“Good,” he said. “Perhaps they are both dead. Well, let them both die. It will be a lesson to others how far they interfere with me. Society and I are now fairly at war, and I will win as many battles as I can. They can’t say but this is a well fought one, two to one. Ha! They ought to make me a field marshal. Ha!”

Making the most hideous faces, just for the fun of the thing, Todd made his way to the parlour, and taking from a corner, where he knew to lay his hands upon them in a moment, a couple of old newspapers, he twisted them up into a kind of torch, and lighting it then at the fire, he went with it flaming in his hand to the passage.

The two men lay profoundly still. Terror and the fall they had had, combined to throw them quite into a swooning state, from which probably it would be hours before they would recover.

“This is capital,” said Todd. “Lie there, both of you, until I have transacted the business in this house that brought me here. Then I will, perhaps, think of some amusing way of finishing you both off — ha!”

Still carrying the flaming papers in his hand, Todd now made his way to the first floor, and found the candle that the men had dropped. That he lighted, as it would be much more convenient to him than the papers; and then he trod them out, for he did not wish any great light as yet to appear from the windows of that house, and perchance awaken the attention of some passing traveller or curious neighbour.

Shading the light with his hand, and looking like some grim ogre, Todd took his way to the second floor. As he went, he every now and then muttered his satisfaction to himself, or gave utterance to one of his unearthly laughs; for in the whole of that night’s adventure there was much to please him.

In the first place, he hoped, and fully expected, to get enough booty from the house to place him a little at his ease as regarded money matters, provided that with it he should be fortunate enough to get away from England. Then, again, it was no small satisfaction to Todd to do anything which looked like a triumph over Sir Richard Blunt, and this not only looked like it, but really was.

“A good step,” he muttered, “a capital step, and a bold one, too; but bold steps are always good ones. Who knows but that from some place of security I may laugh at them all yet; and then, if I do not succeed in killing any of them before I go, I can at my leisure think of and mature some scheme of revenge against them; and there is much to be done with ingenuity, if you are quite unscrupulous. Ha! Ha! I have some dainty schemes, if I can but carry them out in the time to come — ha!”

When Todd reached the second floor, he at once went into the front room, in one corner of which was a large old fashioned bureau. Now it was not to be supposed that this bureau had escaped the scrutiny of Sir Richard Blunt; but then it had so happened that before he came to search it he had all the evidence he wished against Todd, so that the search was not so complete or so scrutinising as it might have been.

We shall see that it was not.

“Ah” said Todd, as he drew out the drawers one after the other, “all the locks forced! Well, be it so. That was just what I expected. But I do not think they have moved it from the wall by the look of it.”

The bureau, it was quite evident, had not been removed from the wall. It was of immense weight, but Todd managed to move it by short sudden jerks; and then when he had got it quite away at right angles from the wall, he said —

“Here was it that I hid, until some favourable opportunity should occur for the private disposal of them, various articles of value, that I dare not try to convert into money in my open way, for fear of detection. Here are watches, and rings, and jewels, that were described in handbills, offering rewards for missing persons, and in advertisements in the papers; so that it became most unsafe for me to show them even to the not very scrupulous Hebrews, who have from time to time bought goods of me.”

As he spoke, he removed a portion of the back of the bureau, which slid out of its place softly and easily, for it was made with great skill and care. This sliding piece, when it was fairly removed, disclosed a receptacle capable of holding a great quantity of small articles, and filled up with narrow shelves, as if to hold them securely.

There were costly watches — wigs with rare jewels set in them; for the fashion of wearing wigs was so common at the time, that many wealthy residents of the Temple would pop into Todd’s shop for a little arrangement of their wigs or a puff of fresh powder, if they were going somewhere in a hurry, and so lost their lives. Then there were some pairs of rich diamond knee and shoe buckles, and a few locketts, and a whole heap of chains of gold.

“Ah,” said Todd; “here is enough to set me up for a time, if I can dispose of them; and now I must run risks that I would not think of while I had thousands

at my command. I must take these things that I was content enough to leave behind me, lest they should at some inopportune moment lead to my detection. Now they shall do me service."

Todd commenced filling his pockets with this dangerous kind of property, each article of which was associated with the frightful crime of murder!

A couple of thousand pounds certainly would not have paid for what Todd upon this occasion managed to stow away about him; and he thought that if he could get one fourth of that amount for the articles, that it would not be a very bad night's work, considering the not very flourishing state of his finances at that time, compared with what they had been.

During the process, though, of stocking himself with the contents of the secret place in the bureau, he more than once crept to the door of the room, and going out upon the landing, he leant over the staircase and listened. All was most profoundly still, and he was satisfied that Sir Richard Blunt's two men remained in the passage, in the same state of insensibility — if not of death — in which he had left them.

Leaving there some articles of smaller importance than those with which he loaded himself, Todd pushed the bureau back into its place again; and then, taking the light in his hand, cautiously descended the stairs.

When he reached the passage, there lay the two men as he had left them. Indeed, he had been absent much too short a space of time for any very material change to take place in their condition.

"Well," he said. "Now to dispose of you two. What shall it be? Shall I cut your throats as you lie there, or — no, no, I have hit it. No doubt you have both been full of curious speculations respecting how I disposed of those persons whom I polished off in my shop; so you shall both know exactly how it was done. Ha! a good joke."

Todd's good joke consisted now of going into the parlour, and fastening the levers which held up the shaving chair. Then he lifted up one of the insensible bodies of the men, and carried it into the shop.

"Sit there, or lie there, how you like," he said, as he flung the man into the large shaving chair.

It was quite a treat now to Todd, and put him in mind of old times, to arrange his apparatus for giving this wretched man a tumble into the vaults below. He went into the parlour and drew the bolt, when away went the man and the chair, and the other chair that was on the reverse side of the plank took the place of that which had gone.

"Ha! Ha!" shouted Todd. "This is grand — this is most glorious! Ha! Ha! Who would have thought, now, that I should ever live to be at my old work again in

this house? It is capital! If that fall has not broken his neck, it's a wonder. It used to kill five out of seven; that was about the average — ha!”

Todd didn't fasten the bolt again, but went at once for the other man. He was sitting up!

Todd staggered back for a moment, when he saw him in that position looking at him. The man rubbed his eyes with his hands and said in a weak voice —

“Good God! What is it all about?”

Todd placed the light on the floor within the parlour, so that it shed sufficient rays into the shop to let him see every object in it; and then, with a cry like that of some wild beast rushing upon his prey, he dashed at the man.

The struggle that ensued was a frightful one. Despair, and a feeling that he was fighting for his life, nerved the man, who had recovered just in time to engage in such a contest, and they both fought their way into the shop together. Todd made the greatest exertions to overcome the man, but it was not until he got him by the throat, and held him with a clutch of iron, that he could do so. Then he flung him upon the chair, but the man, with a last effort, dragged Todd after him, and down they both went together to the vault below!



Todd and the Bow Street Officers — the Death Grapple.

CHAPTER CLI

Sir Richard Blunt and Crotchet Commence their Search for Todd

When Sir Richard Blunt left Chelsea, he felt that he had given a sufficient warning to all who could feel in any way personally interested in the escape of Sweeney Todd from the punishment that his numerous crimes merited.

He rode directly to the office of the Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, and his name at once procured him an interview. This was not the supercilious personage who once before, upon an occasion of Sir Richard Blunt calling upon him regarding Sweeney Todd, had exhibited so much indifference upon the subject, and Sir Richard was received as he ought to be.

"I have waited upon you, sir," said the magistrate, "to say that I have now made every arrangement that is possible for the purpose of counteracting any mischief that the man, Todd, might strive to do; and I think it very likely that I may not have the pleasure of seeing or communicating with you for some time."

"Then you still think, Sir Richard, of going personally after the notorious ruffian?"

"I do, sir. I feel that in some sort I am bound to rid society of that man. I had so large a share in his former apprehension, and in his conviction, that I feel his escape quite a personal matter; and I have no hesitation in saying that I shall not feel at ease until I have again placed him in the hands of the law."

"It is most desirable that he should be so placed, Sir Richard, and I have only two things to say to you upon the subject. One is, that I hope you will be careful of your own safety in the affair; and the other is, that anything we can do or any facilities we can throw in your way, you may most unhesitatingly command in the prosecution of your most praiseworthy enterprise."

"I thank you, sir. I shall take one man with me. His name is Crotchet; and I should wish that in your name I might tell him that, in the event of our search for Todd being successful, he may count upon an adequate reward."

"Certainly! He shall have the whole reward, Sir Richard; and as for yourself, the ministry will not be unmindful of your service in a way that I am sure will be more gratifying to you than an offer of money."

"Sir, I thank you. The government has already, upon more than two or three occasions, been sufficiently liberal to me as regards money to place me in a good position, and I have now no further desires of that sort. I will bid you good morning, sir, and at once start upon the expedition in search of Sweeney Todd. If he be alive and above ground in this country, I will have him."

"If anybody will, you will, Sir Richard."

The magistrate left the place, and repaired at once to his private office, which was close at hand, in Craven Street. There our old friend, Crotchet, was waiting for him.

"Well, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "I have just seen the Secretary of State, and if we catch Todd, you are to have all the money."

"All on it, sir? Oh, my eye! No, I doesn't want all on it, Sir Richard. I isn't a pig."

"I never thought you were, Crotchet; but you may make up your mind to the whole of the reward, as the government will provide for me in another way; so you know now, at starting, what you have to expect, and it will keep you in good heart during all the botheration we may have in looking after this man."

"Why, so it will, sir, you see, so it will, and if I do catch him and get all this tin as is offered as a reward for him, I shall retire from the grabbing business, you see, sir."

"What will you do then, Crotchet?"

"Set up a public house, sir, and call it 'The Crotchet's Arms,' to be sure. That's the sort of ticket for me."

"Well, Crotchet, you will be quite at liberty to do what you like; and now let us at once start on our errand. We will, from the door of Newgate, see if we cannot trace the progress of this man, with his new friend, that rascal, Lupin."

A tap sounded on the panel of the door of the room in which Crotchet and Sir Richard were conversing.

"Come in," said the magistrate, and his clerk entered with a written paper in his hand.

"Here, sir," he said, "is a report from a city officer, which will give a clue to the route that Todd and Lupin have taken, sir."

"Ah, that is welcome. Let me see it. 'Two men broke into the house of Alderman Stanhope; one a tall man with a large face — the other, shorter.' Humph! Not a doubt of it. I will go and see about it. No doubt it was Todd and his new friend Lupin. This is something of a clue, at all events however slight, and may, after all, put us upon the right track. Come on, Crotchet, we will do the best we can in this matter. Have you your pistols in good order?"

"Yes, yer honour, and a pair of darbies in my pocket, that if once they get on the wrists of old Todd, he will find it no such easy matter to get them off again."

"That is right. I only want to get face to face with the ruffian, and then I will engage that he shall not be much further trouble to society or to individuals."

Sir Richard Blunt and Crotchet proceeded then at once to the house in the City, into which Lupin and Todd, it will be recollected, had made a violent entry, and from which they had been so gallantly repulsed by the young lady. Then, from the description of the assailants, not a shadow of a doubt remained upon the magistrate's mind that they were the parties he sought; but there all clue seemed to be lost.

He and Crotchet stood in the street looking about them rather despairingly; and then they thought of going to the roundhouse close to Finsbury; and when they got there, they found an officer, who reported that two men answering the description of the fugitives had been seen making their way westward; and he had met a woman who had passed them, and who had heard the words "money," and "Caen Wood."

This was, in good truth, most important intelligence, if it could be relied upon; and that was the only kind of doubt that Sir Richard had. He spoke to Crotchet about it.

"What do you think, Crotchet? Is it worth while to follow this seeming clue to Highgate?"

"Yes, yer honour, it is. We can go there and back again while we are considering about it here. It's clear enough as we shan't get any other news in this part of the town; and so I advises that we go off at once to Highgate, and calls at every public house on the road."

"Every public house?"

"Yes, yer honour. Todd won't do without his drops of something strong to keep him agoing. These kind of feelings go down — down, till they haven't the heart to say don't, when the hangman puts the noose round their necks, if they haven't their drops. It's brandy, yer worship, as keeps 'em a going."

"I do believe, Crotchet, that there is a great deal of truth in what you say; and that it is only by use of stimulants that they keep up a kind of artificial strength, as well as drowning reflection; and so they go blundering on in the career of crime."

"You may depend upon it, sir. They'd cut their own throats in a week, If it wasn't for the tippie, yer honour."

Acting then upon the practical advice of Crotchet, which in a great measure accorded with his own convictions, Sir Richard Blunt repaired to a livery stable, and hired two good horses. He found no difficulty in getting them, upon declaring who he was; and so, well mounted, he and Crotchet went upon the very road that had been so recently traversed by the two culprits, Todd and Lupin.

At the first public house they came to they got no news; but at the second they were told, that two men, answering the description they gave of those they sought, had called and had some brandy.

The magistrate no longer doubted but that he was upon the right track now. With such a feeling, he pushed on, making what inquiries he could on the road; but until Highgate was reached they got no further news, and then, by dint of diligent ferreting out, they found a woman who had seen two men go down Swains Lane, and from the description she gave of them, there could be no doubt but that they were Todd and Lupin. Now as Swains Lane led directly to Caen Wood, it was a great confirmation of the former intelligence; and Sir Richard made up his mind to search the wood, as well as it could be done by him and Crotchet.

They engaged a lad from Highgate to come with them, and to take care of the horses, while they should go into the wood; but they did not say one word to him regarding their object in going there, nor could he possibly suspect it. Sir Richard and Crotchet both thought it would be much more prudent to keep that to themselves, than to put it in the power of a boy to gossip about it to every one who might chance to pass that way, while he was minding the horses.

When the wood was reached, Sir Richard said to the lad —

“Now, my boy, we shall not be very long gone, but you will bear in mind that if we are absent longer than you expected, you will be paid in proportion; so don’t be impatient, but walk the horses up and down this bit of the lane; and think that you have got a very good job.”

“Thank you, sir,” said the boy. “Across that there meadow is the nearest way to the wood. I seed two fellows go that way, early this morning, and one on ‘em was the ugliest fellow I ever saw, and he calls out to the other — ‘Come along Lupin, we shall be all right in the wood now. Come along, Lupin — Ha! Ha!’ ”

“You heard that?”

“Yes, sir, I did. You see, I was sloe gathering in the hedge, and they don’t let you do it, ’cos they say you breaks down all the young twigs, and spoils the hedge, and so you does; and so, sir, when I heard footsteps a-coming, I hid myself right down among the long grass, so that they did not see me.”

Mr. Crotchet gave a long whistle.

“Very good,” said Sir Richard; “we shall be back with you soon. You take good care of the horses.”

“I will, sir.”

“What do you think of that, Crotchet?” said Sir Richard, as they made their way into the very meadow across which Todd and Lupin had run to get to Caen Wood.

“It’s the finger o’ Providence, yer worship.”

“Well, I cannot deny, Crotchet, but that it may be so. At all events, whether it be Providence or chance, one thing is quite certain, and that is, that we are on the track of those whom we seek.”

“Not a doubt o’ that, sir. Into the wood here they have been, but whether they have stayed here or not, you see, sir, is quite another affair. But it’s worth looking well to; at all events yer worship, and I shan’t leave an old tree in this here place as we is coming to, that I shan’t walk right round and have a jolly good look at, somehow or another.”

“Nor I, Crotchet. They may know of some hiding place in this wood, for all we know to the contrary, and if they do, it strikes me we shall ferret them out.”

“In course we shall, sir; and here we is.”

They had reached the wood by this time, and before plunging into its recesses the magistrate looked carefully about him, and Crotchet did the same.

“Do you think, your worship, there’s a chance of such a fellow as Todd staying long here?”

“Why do you think that?” said Sir Richard.

“Why, sir,” said Crotchet, putting his head on one side, “this here is a sort of place that makes a man think; and always when I am in a quiet place like this, with the beautiful trees all about me, and the little birds a-singing, and the frogs a-croaking, it makes me think of things that I don’t always think of, and of those as has passed away like spirits, and as we may meet in t’other world nor this, sir.”

“Indeed, Crotchet, I do not wonder that the silence and solitude of nature should have that effect upon you.”

“Exactly, sir. In course, it ain’t for me to say whether in this ’ere world there ought to be prigs, and sneaks, and cracksmen, and all that sort of thing or not; but I will say, sir, as I’m not a little surprised how anybody can do anything very wrong, sir, in the country.”

“Indeed, Crotchet?”

“Yes, sir; it has an effect on me. When I gets among the old trees and sees the branches a-waving about, and hear the wind a moaning among ’em, it makes me think as there ain’t a great deal in this world as is worth the bothering

about, you see, sir; and least of all is it worthwhile doing anything that ain't the right thing."

"You are quite a philosopher, Crotchet, although you are not the first nor the only one upon whom the beauties of nature have produced an elevating effect. The reason I fear is that you are not familiar with such places as these. You are town bred, Crotchet, and you pass your life among the streets of London; so such places as this affect you with all the charm of novelty, while those who are born in the country know nothing and care nothing for its sights and sounds."

"That's about it, sir, I shouldn't wonder," said Crotchet; "but I feels what I feels and thinks what I thinks."

They now had fairly penetrated into Caen Wood; and we may here appropriately remark, that Caen Wood was much more of a real wood then, than it is now, when it is rather an imitation of one than one in reality. The smoke and the vegetation killing vapours of London have almost succeeded in begriming the green trees even at that distance off; and in a few short years Caen Wood, we fear, will be but a thing of tradition in the land.

So time works his changes!

Sir Richard Blunt, with long practised sagacity, began his hunt through the wood. It could scarcely be said that he expected to find Todd there, but he would be satisfied if he found some conclusive evidence that he had been there, for that would show him that he was upon the track of the villain, and that he was not travelling wide from the course that Todd had taken. The idea that he might have at once, on foot, made his way to some part of the coast, haunted Sir Richard, notwithstanding all the seemingly conclusive evidence he had to the contrary; and knowing well, as he did, how very little reliance ought to be placed upon personal descriptions, he did buoy himself up with many hopes consequent upon the presumed identity of Todd with the person who had been seen by those who had described him.

Taking a small piece of chalk from his pocket, the magistrate marked a few of the trees in the different directions where they searched, so that they might not, amid the labyrinths of the wood, give themselves increased trouble; and in the course of half an hour they had gone over a considerable portion of the wood.

They paused at an open spot, and Crotchet lifted from the ground a thick stick that appeared to have been recently cut from a tree.

"This is late work," he said.

"Yes; and here are the marks of numerous footsteps. What is the meaning of this strange appearance on the ground, as if something had been dragged along it?"

Crotchet looked at the appearance that Sir Richard pointed out, and then with a nod, he said —

“Let’s follow this, Sir Richard. It strikes me that it leads to something.”