CHAPTER XXIV
The Night at the Madhouse

When Sweeney Todd had, with such diabolical want of feeling, whispered the few words of mockery which we have recorded in Tobias's ear, when he was carried out of Mr. Fogg's reception room to be taken to a cell, the villanous barber drew back and indulged in rather a longer laugh than usual.

"Mr. Todd," said Fogg, "I find that you still retain your habit of merriment; but yours ain't the most comfortable laugh in the world, and we seldom hear anything equal to it, even from one of our cells."

"No!" said Sweeney Todd, "I don't suppose you do, and for my part I never heard of a cell laughing yet."

"Oh! You know what I mean, Mr. Todd, well enough."

"That may be," said Todd, "but it would be just as well to say it for all that. I think, however, as I came in you said something about refreshment?"

"I certainly did; and, if you will honour me by stepping back to my room, I think I can offer you, Mr. Todd, a glass of as nice wine as the king himself could put on his table, if he were any judge of that commodity, which I am inclined to think he is not."

"What do you expect," said Sweeney Todd, "that such an idiot should be a judge of? — But I shall have great pleasure in tasting your wine, for I have no hesitation in saying that my work tonight has made me thirsty."

At this moment a shriek was heard, and Sweeney Todd shrank away from the door.

"Oh! It's nothing, it's nothing," said Mr. Fogg; "if you had resided here as long as I have, you would get accustomed to now and then hearing a slight noise. The worst of it is, when half a dozen of the mad fellows get shrieking against each other in the middle of the night. Then, I grant, it is a little annoying."

"What do you do with them?"

"We send in one of the keepers with the lash, and soon put a stop to that. We are forced to keep the upper hand of them, or else we should have no rest. Hark! Do you not hear that fellow now? — He is generally pretty quiet, but he has taken it into his head to be outrageous today; but one of my men will soon put a stop to that. This way, Mr. Todd, if you please, and as we don't often meet, I think when we do we ought to have a social glass."

Sweeney Todd made several horrible faces as he followed the madhouse keeper, and he looked as if it would have given him quite as much pleasure,

and no doubt it would, to brain that individual, as to drink his wine, although probably he would have preferred doing the latter process first, and executing the former afterwards, and at his leisure. They soon reached the room which was devoted to the use of Mr. Fogg and his friends, and which contained the many little curiosities in the way of madhouse discipline that were in that age considered indispensable in such establishments. Mr. Fogg moved away with his hands a great number of the books and papers which were on the table, so as to leave a vacant space, and then drawing the cork of a bottle, he filled himself a large glass of its contents, and invited Sweeney Todd to do the same, who was by no means slow in following his example. While these two villains were carousing, and caring nothing for the scenes of misery with which they are surrounded, poor Tobias, in conformity with the orders that had been issued with regard to him, was conveyed along a number of winding passages, and down several staircases, towards the cells of the establishment. In vain he struggled to get free from his captor — as well might a hare have struggled in the fangs of a wolf — nor were his cries at all heeded; although, now and then, the shrieks he uttered were terrible to hear, and enough to fill any one with dismay.

"I am not mad," said he, "indeed I am not mad — let me go, and I will say nothing — not one word shall ever pass my lips regarding Mr. Todd — let me go, oh, let me go, and I will pray for you as long as I live."

Mr. Watson whistled a lively tune.

"If I promise — if I swear to tell nothing, Mr. Todd will not wish me kept here — all he wants is my silence, and I will take any oath he likes. Speak to him for me, I implore you, and let me go."

Mr. Watson commenced the second part of his lively tune, and by that time he reached a door, which he unlocked, and then, setting down Tobias upon the threshold, he gave him a violent kick, which flung him down two steps on to the stone floor of a miserable cell, from the roof of which continual moisture was dripping, the only accommodation it possessed being a truss of damp straw flung into one corner.

"There," said Mr. Watson, "my lad, you can stay there and make yourself comfortable till somebody comes to shave your head, and after that you will find yourself quite a gentleman."

"Mercy! Mercy — have mercy upon me!"

"Mercy! — What the devil do you mean by mercy? Well, that's a good joke; but I can tell you, you have come to the wrong shop for that; we don't keep it in stock here, and if we wanted ever so little of it, we should have to go somewhere else for it."

Mr. Watson laughed so much at his own joke, that he felt quite amiable, and told Tobias that if he were perfectly quiet, and said "thank you" for everything,

he wouldn't put him on the strait waistcoat, although Mr. Fogg had ordered it; "for," added Mr. Watson, "so far as that goes, I don't care a straw what Mr. Fogg says, or what he does; he can't do without me, damn him! Because I know too many of his secrets."

Tobias made no answer to this promise, but he lay upon his back on the floor of the cell wringing his hands despairingly, and feeling that almost already the very atmosphere of that place seemed pregnant with insanity, and giving himself up for lost entirely.

"I shall never — never," he said, "look upon the bright sky and the green fields again. I shall be murdered here, because I know too much; what can save me now? Oh, what an evil chance it was that brought me back again to my mother, when I ought to have been far, far away by this time, instead of being, as I know I am, condemned to death in this frightful place. Despair seizes upon me! What noise is that — a shriek? Yes, yes, there is some other blighted heart beside mine in this dreadful house. Oh, Heaven! What will become of me? I feel already stifled and sick, and faint with the air of this dreadful cell. Help, help, help! Have mercy upon me, and I will do anything, promise anything, swear anything."

If poor Tobias had uttered his complaints on the most desolate shore that ever a shipwrecked mariner was cast upon, they could not have been more unheeded than they were in that house of terror. He screamed and shrieked for aid. He called upon all the friends he had ever known in early life, and at that moment he seemed to remember the name of every one who had ever uttered a kind word to him; and to those persons who, alas, could not hear him, but were far enough removed away from his cries, he called for aid in that hour of his deep distress. At length, faint, wearied and exhausted, he lay a mere living wreck in that damp, unwholesome cell, and felt almost willing that death should come and relieve him, at least from the pang of constantly expecting it! His cries, however, had had the effect of summoning up all the wild spirits in that building; and, as he now lay in the quiet of absolute exhaustion, he heard from far and near smothered cries and shrieks and groans, such as one might expect would fill the air of the infernal regions with dismal echoes. A cold and clammy perspiration broke out upon him, as these sounds each moment more plainly fell upon his ear, and as he gazed upon the profound darkness of the cell, his excited fancy began to people it with strange unearthly beings, and he could suppose that he saw hideous faces grinning at him, and huge misshapen creatures crawling on the walls, and floating in the damp, pestiferous atmosphere of the wretched cell. In vain he covered his eyes with his hands; those creatures of his imagination were not to be shut out from the mind, and he saw them, if possible, more vividly than before, and presenting themselves in more frightfully tangible shapes. Truly, if such visions should continue to haunt him, poor Tobias was likely enough to follow the fate of many others who had been placed in that establishment perfectly sane, but in a short time exhibited in it as raving lunatics.

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"A nice clear cool glass of wine," said Sweeney Todd, as he held up his glass between him and the light, "and pleasant drinking; so soft and mild in the mouth, and yet gliding down the throat with a pleasant strength of flavour!"

"Yes," said Mr. Fogg, "it might be worse. You see some patients, who are low and melancholy mad, require stimulants, and their friends send them wine. This is some that was so sent."

"Then you don't trouble the patients with it?"

"What! Give a madman wine, while I am here in my senses to drink it? Oh, dear no! That won't do on any account."

"I should certainly, Mr. Fogg, not expect such an act of indiscretion from you, knowing you as I do to be quite a man of the world."

"Thank you for the compliment. This wine, now, was sent for an old gentleman who had turned so melancholy, that he not only would not take food enough to keep life and soul together, but he really terrified his friends so by threatening suicide that they sent him here for a few months; and, as stimulants were recommended for him, they sent this wine, you see; but I stimulated him without it quite as well, for I drink the wine myself and give him an infernal good kick or two every day, and that stimulates him, for it puts him in such a devil of a passion that I am quite sure he doesn't want any wine."

"A good plan," said Sweeney Todd, "but I wonder you don't contrive that your own private room should be free from the annoyance of hearing such sounds as those that have been coming upon my ears for the last five or ten minutes."

"It's impossible; you cannot get out of the way if you live in the house at all; and you see, as regards these mad fellows, they are quite like a pack of wolves, and when once one of them begins howling and shouting, the others are sure to chime in, in full chorus, and make no end of disturbance till we stop them, as I have already told you we do, with a strong hand."

"While I think of it," said Sweeney Todd, as he drew from his pocket a leathern bag, "while I think of it, I may as well pay you the year's money for the lad I have now brought you; you see I have not forgot the excellent rule you have of being paid in advance. There is the amount."

"Ah, Mr. Todd," said the madhouse keeper as he counted the money, and then placed it in his pocket, "it's a pleasure to do business with a thorough business man like yourself. The bottle stands with you, Mr. Todd, and I beg you will not spare it. Do you know, Mr. Todd, this is a line of life which I have often thought would have suited you; I am certain you have a genius for such things."

"Not equal to you," said Todd; "but as I am fond, certainly, of what is strange and out of the way, some of the scenes and characters you come across would, I have no doubt, be highly entertaining to me."

“Scenes and characters — I believe you! During the course of a business like ours, we come across all sorts of strange things; and if I choose to do it, which of course I don’t, I could tell a few tales which would make some people shake in their shoes; but I have no right to tell them, for I have been paid, and what the deuce is it to me?”

“Oh, nothing, of course nothing. But just while we are sipping our wine, now, couldn’t you tell me something that would not be betraying anybody’s confidence?”

“I could, I could; I don’t mean to say that I could not, and I don’t care much if I do to you.”

CHAPTER XXV
Mr. Fogg's Story at the Madhouse to Sweeney Todd

After a short pause, during which Mr. Fogg appeared to be referring to the cells of memory, with the view of being refreshed in a matter that had long since been a bygone, but which he desired to place as clearly before his listener as he could, in fact, to make, if possible, the relation real to him, and to omit nothing during its progress that should be told; or possibly, that amiable individual was engaged in considering if there were any salient point that might criminate himself, or give even a friend a handle to make use of against him; but apparently there was nothing of the kind, for, after a loud "hem!" he filled the glasses, saying —

"Well, now, as you are a friend, I don't mind telling you how we do business here — things that have been done, you know, by others; but I have had my share as well as others — I have known a thing or two, Mr. Todd, and I may say I have done a thing or two, too."

"Well, we must live and let live," said Sweeney Todd, "there's no going against that, you know; if all I have done could speak, why — but no matter, I am listening to you — however, if deeds could speak, one or two clever things would come out rather, I think."

"Ay, 'tis well they don't," said Mr. Fogg, with much solemnity, "if they did they would be constantly speaking at times when it would be very inconvenient to hear them, and dangerous besides."

"So it would," said Sweeney, "a still tongue makes a wise head — but then the silent system would bring no grist to the mill, and we must speak when we know we are right and among friends."

"Of course," said Fogg, "of course, that's the right use of speech, and one may as well be without it, as to have it and not use it; but come — drink, and fill again before I begin, and then to my tale. But we may as well have a sentiment. Sentiment, you know," continued Fogg, "is the very soul of friendship. What do you say to 'The heart that can feel for another?' "

"With all my soul," said Sweeney Todd; "it's very touching — very touching, indeed. 'The heart that can feel for another!'" and as he spoke, he emptied the glass, which he pushed towards Fogg to refill.

"Well," said Fogg, as he complied, "we have had the sentiment, we may as well have the exemplification."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" said Todd, "Very good, very good indeed; pray go on, that will do capitally."

“I may as well tell you the whole matter, as it occurred; I will then let you know all I know, and in the same manner. None of the parties are now living, or, at least, they are not in this country, which is just the same thing, so far as I am concerned.”

“Then that is an affair settled and done with,” remarked Sweeney Todd, parenthetically.

“Yes, quite. — Well, it was one night — such a one as this, and pretty well about the same hour, perhaps somewhat earlier than this. However, it doesn’t signify a straw about the hour, but it was quite night, a dark and wet night too, when a knock came at the street door — a sharp double knock — it was. I was sitting alone, as I might have been now, drinking a glass or two of wine; I was startled, for I was thinking about an affair I had on hand at that very moment, of which there was a little stir. However, I went to the door, and peeped through a grating that I had there, and saw only a man; he had drawn his horse inside the gate, and secured him. He wore a large Whitney riding coat, with a nap that would have thrown off a deluge. I fancied, or thought I could tell, that he meant no mischief; so I opened the door at once and saw a tall, gentlemanly man, but wrapped up so, that you could not tell who or what he was; but my eyes are sharp, you know, Mr. Todd. We haven’t seen so much of the world without learning to distinguish what kind of person one has to deal with?”

“I should think not,” said Todd.

“‘Well,’ said I, ‘what is your pleasure, sir?’

“The stranger paused a moment or two before he made any reply to me.

“‘Is your name Fogg?’ he said.

“‘Yes, it is,’ said I; ‘my name is Fogg — what is your pleasure with me, sir?’

“‘Why,’ said he, after another pause, during which he fixed his keen eye very hard upon me — ‘why, I wish to have a little private conversation with you, if you can spare so much time, upon a very important matter which I have in hand.’

“‘Walk in, sir,’ said I, as soon as I heard what it was he wanted, and he followed me in. ‘It is a very unpleasant night, and it’s coming on to rain harder. I think it is fortunate you have got housed.’

“‘Yes,’ he replied; ‘but I am tolerably well protected against the rain, at all events.’

“He came into this very parlour, and took a seat before the fire, with his back to the light, so that I couldn’t see his face very well. However, I was determined that I would be satisfied in these particulars, and so, when he had taken off his hat, I stirred up the fire, and had a blaze that illuminated the whole room, and

which showed me the sharp, thin visage of my visitor, who was a dark man, with keen grey eyes that were very restless —

"'Will you have a glass of wine?' said I; 'the night is cold as well as wet.'

"'Yes, I will,' he replied; 'I am cold with riding. You have a lonely place about here; your house, I see, stands alone too. You have not many neighbours.'

"'No, sir,' said I, 'we hadn't need, for when any of the poor things set to screaming, it would make them feel very uncomfortable indeed.'

"'So it would, there is an advantage in that to yourself as well as to them. It would be disagreeable to you to know that you were disturbing your neighbours, and they would feel equally uncomfortable in being disturbed, and yet you must do your duty.'

"'Ay! To be sure,' said I; 'I must do my duty, and people won't pay me for letting madmen go, though they may for keeping them; and besides that, I think some on 'em would get their throats cut, if I did.'

"'You are right — quite right,' said he; 'I am glad to find you of that mind, for I came to you concerning an affair that requires some delicacy about it, since it is a female patient.'

"'Ah!' said I, 'I always pay great attention, very great attention; and I don't recollect a case, however violent it may be, but what I can overcome. I always make 'em acknowledge me, and there's much art in that.'

"'To be sure, there must be.'

"'And, moreover, they wouldn't so soon crouch and shrink away from me, and do what I tell 'em, if I did not treat them with kindness, that is, as far as is consistent with one's duty, for I mustn't forget that.'

"'Exactly,' he replied; 'those are my sentiments exactly.'

"'And now, sir, will you inform me in what way I can serve you?'

"'Why I have a relative, a female relative, who is unhappily affected with a brain disease; we have tried all we can do, without any effect. Do what we will, it comes to the same thing in the end.'

"'Ah!' said I; 'Poor thing — what a dreadful thing it must be to you or any of her friends, who have the charge of her, to see her day by day an incurable maniac. Why, it is just as bad as when a friend or relative is dead, and you are obliged to have the dead body constantly in your house, and before your eyes.'

"'Exactly, my friend,' said the stranger; 'exactly, you are a man of discernment, Mr. Fogg. I see, that is truly the state of the case. You may then guess at the state of our feelings, when we have to part with one beloved by us.'

"As he spoke, he turned right round, and faced me, looking very hard into my face.

"'Well,' said I, 'yours is a hard case; but to have one afflicted about you in the manner the young lady is, is truly distressing; it's like having a perpetual lumbago in your back.'

"'Exactly,' said the stranger. 'I tell you what, you are the very man to do this thing for me.'

"'I am sure of it,' said I.

"'Then we understand each other, eh?' said the stranger. 'I must say I like your appearance, it is not often such people as you and I meet.'

"'I hope it will be to our mutual advantage,' said I, 'because such people don't meet every day, and we oughtn't to meet to no purpose; so, in anything delicate and confidential you may command me.'

"'I see, you are a clever man,' said he; 'well, well, I must pay you in proportion to your talents. How do you do business — by the job, or by the year?'

"'Well,' said I, 'where it's a matter of some nicety, it may be both — but it entirely depends upon circumstances. I had better know exactly what it is I have to do.'

"'Why, you see, it is a young female about eighteen, and she is somewhat troublesome — takes to screaming, and all that kind of thing. I want her taken care of, though you must be very careful she neither runs away nor suddenly commits any mischief, as her madness does not appear to me to have any particular form, and would at times completely deceive the best of us, and then suddenly she will break out violently, and snap or fly at anybody with her teeth.'

"'Is she so bad as that?'

"'Yes, quite. So it is quite impossible to keep her at home; and I expect it will be a devil of a job to get her here. I tell you what you shall have; I'll pay you your yearly charge for board and care, and I'll give you a ten pound note for your trouble, if you'll come and assist me in securing her, and bringing her down. It will take some trouble.'

"'Very well,' said I, 'that will do, but you must double the note and make it twenty, if you please; it will cost something to come and do the thing well.'

"'I see — very well — we won't disagree about a ten pound note; but you'll know how to dispose of her if she comes here.'

"'Oh, yes — very healthy place.'

"'But I don't know that health is a very great blessing to any one under such circumstances; indeed, who could regret an early grave to one so severely afflicted?'

"'Nobody ought,' said I; 'if they knew what mad people went through, they would not, I'm sure.'

"'That is very true again, but the fact is, they don't, and they only look at one side of the picture; for my own part, I think that it ought to be so ordained, that when people are so afflicted, nature ought to sink under the affliction, and so insensibly to revert to the former state of nonentity.'

"'Well,' said I, 'that may be as you please, I don't understand all that; but I tell you what, I hope if she were to die much sooner than you expect, you would not think it too much trouble to afford me some compensation for my loss.'

"'Oh dear no! And to show you that I shall entertain no such illiberal feeling, I will give you two hundred pounds, when the certificate of her burial can be produced. You understand me?'

"'Certainly.'

"'Her death will be of little value to me, without the legal proof,' said the stranger; 'so she must die at her own pleasure, or live while she can.'

"'Certainly,' said I.

"'But what terrifies me,' continued the stranger, 'most is, her terror-stricken countenance, always staring us in our faces; and it arose from her being terrified; indeed I think if she were thoroughly frightened, she would fall dead. I am sure, if any wickedly disposed person were to do so, death would no doubt result.'

"'Ah!' said I, 'It would be a bad job; now tell me where I am to see you, and how about the particulars.'

"'Oh, I will tell you; now, can you be at the corner of Grosvenor Street, near Park Lane?'

"'Yes,' I replied, 'I will.'

"'With a coach too. I wish you to have a coach, and one that you can depend upon, because there may be a little noise. I will try to avoid it, if possible, but we cannot always do what we desire; but you must have good horses.'

"'Now, I tell you what is my plan; that is, if you don't mind the damages, if any happen.'

"'What are they?'

"'This: — suppose a horse falls, and is hurt, or an upset — would you stand the racket?'

"'I would, of course.'

"'Then listen to me; I have had more of these affairs than you have, no doubt. Well, then, I have had experience, which you have not. Now, I'll get a trotting horse, and a covered cart or chaise — one that will go along well at ten miles an hour, and no mistake about it.'

"'But will it hold enough?'

"'Yes, four or five or six, and, upon a push, I have known eight to cram in it; but then you know we were not particular how we were placed; but still it will hold as many as a hackney coach, only not so conveniently; but then we have nobody in the affair to drive us, and there can't be too few.'

"'Well, that is perhaps best; but have you a man on whom you can depend? — Because if you have, why, I would not be in the affair at all.'

"'You must,' said I; 'in the first place, I can depend upon one man best; him I must leave here to mind the place; so if you can manage the girl, I will drive, and I know the road as well as the way to my own mouth — I would rather have as few in it as possible.'

"'Your precaution is very good, and I think I will try and so manage it, that there shall be only you and I acquainted with the transaction; at all events, should it become necessary, it will be time enough to let some other person into the secret at the moment their services are required. That, I think, will be the best arrangement that I can come to — what do you say?'

"'That will do very well — when we get her here, and when I have seen her a few days, I can tell what to do with her.'

"'Exactly; and now, good night — there is the money I promised, and now again, good night! I shall see you at the appointed time.'

"'You will,' said I — 'one glass more, it will do you good, and keep the rain out.'

"He took off a glass of wine, and then pulled his hat over his face, and left the house. It was a dark, wet night, and the wind blew, and we heard the sound of

his horse's hoofs for some time; however, I shut the door and went in, thinking over in my own mind what would be the gain of my own exertions.

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"Well, at the appointed hour, I borrowed a chaise cart, a covered one, with what you call a head to it, and I trotted to town in it. At the appointed time I was at the corner of Grosvenor Street; it was late, and yet I waited there an hour or more before I saw any one. I walked into a little house to get a glass of spirits to keep up the warmth of the body, and when I came out again, I saw some one standing at my horse's head. I immediately went up.

"'Oh, you are here,' he said.

"'Yes I am,' said I, 'I have been here the Lord knows how long. Are you ready?'

"'Yes, I am; come,' said he, as he got into the cart — 'come to the place I shall tell you — I shall only get her into the cart, and you must do the rest.'

"'You'll come back with me; I shall want help on the road, and I have no one with me.'

"'Yes, I will come with you, and manage the girl, but you must drive, and take all the casualties of the road, for I shall have enough to do to hold her and keep her from screaming when she does awake.'

"'What! Is she asleep?'

"'I have given her a small dose of laudanum, which will cause her to sleep comfortably for an hour or two, but the cold air and disturbance will most probably awaken her at first.'

"'Throw something over her, and keep her warm, and have something ready to thrust into her mouth, in case she takes to screaming, and then you are all right.'

"'Good,' he replied: 'now wait here. I am going to yon house. When I have entered, and disappeared several minutes, you may quietly drive up, and take your station on the other side of the lamppost.'

"As he spoke he got out, and walked to a large house, which he entered softly, and left the door ajar; and after he had gone in, I walked the horse quietly up to the lamppost, and as I placed it, the horse and front of the cart were completely in the dark. I had scarcely got up to the spot, when the door opened, and he looked out to see if anybody was passing. I gave him the word, and out he came, leaving the door, and came with what looked like a bundle of clothes, but which was the young girl and some clothes he had brought with him.

"'Give her to me,' said I, 'and jump up and take the reins; go on as quickly as you can.'

"I took the girl into my arms, and handed her into the back part of the chaise, while he jumped up, and drove away. I placed the young girl in an easy position upon some hay, and stuffed the clothes under her, so as to prevent the jolting from hurting her.

"'Well,' said I, 'you may as well come back here, and sit beside her: she is all right. You seem rather in a stew.'

"'Well, I have run with her in my arms, and altogether it has flurried me.'

"'You had better have some brandy,' said I.

"'No, no! Don't stop.'

"'Pooh, pooh!' I replied, pulling up, 'here is the last house we shall come to, to have a good stiff tumbler of hot brandy and water. Come, have you any change — about a sovereign will do, because I shall want change on the road? Come, be quick.'

"He handed me a sovereign, saying —

"'Don't you think it's dangerous to stop — we may be watched, or she may wake.'

"'Not a bit of it. She snores too loudly to wake just now, and you'll faint without the cordial; so keep a good lookout upon the wench, and you will recover your nerves again.'

"As I spoke I jumped out, and got two glasses of brandy and water, hot, strong, and sweet, I had in about two minutes made, out of the house.

"'Here,' said I, 'drink — drink it all up — it will make your eyes start out of your head.'

"I spoke the truth, for what with my recommendations, and his nervousness and haste, he drank nearly half of it at a gulp.

"I shall never forget his countenance. Ha! Ha! Ha! I can't keep my mirth to myself. Just imagine the girl inside a covered cart, all dark, so dark that you could hardly see the outline of the shadow of a man, and then imagine, if you can, a pair of keen eyes, that shone in the dark like cat's eyes, suddenly give out a flash of light, and then turn round in their sockets, showing the whites awfully, and then listen to the fall of the glass, and see him grasp his throat with one hand, and thrust the other hand into his stomach. There was a queer kind of voice came from his throat, and then something like a curse and a groan escaped him.

"'Damn it,' said I, 'what is the matter now? — you've upset all the liquor — you are very nervous — you had better have another dose.'

"'No more — no more,' he said faintly and huskily, 'no more — for God's sake no more. I am almost choked — my throat is scalded, and my entrails on fire!'

"'I told you it was hot,' said I.

"'Yes, hot, boiling hot — go on. I'm mad with pain — push on.'

"'Will you have any water, or anything to cool your throat?' said I.

"'No, no — go on.'

"'Yes,' said I, 'but the brandy and water is hot; however, it's going down very fast now — very fast indeed, here is the last mouthful;' and as I said so, I gulped it down, returned with the one glass, and then paid for the damage.

"This did not occupy five minutes, and away we came along the road at a devil of a pace, and we were all right enough; my friend behind me got over his scald, though he had a very sore gullet, and his intestines were in a very uncomfortable state; but he was better. Away we rattled, the ground rattling to the horse's hoofs and the wheels of the vehicle, the young girl still remaining in the same state of insensibility in which she had first been brought out. No doubt she had taken a stronger dose of the opium than she was willing to admit. That was nothing to me, but made it all the better, because she gave the less trouble, and made it safer. We got here easy enough, drove slap up to the door, which was opened in an instant, jumped out, took the girl, and carried her in. When once these doors are shut upon any one, they may rest assured that it is quite a settled thing, and they don't get out very easy, save in a wooden surtout; indeed, I never lost a boarder by any other means; we always keep one connection, and they are usually so well satisfied, that they never take any one away from us. Well, well! I carried her indoors, and left her in a room by herself on a bed. She was a nice girl — a handsome girl, I suppose people would call her, and had a low, sweet, and plaintive voice. But enough of this.

"'She's all right,' said I, when I returned to this room, 'It's all right — I have left her.'

"'She isn't dead,' he inquired, with much terror.

"'Oh! No, no! She is only asleep, and has not woke up yet from the effects of the laudanum. Will you now give me one year's pay in advance?'

"'Yes,' he replied, as he handed the money, and the remainder of the bonds. 'Now, how am I to do about getting back to London tonight?'

"'You had better remain here.'

"'Oh, no! I should go mad too, if I were to remain here; I must leave here soon.'

"'Well, will you go to the village inn?'

"'How far is that off?'

"'About a mile — you'll reach it easy enough; I'll drive you over for the matter of that, and leave you there. I shall take the cart there.'

"'Very well, let it be so; I will go. Well, well, I am glad it is all over, and the sooner it is over for ever, the better. I am truly sorry for her, but it cannot be helped. It will kill her, I have no doubt; but that is all the better: she will escape the misery consequent upon her departure, and release us from a weight of care.'

"'So it will,' said I 'but come, we must go at once, if going you are.'

"'Yes, yes,' he said hurriedly.

"'Well then, come along; the horse is not yet unharnessed, and if we do not make haste, we shall be too late to obtain a lodging for the night.'

"'That is very good,' he said, somewhat wildly: 'I am quite ready — quite.'

"We left the house, and trotted off to the inn at a good rate, where we arrived in about ten minutes or less, and then I put up the horse, and saw him to the inn, and came back as quick as I could on foot. 'Well, well,' I thought, 'this will do, I have had a good day of it — paid well for business, and haven't wanted for sport on the road.'

"Well, I came to the conclusion that if the whole affair was to speedily end, it would be more in my pocket than if she were living, and she would be far happier in heaven than here, Mr. Todd."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Sweeney Todd, "undoubtedly, that is a very just observation of yours."

"Well, then, I set to work to find out how the matter could be managed, and I watched her until she awoke. She looked around her, and seemed much surprised and confused, and did not seem to understand her position, while I remained at hand."

"She sighed deeply, and put her hand to her head, and appeared for a time to be quite unable to comprehend what had happened to her, or where she was. I sent some tea to her, as I was not prepared to execute my purpose, and she seemed to recover, and asked some questions, but my man was dumb for the occasion, and would not speak, and the result was, she was very much

frightened. I left her so for a week or two, and then, one day, I went into her cell. She had greatly altered in her appearance, and looked very pale.

"'Well,' said I, 'how do you find yourself, now?'

"She looked up into my face, and shuddered; but she said in a calm voice, looking round her —

"'Where am I?'

"'You are here!' said I, 'And you'll be very comfortable if you only take on kindly, but you will have a strait waistcoat put on you if you do not.'

"'Good God!' she exclaimed, clasping her hands, 'Have they put me here — in — in —'

"She could not finish the sentence, and I supplied the word which she did not utter, and then she screamed loudly —

"'Come,' said I, 'this will never do; you must learn to be quiet, or you'll have fearful consequences.'

"'Oh mercy, mercy! I will do no wrong! What have I done that I should be brought here? — What have I done? They may take all I have if they will let me live in freedom. I care not where or how poor I may be. Oh, Henry! Henry! — if you knew where I was, would you not fly to my rescue? Yes, you would, you would!'

"'Ah,' said I, 'there is no Henry here, and you must be content to do without one.'

"'I could not have believed that my brother would have acted such a base part. I did not think him wicked, although I knew him to be selfish, mean, and stern, yet I did not think he intended such wickedness; but he thinks to rob me of all my property; yes, that is the object he has in sending me here.'

"'No doubt,' said I.

"'Shall I ever get out?' she inquired, in a pitiful tone; 'do not say my life is to be spent here!'

"'Indeed it is,' said I; 'while he lives, you will never leave these walls.'

"'He shall not attain his end, for I have deeds about me that he will never be able to obtain; indeed, he may kill me, but he cannot benefit by my death.'

"'Well,' said I, 'it serves him right. And how did you manage that matter? how did you contrive to get the deeds away?'

"'Never mind that; it is a small deed, and I have secured it. I did not think he would have done this thing; but he may yet relent. Will you aid me? I shall be rich, and can pay you well.'

"'But your brother,' said I.

"'Oh, he is rich without mine, but he is over avaricious; but say you will help me — only help me to get out, and you shall be no loser by the affair.'

"'Very well,' said I. 'Will you give me this deed as a security that you will keep your word?'

"'Yes,' she replied, drawing forth the deed — a small parchment — from her bosom. 'Take it; and now let me out. You shall be handsomely rewarded.'

"'Ah!' said I; 'but you must allow me first to settle this matter with my employers. You must really be mad. We do not hear of young ladies carrying deeds and parchments about them when they are in their senses.'

"'You do not mean to betray me?' she said, springing up wildly and rushing towards the deed, which I carefully placed in my breast coat pocket.

"'Oh dear no! But I shall retain the deed, and speak to your brother about this matter.'

"'My God! My God!' she exclaimed, and then she sank back on her bed, and in another moment she was covered with blood. She had burst a blood vessel. I sent for a surgeon and physician, and they both gave it as their opinion that she could not be saved, and that a few hours would see the last of her. This was the fact. She was dead before another half hour, and then I sent to the authorities for the purpose of burial; and, producing the certificate of the medical men, I had no difficulty, and she was buried all comfortably without any trouble.

* * * * * * *

"'Well,' thought I, 'this is a very comfortable affair; but it will be more profitable than I had any idea of, and I must get my first reward first, and if there should be any difficulty, I have the deed to fall back upon. He came down next day, and appeared with rather a long face.

"'Well,' said he, 'how do matters go on here?'

"'Very well,' said I, 'how is your throat?'

"I thought he cast a malicious look at me, as much as to imply he laid it all to my charge.

"'Pretty well,' he replied; 'but I was ill for three days. How is the patient?'

"'As well as you could possibly wish,' said I.

"'She takes it kindly, eh? Well, I hardly expected it — but no matter. She'll be a long while on hand, I perceive. You haven't tried the frightening system yet, then?'

"'Hadn't any need,' I replied, putting the certificate of her burial in his hand, and he jumped as if he had been stung by an adder, and turned pale; but he soon recovered, and smiled complaisantly as he said —

"'Ah! Well, I see you have been diligent, but I should have liked to have seen her, to have asked her about a missing deed; but no matter.'

"'Now about the two hundred pounds,' said I.

"'Why,' said he, 'I think one will do when you come to consider what you have received, and the short space of time and all: you had a year's board in advance.'

"'I know I had; but because I have done more than you expected, and in a shorter time, instead of giving me more, you have the conscience to offer me less.'

"'No, no, not the — the — what did you call it? — We'll have nothing said about that, — but here is a hundred pounds, and you are well paid.'

"'Well,' said I, taking the money, 'I must have five hundred pounds at any rate, and unless you give it me, I will tell other parties where a certain deed is to be found.'

"'What deed?'

"'The one you were alluding to. Give me four hundred more, and you shall have the deeds.'

"After much conversation and trouble he gave it to me, and I gave him the deed, with which he was well pleased, but looked hard at the money, and seemed to grieve at it very much.

"Since that time I have heard that he was challenged by his sister's lover, and they went out to fight a duel, and he fell — and died. The lover went to the continent, where he has since lived.

"Ah," said Sweeney Todd, "you have had decidedly the best of this affair: nobody gained anything but you."

"Nobody at all that I know of, save distant relations, and I did very well; but then, you know, I can't live upon nothing: it costs me something to keep my

house and cellar, but I stick to business, and so I shall as long as business sticks to me."

CHAPTER XXVI
Colonel Jeffery Makes another Effort to come at Sweeney Todd's Secret

If we were to say that Colonel Jeffery was satisfied with the state of affairs as regarded the disappearance of his friend Thornhill, or that he made up his mind now contentedly to wait until chance, or the mere progress of time, blew something of a more defined nature in his way, we should be doing that gentleman a very great injustice indeed. On the contrary, he was one of those chivalrous persons who when they do commence anything, take the most ample means to bring it to a conclusion, and are not satisfied that they have made one great effort, which, having failed, is sufficient to satisfy them. Far from this, he was a man who, when he commenced any enterprise, looked forward to but one circumstance that could possibly end it, and that was its full and complete accomplishment in every respect; so that in this affair of Mr. Thornhill, he certainly did not intend by any means to abandon it. But he was not precipitate. His habits of military discipline, and the long life he had led in camps, where anything in the shape of hurry and confusion is much reprobated, made him pause before he decided upon any particular course of action; and this pause was not one contingent upon a belief, or even a surmise in the danger of the course that suggested itself, for such a consideration had no effect whatever upon him; and if some other mode had suddenly suggested itself, which, while it placed his life in the most imminent peril, would have seemed more likely to accomplish his object, it would have been at once most gladly welcomed. And now, therefore, he set about thinking deeply over what could possibly be done further in a matter that as yet appeared to be involved in the most profound of possible mysteries. That the barber's boy, who had been addressed by him, and by his friend, the captain, knew something of an extraordinary character, which fear prevented him from disclosing, he had no doubt, and, as the colonel remarked —

"If fear keeps that lad silent upon the subject, fear may make him speak; and I do not see why we should not endeavour to make ourselves a match for Sweeney Todd in such a matter."

"What do you propose then?" said the captain.

"I should say that the best plan would be, to watch the barber's shop, and take possession of the boy, as we may chance to find an opportunity of so doing."

"Carry him off?"

"Yes, certainly; and as in all likelihood his fear of the barber is but a visionary affair after all, it can easily, when we have him to ourselves, be dispelled; and then, when he finds that we can and will protect him, we shall hear all he has to say."

After some further conversation, the plan was resolved upon; and the captain and the colonel, after making a careful "reconnoissance," as they called it, of Fleet Street, found that by taking up a station at the window of a tavern, which was nearly opposite to the barber's shop, they should be able to take such effectual notice of whoever went in and came out, that they would be sure to see the boy some time during the course of the day. This plan of operations would no doubt have been greatly successful, and Tobias would have fallen into their hands, had he not, alas, for him, poor fellow, already been treated by Sweeney Todd as we have described by being incarcerated in that fearful madhouse on Peckham Rye, which was kept by so unscrupulous a personage as Fogg. And we cannot but consider that it was most unfortunate for the happiness of all those persons in whose fate we take so deep an interest — and in whom we hope, as regards the reader, we have likewise awakened a feeling of great sympathy — if Tobias had not been so infatuated as to make the search he did of the barber's house, but had waited even for twenty four hours before doing so; in that case, not only would he have escaped the dreadful doom which had awaited him, but Johanna Oakley would have been saved from much danger which afterwards befel her. But we must not anticipate; and the fearful adventures which it was her doom to pass through, before she met with the reward of her great virtue, and her noble perseverance will speak for themselves, trumpet tongued indeed. It was at a very early hour in the morning that the two friends took up their station at the public-house so nearly opposite to Sweeney Todd's, in Fleet street; and then, having made an arrangement with the landlord of the house, that they were to have undisturbed possession of the room as long as they liked, they both sat at the window, and kept an eye upon Todd's house. It was during the period of time there spent, that Colonel Jeffery first made the captain acquainted with the fact of his great affection for Johanna, and that in her he thought he had at length fixed his wandering fancy, and found, really, the only being with whom he thought he could, in this world taste the sweets of domestic life, and know no regret.

"She is all," he said, "in beauty that the warmest imagination can possibly picture, and along with these personal charms, which certainly are most peerless, I have seen enough of her to feel convinced that she has a mind of the purest order that ever belonged to any human being in the world."

"With such sentiments and feelings towards her, the wonder would be," said the captain, "if you did not love her, as you now avow you do."

"I could not be insensible to her attractions. But, understand me, my dear friend, I do not, on account of my own suddenly conceived partiality for this young and beautiful creature, intend to commit the injustice of not trying might and main, and with heart and hand, to discover if, as she supposes, it be true that Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie be one and the same person; and when I say that I love her with a depth and a sincerity of affection that makes her happiness of greater importance to me than my own — you know, I think, enough of me to feel convinced that I am speaking only what I really feel."

"I can," said the captain, "and I do give you credit for the greatest possible amount of sincerity, and I feel sufficiently interested myself in the future fate of this fair young creature to wish that she may be convinced her lover is no more, and may so much better herself, as I am quite certain she would, by becoming your wife; for all we can hear of this Ingestrie seems to prove that he is not the most stable minded of individuals the world ever produced, and perhaps not exactly the sort of man — however, of course, she may think to the contrary, and he may in all sincerity think so likewise — to make such a girl as Johanna Oakley happy."

"I thank you for the kind feeling towards me, my friend, which has dictated that speech, but — "

"Hush!" said the captain, suddenly, "Hush! look at the barber!"

"The barber? Sweeney Todd?"

"Yes, yes, there he is; do you not see him? There he is, and he looks as if he had come off a long journey. What can he have been about, I wonder? He is draggled in mud!"

Yes, there was Sweeney Todd, opening his shop from the outside with a key, that after a vast amount of fumbling, he took from his pocket; and, as the captain said, he did indeed look as if he had come off a long journey, for he was draggled with mud, and his appearance altogether was such as to convince any one that he must have been out in most of the heavy rain which had fallen during the early part of the morning upon London and its suburbs. And this was just the fact, for after staying with the madhouse keeper in the hope that the bad weather which had set in would be alleviated, he had been compelled to give up all chance of such a thing, and as no conveyance of any description was to be had, he enjoyed the pleasure, if it could be called such, of walking home up to his knees in the mud of that dirty neighbourhood. It was, however, some satisfaction to him to feel that he had got rid of Tobias, who, from what he had done as regarded the examination of the house, had become extremely troublesome indeed, and perhaps the most serious enemy that Sweeney Todd had ever had.

"Ha!" he said, as he came within sight of his shop in Fleet Street, — "Ha! Master Tobias is safe enough; he will give me no more trouble, that is quite clear. What a wonderfully convenient thing it is to have such a friend as Fogg, who for a consideration will do so much towards ridding one of an uncomfortable encumbrance. It is possible enough that that boy might have compassed my destruction. I wish I dared now chance, with the means I have for the sale of the string of pearls, joined to my other resources, leaving business, and so not be obliged to run the risk and have the trouble of another boy."

Yes, Sweeney Todd would have been glad now to shut up his shop in Fleet Street at once and for ever, but he dreaded that when John Mundel found that

his customer did not come back to him to redeem the pearls, that he (John Mundel) would proceed to sell them, and that then their beauty and great worth would excite much attention, and someone might come forward who knew more about their early history than he did.

"I must keep quiet," he thought, — "I must keep quiet; for although I think I was pretty well disguised, and it is not at all likely that any one — no, not even the acute John Mundel himself — would recognise in Sweeney Todd, the poor barber of Fleet Street, the nobleman who came from the queen to borrow £8,000 upon a string of pearls; yet there is a remote possibility of danger; and should there be a disturbance about the precious stones, it is better that I should remain in obscurity until that disturbance is completely over."

This was no doubt admirable policy on the part of Todd, who, although he found himself a rich man, had not, as many people do when they make that most gratifying and interesting discovery, forgotten all the prudence and tact that made him one of that most envied class of personages. He was some few minutes before he could get the key to turn in the lock of his street door, but at length he effected that object and disappeared from before the eyes of the colonel and his friend into his own house, and the door was instantly again closed upon him.

"Well," said Colonel Jeffery, "what do you think of that?"

"I don't know what to think, further than that your friend Todd has been out of town, as the state of his boots abundantly testifies."

"They do, indeed, and he has the appearance of having been a considerable distance, for the mud that is upon his boots is not London mud."

"Certainly not; it is quite of a different character altogether. But see, he is coming out again."

Sweeney Todd strode out of his house, bareheaded now, and proceeded to take down the shutters of his shop, which, there being but three, he accomplished in a few seconds of time, and walked in again with them in his hand, along with the iron bar which had secured them, and which he had released from the inside. This was all the ceremony that took place at the opening of Sweeney Todd's shop, and the only surprise our friends, who were at the public house window, had upon the subject was, that having a boy, he, Todd, should condescend to make himself so useful as to open his own shop. And nothing could be seen of the lad, although the hour, surely, for his attendance must have arrived; and Todd, equally surely, was not the sort of man to be so indulgent to a boy, whom he employed to make himself generally useful, as to allow him to come when all the dirty work of the early morning was over. But yet such to all appearance would seem to be the case, for presently Todd appeared with a broom in his hand, sweeping out his shop with a rapidity and a vengeance which seemed to say, that he did not perform that operation with the very best grace in the world.

"Where can the boy be?" said the captain. "Do you know, little reason as I may really appear to have for such a supposition, I cannot help in my own mind connecting Todd's having been out of town somehow with the fact of that boy's nonappearance this morning."

"Indeed! — The coincidence is curious, for such was my own thought likewise upon the occasion; and the more I do think of it, the more I feel convinced that such must be the case, and that our watch will be a fruitless one completely. Is it likely — for possible enough it is — that the villain has found out that we have been asking some questions of the boy, and has thought proper to take his life?"

"Do not let us go too far," said the captain, "in mere conjecture; recollect that as yet, let us suspect what we may, we know nothing, and that the mere facts of our not being able to trace Thornhill beyond the shop of this man, will not be sufficient to found an action upon."

"I know all that, and I feel how very cautious we must be; and yet to my mind the whole of the circumstances have been day by day assuming a most hideous air of probability, and I look upon Todd as a murderer already."

"Shall we continue our watch?"

"I scarcely see its utility. Perchance we may see some proceedings which may interest us; but I have a powerful impression that we certainly shall not see the boy we want. But, at all events, the barber, you perceive, has a customer already."

As they looked across the way, they saw a well dressed looking man, who, from a certain air and manner which he had, could be detected not to be a Londoner. He rather resembled some substantial yeoman, who had come to town to pay or to receive money, and, as he came near to Sweeney Todd's shop he might have been observed to stroke his chin, as debating in his mind the necessity or otherwise of a shave. The debate, if it were taking place in his mind, ended by the ayes having it, for he walked into Todd's shop, being most unquestionably the first customer which he had had that morning. Situated as the colonel and his friend were, they could not see into Todd's shop, even if the door had been opened, but they saw that after the customer had been in for a few moments, it was closed, so that, had they been close to it, all the interior of the shaving establishment would have been concealed. They felt no great degree of interest in this man, who was a commonplace personage enough, who had entered Sweeney Todd's shop; but when an unreasonable time had elapsed, and he did not come out, they did begin to feel a little uneasy. And when another man, went in and was only about five minutes before he emerged, shaved, and yet the first man did not come, they knew not what to make of it, and looked at each other for some few moments in silence. At length the colonel spoke — and he did so in a tone of excitement, saying —

“My friend, have we waited here for nothing now? What can have become of that man whom we saw go into the barber’s shop; but who, I suppose, we feel ourselves to be in a condition to take our oaths never came out?”

“I could take my oath; and what conclusion can we come to?”

“None, but that he met his death there; and that, let his fate be what it may, it is the same which poor Thornhill has suffered. I can endure this no longer. Do you stay here, and let me go alone.”

“Not for worlds — you would rush into an unknown danger; you cannot know what may be the powers of mischief that man possesses. You shall not go alone, colonel, you shall not indeed; but something must be done.”

“Agreed; and yet that something surely need not be of the desperate character you meditate.”

“Desperate emergencies require desperate remedies; and yet I think that in this case everything is to be lost by precipitation, and nothing is to be gained. We have to do with one who, to all appearance, is keen and subtle, and if anything is to be accomplished contrary to his wishes, it is not to be done by that open career, which for its own sake, under ordinary circumstances, both you and I would gladly embrace.”

“Well, well,” said the colonel, “I do not and will not say but you are right.”

“I know I am — I am certain I am; and now hear me: I think we have gone quite far enough unaided in this transaction, and that it is time we drew some others into the plot.”

“I do not understand what you mean.”

“I will soon explain. I mean, that if in the pursuit of this enterprise, which grows each moment to my mind more serious, anything should happen to you and me, it is absolutely frightful to think that there would then be an end of it.”

“True, true; and as for poor Johanna and her friend Arabella, what could they do?”

“Nothing, but expose themselves to great danger. Come, now, colonel, I am glad to see that we understand each other better about this business; you have heard, of course, of Sir Richard Blunt?”

“Sir Richard Blunt — Blunt — oh, you mean the magistrate?”

“I do; and what I propose is that we have a private and confidential interview with him about the matter — that we make him possessed of all the circumstances, and take his advice what to do. The result of placing the affair

in such hands will, at all events, be that if, in anything we may attempt, we may by force or fraud be overpowered, we shall not fall wholly unavenged."

"Reason backs your proposition."

"I knew it would, when you came to reflect. Oh, Colonel Jeffery, you are too much a creature of impulse."

"Well," said the colonel, half jestingly, "I must say that I do not think the accusation comes well from you, for I have certainly seen you do some rather impulsive things, I think."

"We won't dispute about that; but since you think with me upon the matter, you will have no objection to accompany me at once to Sir Richard Blunt's?"

"None in the least; on the contrary, if anything is to be done at all, for Heaven's sake let it be done quickly. I am quite convinced that some fearful tragedy is in progress, and that, if we are not most prompt in our measures, we shall be too late to counteract its dire influence upon the fortunes of those in whom we have become deeply interested."

"Agreed, agreed! Come this way, and let us now for a brief space, at all events, leave Mr. Todd and his shop to take care of each other, while we take an effectual means of circumventing him. Why do you linger?"

"I do linger. Some mysterious influence seems to chain me to the spot."

"Some mysterious fiddlestick! Why, you are getting superstitious, colonel."

"No, no! Well, I suppose I must come with you. Lead the way, lead the way; and believe me that it requires all my reason to induce me to give up a hope of making some important discovery by going to Sweeney Todd's shop."

"Yes, you might make an important discovery; and only suppose now that the discovery you did make was that he murdered some of his customers. If he does so, you may depend that such a man takes good care to do the deed effectually, and you might make the discovery just a little too late. You understand that?"

"I do, I do. Come along, for I positively declare, that if we see anybody else go into the barber's, I shall not be able to resist rushing forward at once, and giving an alarm."

It was certainly a good thing that the colonel's friend was not quite so enthusiastic as he was, or from what we happen actually to know of Sweeney Todd, and from what we suspect, the greatest amount of danger might have befallen Jeffery, and instead of being in a position to help others in unravelling the mysteries connected with Sweeney Todd's establishment, he might himself

have been past all help, and most absolutely one of the mysteries. But such was not to be.

CHAPTER XXVII
Tobias Makes an Attempt to Escape from the Madhouse

We cannot find it in our hearts to force upon the mind of the reader the terrible condition of poor Tobias. No one, certainly, of all the *dramatis personae* of our tale, is suffering so much as he; and, consequently, we feel it to be a sort of duty to come to a consideration of his thoughts and feelings as he lay in that dismal cell, in the madhouse at Peckham Rye. Certainly Tobias Ragg was as sane as any ordinary Christian need wish to be, when the scoundrel, Sweeney Todd, put him into the coach to take him to Mr. Fogg's establishment; but if by any ingenious process the human intellect can be toppled from its throne, certainly that process must consist in putting a sane person into a lunatic asylum. To the imagination of a boy, too, and that boy one of vivid imagination, as was poor Tobias, a madhouse must be invested with a world of terrors. That enlarged experience which enables persons of more advanced age to shake off much of the unreal, which seemed so strangely to take up its abode in the mind of the young Tobias, had not reached him; and no wonder, therefore, that to him his present situation was one of acute and horrible misery and suffering.

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He lay for a long time in the gloomy dungeon like cell into which he had been thrust, in a kind of stupor, which might or might not be the actual precursor of insanity, although, certainly, the chances were all in favour of being so. For many hours he neither moved hand nor foot, and as it was a part of the policy of Mr. Fogg to leave well alone, as he said, he never interfered, by any intrusive offers of refreshment, with the quiet or the repose of his patients. Tobias, therefore, if he had chosen to remain as still as an Indian fakir, might have died in one position, without any remonstrances from any one. It would be quite an impossibility to describe the strange visionary thoughts and scenes that passed through the mind of Tobias during this period. It seemed as if his intellect was engulfed in the charmed waters of some whirlpool, and that all the different scenes and actions which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been clear and distinct, were mingled together in inextricable confusion. In the midst of all this, at length, he began to be conscious of one particular impression or feeling, and that was, that some one was singing in a low, soft voice, very near to him. This feeling, strange as it was in such a place, momentarily increased in volume, until at length it began in its intensity to absorb almost every other; and he gradually awakened from the sort of stupor that had come over him. Yes some one was singing. It was a female voice, he was sure of that, and as his mind became more occupied with that one subject of thought, and his perceptive faculties became properly exercised, his intellect altogether assumed a healthier tone. He could not distinguish the words that were sung, but the voice itself was very sweet and musical; and as Tobias listened, he felt as if the fever of his blood was abating, and that healthier thoughts were taking the place of those disordered fancies that had held sway within the chambers of his brain.

“What sweet sounds!” he said. “Oh! I do hope that singing will go on. I feel happier to hear it; I do so hope it will continue. What sweet music! Oh, mother, mother, if you could but see me now!”

He pressed his hands over his eyes, but he could not stop the gush of tears that came from them, and which would trickle through his fingers. Tobias did not wish to weep; but those tears, after all the horrors of the night, did him a world of good, and he felt wonderfully better after they had been shed. Moreover, the voice kept singing without intermission.

“Who can it be,” thought Tobias, “that don’t tire with so much of it.”

Still the singer continued; but now and then Tobias felt certain that a very wild note or two was mingled with the ordinary melody; and that bred a suspicion in his mind, which gave him a shudder to think of, namely, that the singer was mad.

“It must be so,” said he. “No one in their senses could or would continue for so long a period of time such strange snatches of song. Alas! Alas! It is some one who is really mad, and confined for life in this dreadful place; for life do I say, am not I too confined for life here? Oh! Help! Help! Help!”

Tobias called out in so loud a tone, that the singer of the sweet strains that had for a time lulled him to composure, heard him, and the strains which had before been redolent of the softest and sweetest melody, suddenly changed to the most terrific shrieks that can be imagined. In vain did Tobias place his hands over his ears, to shut out the horrible sounds. They would not be shut out, but ran, as it were, into every crevice of his brain, nearly driving him distracted by their vehemence. But hoarser tones soon came upon his ears, and he heard the loud, rough voice of a man say —

“What, do you want the whip so early this morning? The whip — do you understand that?”

These words were followed by the lashing of what must have been a heavy carter’s whip, and then the shrieks died away in deep groans, every one of which went to the heart of poor Tobias.

“I can never live amid all these horrors,” he said. “Oh, why don’t you kill me at once? it would be much better, and much more merciful. I can never live long here. Help! Help! Help!”

When he shouted this word “help” it was certainly not with the most distant idea of getting any help, but it was a word that came at once uppermost to his tongue; and so he called it out with all his might, that he should attract the attention of some one; for the solitude, and the almost total darkness of the place he was in, was beginning to fill him with new dismay. There was a faint light in the cell, which made him know the difference between day and night; but where that faint light came from he could not tell, for he could see no grating

or opening whatever; but yet that was in consequence of his eyes not being fully accustomed to the obscurity of the place; otherwise he would have seen that close up to the roof there was a narrow aperture, certainly not larger than any one could have passed a hand through, although of some four or five feet in length; and from a passage beyond that, there came the dim borrowed light which made darkness visible in Tobias's cell. With a kind of desperation, heedless of what might be the result, Tobias continued to call aloud for help; and after about a quarter of an hour, he heard the sound of a heavy footstep. Some one was coming; yes, surely some one was coming, and he was not to be left to starve to death. Oh, how intently he now listened to every sound, indicative of the near approach of whoever it was who was coming to his prison house. Now he heard the lock move, and a heavy bar of iron was let down with a clanging sound.

"Help! Help!" he cried again, "Help! Help!" for he feared that whoever it was they might even yet go away again after making so much progress to get at him. The cell door was flung open, and the first intimation that poor Tobias got of the fact of his cries having been heard, consisted in a lash with a whip, which, if it had struck him as fully as it was intended to do, would have done him serious injury.

"So, do you want it already?" said the same voice he had before heard.

"Oh no — mercy! Mercy!" said Tobias.

"Oh, that's it now, is it? I tell you what it is, if we have any disturbance here, this is the persuader to silence that we always use: what do you think of that for an argument, eh?"

As he spoke, the man gave the whip a loud smack in the air, and confirmed the truth of the argument, by inducing poor Tobias to absolute silence; indeed the boy trembled so that he could not speak.

"Well, now, my man," added the fellow, "I think we understand each other. What do you want?"

"Oh, let me go," said Tobias, "let me go. I will tell nothing. Say to Mr. Todd that I will do what he pleases, and tell nothing, only let me go out of this dreadful place. Have mercy upon me — I am not at all mad — indeed I am not."

The man closed the door, as he whistled a lively tune.

CHAPTER XXVIII
The Madhouse Yard and Tobias's New Friend

This sudden retreat of the man was unexpected by Tobias, who at least thought it was the practice to feed people, even if they were confined to such a place; but the unceremonious departure of the keeper, without so much as mentioning anything about breakfast, began to make Tobias think that the plan by which he was to be got rid of was starvation; and yet that was impossible, for how easy it was to kill him if they felt so disposed.

"Oh, no, no," he repeated to himself, "surely they will not starve me to death."

As he uttered these words, he heard the plaintive singing commence again; and he could not help thinking that it sounded like some requiem for the dead, and that it was a sort of signal that his hours were numbered. Despair again began to take possession of him, and despite the savage threats of the keeper, he would again have loudly called for help, had he not become conscious that there were footsteps close at hand. By dint of listening most intently he heard a number of doors opened and shut, and sometimes when one was opened there was a shriek, and the lashing of the whips, which very soon succeeded in drowning all other noises. It occurred to Tobias, and correctly too, for such was the fact, that the inmates of that most horrible abode were living, like so many wild beasts, in cages fed. Then he thought how strange it was that even for any amount of money human beings could be got to do the work of such an establishment. And by the time Tobias had made this reflection to himself, his own door was once more opened upon its rusty hinges. There was the flash of a light, and then a man came in with a water can in his hand, to which there was a long spout, and this he placed to the mouth of Tobias, who fearing that if he did not drink then he might be a long time without, swallowed some not over savoury ditch water, as it seemed to him, which was thus brought to him. A coarse, brown looking, hard loaf was then thrown at his feet, and the party was about to leave his cell, but he could not forbear speaking, and in a voice of the most supplicating earnestness he said —

"Oh, do not keep me here. Let me go, and I will say nothing of Todd. I will go to sea at once if you will let me out of this place, indeed I will; but I shall really go mad here!"

"Good that, Watson, ain't it?" said Mr. Fogg, who happened to be one of the party.

"Very good, sir. Lord bless you, the cunning of 'em is beyond anything in the world, sir; you'd be surprised at what they say to me sometimes."

"But I'm not mad — indeed I'm not mad!" cried Tobias.

"Oh," said Fogg, "it's a bad case I'm afraid; the strongest proof of insanity in my opinion, Watson, is the constant reiteration of the statement that he is not mad on the part of a lunatic. Don't you think it is so, Mr. Watson?"

"Oh, of course, sir, of course."

"Ah! I thought you would be of that opinion; but I suppose as this is a mere lad, we may do without chaining him up; and, besides, you know that today is inspection day, when we get an old fool of a superannuated physician to make us a visit."

"Yes, sir," said Watson, with a grin, "and a report that all is well conducted."

"Exactly. Who shall we have this time, do you think? I always give a ten guinea fee."

"Why, sir, there's old Dr. Popplejoy, he's 84 years old, they say, and sand blind; he'll take it as a great compliment, he will, and no doubt we can humbug him easily."

"I dare say we may; I'll see to it; and we will have him at twelve o'clock, Watson. You will take care to have everything ready, of course, you know; make all the usual preparations."

Tobias was astonished that before him they chose thus to speak so freely, but despairing as he was, he little knew how completely he was in the power of Mr. Fogg, and how utterly he was shut out from all human sympathy. Tobias said nothing; but he could not help thinking that, however old and stupid the physician whom they mentioned might be, surely there was a hope that he would be able to discover Tobias's perfect sanity. But the wily Mr. Fogg knew perfectly well what he was about, and when he retired to his own room, he wrote the following note to Dr. Popplejoy, who was a retired physician, who had purchased a country house in the neighbourhood. The note will speak for itself, being as fine a specimen of hypocrisy as we can ever expect to lay before our readers —

"The Asylum, Peckham.

"SIR, — Probably you may recognise my name as that of the keeper of a lunatic asylum in this neighbourhood. Consistent with a due regard for the safety of that most unhappy class of the community submitted to my care, I am most anxious, with the blessing of Divine Providence, to ameliorate as far as possible, by kindness, that most shocking of all calamities — insanity. Once a year it is my custom to call in some experienced, able, and enlightened physician to see my patients (I enclose a fee) — a physician who has nothing to do with the establishment, and therefore cannot be biased. If you, sir, would do me the favour at about twelve o'clock today, to make a short visit of inspection, I shall esteem it a great honour, as well as a great favour.

"Believe me to be, sir, with the most profound respect, your most obedient and humble servant,

"J. B. FOGG."

"To Dr. Popplejoy, etc."

This note, as might be expected, brought the old purblind, superannuated Dr. Popplejoy to the asylum, and Mr. Fogg received him in due form, and with great gravity, saying, almost with tears in his eyes —

"My dear sir, the whole aim of my existence now, is to endeavour to soften the rigours of the necessary confinement of the insane, and I wish this inspection of my establishment to be made by you in order that I may thus for a time stand clear with the world — with my own conscience I am, of course, always clear; and if your report be satisfactory about the treatment of the unhappy persons I have here, not the slightest breath of slander can touch me."

"Oh yes, yes," said the old garrulous physician; "I — I — very good — eugh, eugh — I have a slight cough."

"A very slight one, sir. Will you, first of all, take a look at one of the sleeping chambers of the insane?"

The doctor agreed, and Mr. Fogg led him into a very comfortable sleeping room, which the old gentleman declared was very satisfactory indeed, and when they returned to the apartment into which they had already been, Mr. Fogg said —

"Well then, sir, all we have to do is to bring in the patients, one by one, to you as fast as we can, so as not to occupy more of your valuable time than necessary; and any questions you ask will, no doubt, be answered, and I, being by, can give you the heads of any case that may excite your especial notice."

"Exactly, exactly. I — I — quite correct. Eugh — eugh!"

The old man was placed in a chair of state, reposing on some very comfortable cushions; and take him altogether, he was so pleased with the ten guineas and the flattery of Mr. Fogg — for nobody had given him a fee for the last fifteen years — that he was quite ready to be the foolish tool of the madhouse keeper in almost any way that he chose to dictate to him. We need not pursue the examination of the various unfortunates who were brought before old Dr. Popplejoy; it will suffice for us if we carry the reader through the examination of Tobias, who is our principal care, without, at the same time, detracting from the genial sympathy we must feel for all who, at that time, were subject to the tender mercies of Mr. Fogg. At about half past twelve the door of Tobias's cell was opened by Mr. Watson, who, walking in, laid hold of the boy by the collar, and said —

"Hark you, my lad! You are going before a physician, and the less you say the better. I speak to you for your own sake; you can do yourself no good, but you can do yourself a great deal of harm. You know we keep a cartwhip here. Come along."

Tobias said not a word in answer to this piece of altogether gratuitous advice, but he made up his mind that, if the physician was not absolutely deaf, he should hear him. Before, however, the unhappy boy was taken into the room where old Dr. Popplejoy was waiting, he was washed and brushed down generally, so that he presented a much more respectable appearance than he would have done had he been ushered in in his soiled state, as he was taken from the dirty madhouse cell.

"Surely, surely," thought Tobias, "the extent of cool impudence can go no further than this; but I will speak to the physician, if my life should be sacrificed for so doing. Yes, of that I am determined."

In another minute he was in the room, face to face with Mr. Fogg and Dr. Popplejoy.

"What — what? — eugh! Eugh!" coughed the old doctor; "A boy, Mr. Fogg, a mere boy. Dear me! I — I — eugh! Eugh! Eugh! My cough is a little troublesome I think, today — eugh! Eugh!"

"Yes, sir," said Fogg, with a deep sigh, and making a pretence to dash a tear from his eye; "here you have a mere boy. I am always affected when I look upon him, doctor. We were boys ourselves once, you know, and to think that the divine spark of intelligence has gone out in one so young, is enough to make any feeling heart throb with agony. This lad though, sir, is only a monomaniac. He has a fancy that some one named Sweeney Todd is a murderer, and that he can discover his bad practices. On all other subjects he is sane enough; but upon that, and upon his presumed freedom from mental derangement, he is furious."

"It is false, sir, it is false!" said Tobias, stepping up. "Oh, sir, if you are not one of the creatures of this horrible place, I beg that you will hear me, and let justice be done."

"Oh, yes — I — I — eugh! Of course — I — eugh!"

"Sir, I am not mad, but I am placed here because I have become dangerous to the safety of criminal persons."

"Oh, indeed! Ah — oh — yes."

"I am a poor lad, sir, but I hate wickedness; and because I found out that Sweeney Todd was a murderer, I am placed here."

"You hear him, sir," said Fogg; "just as I said."

“Oh, yes, yes. Who is Sweeney Todd, Mr. Fogg?”

“Oh, sir, there is no such person in the world.”

“Ah, I thought as much — I thought as much — a sad case, a very sad case, indeed. Be calm, my little lad, and Mr. Fogg will do all that can be done for you, I’m sure.”

“Oh! How can you be so foolish, sir,” cried Tobias, “as to be deceived by that man, who is making a mere instrument of you to cover his own villany? What I say to you is true, and I am not mad!”

“I think, Dr. Popplejoy,” said Fogg, with a smile, “it would take rather a cleverer fellow than I am to make a fool of you; but you perceive, sir, that in a little while the boy would get quite furious, that he would. Shall I take him away?”

“Yes, yes — poor fellow!”

“Hear me — oh, hear me,” shrieked Tobias. “Sir, on your deathbed you may repent this day’s work — I am not mad — Sweeney Todd is a murderer — he is a barber in Fleet Street — I am not mad!”

“It’s melancholy, sir, is it not?” said Fogg, as he again made an effort to wipe away a tear from his eyes. “It’s very melancholy.”

“Oh! Very, very.”

“Watson, take away poor Tobias Ragg, but take him very gently, and stay with him a little, in his nice comfortable room, and try to soothe him; speak to him of his mother, Watson, and get him round if you can. Alas, poor child! My heart quite bleeds to see him. I am not fit exactly for this life, doctor, I ought to be made of sterner stuff, indeed I ought.”

* * * * * * *

“Well,” said Mr. Watson, as he saluted poor Tobias with a kick outside the door, “what a deal of good you have done!”

The boy’s patience was exhausted; he had borne all that he could bear and this last insult maddened him. He turned with the quickness of thought, and sprang at Mr. Watson’s throat. So sudden was the attack, and so completely unprepared for it was that gentleman, that down he fell in the passage, with such a blow of his head against the stone floor that he was nearly insensible; and, before anybody could get to his assistance, Tobias had so pommelled and clawed his face, that there was scarcely a feature discernible, and one of his eyes seemed to be in fearful jeopardy. The noise of this assault soon brought

Mr. Fogg to the spot, as well as old Dr. Popplejoy, and the former tore Tobias from his victim, whom he seemed intent upon murdering.

CHAPTER XXIX
The Consultation of Colonel Jeffery with the Magistrate

The advice which his friend had given to Colonel Jeffery was certainly the very best that could have been tendered to him; and, under the whole of these circumstances, it would have been something little short of absolute folly to have ventured into the shop of Sweeney Todd without previously taking every possible precaution to ensure the safety of so doing. Sir Richard was within when they reached his house, and, with the acuteness of a man of business, he at once entered into the affair. As the colonel, who was the spokesman, proceeded, it was evident that the magistrate became deeply interested. Colonel Jeffery concluded by saying —

"You will thus, at all events, perceive that there is great mystery somewhere."

"And guilt, I should say," replied the magistrate.

"You are of that opinion, Sir Richard?"

"I am, most decidedly."

"Then what would you propose to do? Believe me, I do not ask out of any idle curiosity, but from a firm faith, that what you set about will be accomplished in a satisfactory manner."

"Why, in the first place, I shall certainly go and get shaved at Todd's shop."

"You will venture that?"

"Oh, yes; but do not fancy that I am so headstrong and foolish as to run any unnecessary risks in the matter — I shall do no such thing: you may be assured that I will do all in my power to provide for my own safety; and if I did not think I could do that most effectually, I should not be at all in love with the adventure; but, on the contrary, carefully avoid it to the best of my ability. We have before heard something of Mr. Todd."

"Indeed! — And of a criminal character?"

"Yes; a lady once in the street took a fancy to a pair of shoe buckles of imitation diamonds that Todd had on, when he was going to some city entertainment; she screamed out, and declared that they had belonged to her husband, who had gone out one morning, from his house in Fetter Lane, to get himself shaved. The case came before me, but the buckles were of too common a kind to enable the lady to persevere in her statement; and Todd, who preserved the most imperturbable coolness throughout the affair, was, of course, discharged."

"But the matter left a suspicion upon your mind?"

"It did; and more than once I have resolved in my own mind what means could be adopted of coming at the truth: other affairs, however, of more immediate urgency have occupied me, but the circumstances you detail revive all my former feelings upon the subject; and I shall now feel that the matter has come before me in a shape to merit immediate attention."

This was gratifying to Colonel Jeffery, because it not only took a great weight off his shoulders, but it led him to think, from the well-known tact of the magistrate, that something certainly would be accomplished, and that very shortly too, towards unravelling the secret that had as yet only appeared to be more complicated and intricate the more it was inquired into. He made the warmest acknowledgments to the magistrate for the courtesy of his reception, and then took his leave. As soon as the magistrate was alone, he rang a small handbell that was upon the table, and the summons was answered by a man, to whom he said —

"Is Crotchet here?"

"Yes, your worship."

"Then, tell him I want him at once, will you?"

The messenger retired, but he presently returned, bringing with him about as rough a specimen of humanity as the world could have produced. He was tall and stout, and his face looked as if, by repeated injuries, it had been knocked out of all shape, for the features were most strangely jumbled together indeed, and an obliquity of vision, which rendered it always a matter of doubt who and what he was looking at, by no means added to his personal charms.

"Sit down, Crotchet," said the magistrate, "and listen to me without a word of interruption."

If Mr. Crotchet had no other good quality on earth, he still had that of listening attentively, and he never opened his mouth while the magistrate related to him what had just formed the subject matter of Mr. Jeffery's communication; indeed, Crotchet seemed to be looking out of the window all the while; but then Sir Richard knew the little peculiarities of his visual organs. When he concluded his statement, Sir Richard said —

"Well, Crotchet, what do you think of all that? What does Sweeney Todd do with his customers?"

Mr. Crotchet gave a singular and peculiar kind of grin, as he said, still looking apparently out of the window, although his eyes were really fixed upon the magistrate —

"He *smugs* 'em."

"What?"

"Uses 'em up, yer worship; it's as clear to me as mud in a wine glass, that it is. Lor' bless you! I've been thinking he did that 'ere sort of thing a deuce of a while, but I didn't like to interfere too soon, you see."

"What do you advise, Crotchet? I know I can trust to your sagacity in such a case."

"Why, your worship, I'll think it over a bit in the course of the day, and let your worship know what I think. It's a awkward job rather, for a wariety of reasons, but howsomedever there's always a something to be done, and if we don't do it, I'll be hung if I know who can, that's all!"

"True, true, you are right there; and, perhaps, before you see me again, you will walk down Fleet Street, and see if you can make any observations that will be of advantage in the matter. It is an affair which requires great caution indeed."

"Trust me, yer worship: I'll do it, and no mistake. Lor' bless you, it's easy for anybody now to go lounging about Fleet-street, without being taken much notice of; for the fact is, the whole place is agog about the horrid smell as has been for never so long in the old church of St. Dunstan."

"Smell — smell — in St. Dunstan's church! I never heard of that before, Crotchet."

"Oh, Lor' yes, it's enough to pison the devil himself, Sir Richard; and t'other day when the blessed bishop went to *'firm* a lot of people, he as good as told 'em they might all be damned first, afore he 'firm nobody in such a place."

The magistrate was in a deep thought for a few minutes, and then he said suddenly —

"Well, well, Crotchet, you turn the matter over in your mind and see what you can make of it; I will think it over likewise. Do you hear? — Mind you are with me at six this evening punctually; I do not intend to let the matter rest, and you may depend, that from this moment I will give it my greatest attention."

"Wery good, yer worship; wery good indeed; I'll be here, and something seems to strike me uncommon forcible that we shall unearth this fox very soon, yer worship."

"I sincerely hope so."

Mr. Crotchet took his leave, and when he was alone the magistrate rose and paced his apartment for some time with rapid strides, as if he was much

agitated by the reflections that were passing through his mind. At length he flung himself into a chair with something like a groan, as he said —

"A horrible idea forces itself upon my consideration — most horrible! Most horrible! Most horrible! Well, well, we shall see — we shall see. It may not be so: and yet what a hideous probability stares me in the face! I will go down at once to St. Dunstan's and see what they are really about. Yes, yes, I shall not get much sleep I think now, until some of these mysteries are developed. A most horrible idea, truly!"

The magistrate left some directions at home concerning some business calls which he fully expected in the course of the next two hours, and then he put on a plain, sad coloured cloak and a hat destitute of all ornament, and left his house with a rapid step. He took the most direct route towards St. Dunstan's church, and finding the door of the sacred edifice yielded to the touch, he at once entered it; but he had not advanced many steps before he was met and accosted by the beadle, who said, in a tone of great dignity and authority —

"This ain't Sunday, sir; there ain't no service here today."

"I don't suppose there is," replied the magistrate; "but I see you have workmen here. What is it you are about?"

"Well, of all the impudence that ever I came near, this is the worstest — to ask a beadle what he is about; I beg to say, sir, this is quite private, and there's the door."

"Yes, I see it, and you may go out at it just as soon as you think proper."

"Oh, *conwulsions*! Oh, *conwulsions*! This to a beadle."

"What is all this about?" said a gentlemanly looking man, stepping forward from a part of the church where several masons were employed in raising some of the huge flagstones with which it was paved. "What disturbance is this?"

"I believe, Mr. Antrobus, you know me," said the magistrate.

"Oh, Sir Richard, certainly. How do you do?"

"Gracious," said the beadle, "I've put my blessed foot in it. Lor' bless us, sir, how should I know as you was Sir Richard? I begs as you won't think nothing o' what I said. If I had a knowed you, in course I shouldn't have said it, you may depend, Sir Richard — I humbly begs your pardon."

"It's of no consequence — I ought to have announced myself; and you are perfectly justified in keeping strangers out of the church, my friend."

The magistrate walked up the aisle with Mr. Antrobus, who was one of the churchwardens; and as he did so, he said, in a low, confidential tone of voice —

“I have heard some strange reports about a terrible stench in the church. What does it mean? I suppose you know all about it, and what it arises from?”

“Indeed I do not. If you have heard that there is a horrible smell in the church after it has been shut up for some time, and upon the least change in the weather, from dry or wet, or cold or warm, you know as much as we know upon the subject. It is a most serious nuisance, and, in fact, my presence here today is to try and make some discovery of the cause of the stench; and you see we are going to work our way into some of the old vaults that have not been opened for some time, with a hope of finding out the cause of this disagreeable odour.”

“Have you any objection to my being a spectator?”

“None in the least.”

“I thank you. Let us now join the workmen, and I can only now tell you that I feel the strongest possible curiosity to ascertain what can be the meaning of all this, and shall watch the proceedings with the greatest amount of interest.”

“Come along then; I can only say, for my part, that, as an individual, I am glad you are here, and as a magistrate, likewise, it gives me great satisfaction to have you.”