

CHAPTER XXX  
Tobias's Escape from Mr. Fogg's Establishment

The rage into which Mr. Fogg was thrown by the attack which the desperate Tobias had made upon his representative, Mr. Watson, was so great, that, had it not been for the presence of stupid old Dr. Poppiejoy in the house, no doubt he would have taken some most exemplary vengeance upon him. As it was, however, Tobias was thrown into his cell with a promise of vengeance as soon as the coast was clear. These were a kind of promises which Mr. Fogg was pretty sure to keep, and when the first impulse of his passion had passed away, poor Tobias, as well indeed he might, gave himself up to despair.

“Now all is over,” he said; “I shall be half murdered! Oh, why do they not kill me at once? There would be some mercy in that. Come and murder me at once, you wretches! You villains, murder me at once!”

In his new excitement, he rushed to the door of the cell, and banged at it with his fists, when to his surprise it opened, and he found himself nearly falling into the stone corridor from which the various cell doors opened. It was evident that Mr. Watson thought he had locked him in, for the bolt of the lock was shot back, but had missed its hold — a circumstance probably arising from the state of rage and confusion Mr. Watson was in, as a consequence of Tobias's daring attack upon him. It almost seemed to the boy as if he had already made some advance towards his freedom, when he found himself in the narrow passage beyond his cell door, but his heart for some minutes beat so tumultuously with the throng of blissful associations connected with freedom, that it was quite impossible for him to proceed. A slight noise, however, in another part of the building roused him again, and he felt that it was only now by a great coolness and self-possession, as well as great courage, that he could at all hope to turn to account the fortunate incident which had enabled him, at all events, to make that first step towards liberty.

“Oh, if I could but get out of this dreadful place,” he thought; “if I could but once again breathe the pure fresh air of heaven, and see the deep blue sky, I think I should ask for no other blessings.”

Never do the charms of nature present themselves to the imagination in more lovely guise than when some one with an imagination full of such beauties, and a mind to appreciate the glories of the world, is shut up from real, actual contemplation. To Tobias now the thought of green fields, sunshine and flowers, was at once rapture and agony.

“I must,” he said, “I must — I will be free.”

A thorough determination to do anything, we are well convinced, always goes a long way towards its accomplishment; and certainly Tobias now would cheerfully have faced death in any shape, rather than he would again have been condemned to the solitary horrors of the cell, from which he had by such a

chance got free. He conjectured the stupid old Dr. Popplejoy had not left the house, by the unusual quiet that reigned in it, and he began to wonder if, while that quiet subsisted, there was the remotest chance of his getting into the garden, and then scaling the wall, and so reaching the open common. While this thought was establishing itself in his mind, and he was thinking that he would pursue the passage in which he was until he saw where it led to, he heard the sound of footsteps, and he shrank back. For a few seconds they appeared as if they were approaching where he was; and he began to dread that the cell would be searched, and his absence discovered, in which case there would be no chance for him but death. Suddenly, however, the approaching footsteps paused, and then he heard a door banged shut. It was still, even now, some minutes before Tobias could bring himself to traverse the passage again, and when he did, it was with a slow and stealthy step. He had not, however, gone above thirty paces, before he heard the indistinct murmur of voices, and being guided by the sound, he paused at a door on his right hand, which he thought must be the one he had heard closed but a few minutes previously. It was from the interior of the room which that was the door of, that the sound of voices came, and as it was a matter of the very first importance to Tobias to ascertain in what part of the house his enemies were, he placed his ear against the panel, and listened attentively. He recognised both the voices: they were those of Watson and Fogg. It was a very doubtful and ticklish situation that poor Tobias was now in, but it was wonderful how, by dint of strong resolution, he had stilled the beating of his heart and the general nervousness of his disposition. There was but a frail door between him and his enemies, and yet he stood profoundly still and listened. Mr. Fogg was speaking.

“You quite understand me, Watson, I think,” he said, “as concerns that little viper, Tobias Ragg; he is too cunning, and much too dangerous to live long. He almost staggered old superannuated Popplejoy.”

“Oh, confound him!” replied Watson, “And he’s quite staggered me.”

“Why, certainly your face is rather scratched.”

“Yes, the little devil! But it’s all in the way of business, that, Mr. Fogg, and you never heard me grumble at such little matters yet; and I’ll be bound never will, that’s more.”

“I give you credit for that, Watson; but between you and I, I think the disease of that boy is of a nature that will carry him off very suddenly.”

“I think so too,” said Watson, with a chuckle.

“It strikes me forcibly that he will be found dead in his bed some morning, and I should not in the least wonder if that were tomorrow morning: what’s your opinion, Watson?”

“Oh, damn it, what’s the use of all this roundabout nonsense between us? The boy is to die, and there’s an end of it, and die he shall during the night — I owe him a personal grudge, of course, now.”

“Of course you do — he has disfigured you.”

“Has he? Well, I can return the compliment; and I say, Mr. Fogg, my opinion is, that it’s very dangerous having these medical inspections you have such a fancy for.”

“My dear fellow, it is dangerous, that I know as well as you can tell me, but it is from that danger we gather safety. If anything in the shape of a disturbance should arise about any patient, you don’t know of what vast importance a report from such a man as old Dr. Popplejoy might be.”

“Well, well, have it your own way. I shall not go near Master Tobias for the whole day, and shall see what starvation and solitude does towards taming him down a bit.”

“As you please; but it is time you went your regular rounds.”

“Yes, of course.”

Tobias heard Watson rise. The crisis was a serious one. His eye fell upon a bolt that was outside the door, and, with the quickness of thought, he shot it into its socket, and then made his way down the passage towards his cell, the door of which he shut close. His next movement was to run to the end of the passage and descend some stairs. A door opposed him, but a push opened it, and he found himself in a small, dimly lighted room, in one corner of which, upon a heap of straw, lay a woman, apparently sleeping. The noise which Tobias made in entering the cell, for such it was, roused her up, and she said —

“Oh! No, no; not the lash! Not the lash! I am quiet. God, how quiet I am, although the heart within is breaking. Have mercy upon me!”

“Have mercy upon me,” said Tobias, “and hide me if you can.”

“Hide you! Hide you! God of Heaven, who are you?”

“A poor victim, who has escaped from one of the cells, and I —”

“Hush!” said the woman; and she made Tobias shrink down in the corner of the cell, cleverly covering him up with the straw, and then lying down herself in such a position that he was completely screened. The precaution was not taken a moment too soon, for, by the time it was completed, Watson had burst open the door of the room which Tobias had bolted, and stood in the narrow passage.

“How the devil,” he said, “came that door shut, I wonder?”

“Oh! Save me,” whispered Tobias.

“Hush! hush! He will only look in,” was the answer. “You are safe. I have been only waiting for some one who could assist me, in order to attempt an escape. You must remain here until night, and then I will show you how it may be done. Hush! — He comes.” Watson did come, and looked into the cell, muttering an oath, as he said —

“Oh, you have enough bread and water till tomorrow morning, I should say; so you need not expect to see me again till then.”

“Oh! We are saved! We shall escape,” said the poor creature, after Watson had been gone some minutes.

“Do you think so?”

“Yes, yes! Oh, boy, I do not know what brought you here, but if you have suffered one tenth part of the cruelty and oppression that I have suffered, you are indeed to be pitied.”

“If we are to stay here,” said Tobias, “till night, before making any attempt to escape, it will, perhaps, ease your mind, and beguile the time, if you were to tell me how you came here.”

“God knows! It might — it might.”

Tobias was very urgent upon the poor creature to tell her story, to beguile the tedium of the time of waiting, and after some amount of persuasion she consented to do so.

“You shall now hear,” she said to Tobias, “if you will listen, such a catalogue of wrongs, unredressed and still enduring, that would indeed drive any human being mad; but I have been able to preserve so much of my mental faculties as will enable me to recollect and understand the many acts of cruelty and injustice that I have endured here for many a long and weary day. My persecutions began when I was very young — so young that I could not comprehend their cause, and used to wonder why I should be treated with greater rigour or with greater cruelty than people used to treat those who were really disobedient and wayward children. I was scarcely seven years old when a maiden aunt died; she was the old person whom I remember as having been uniformly kind to me; though I can only remember her indistinctly, yet I know she was kind to me; I know also I used to visit her, and she used to look upon me as her favourite, for I used to sit at her feet upon a stool, watching her as she sat amusing herself by embroidering, silent and motionless sometimes, and then I asked her some questions which she answered. This is the chief feature of my recollection of my aunt: she soon after died, but while she lived, I had no unkindness from anybody; it was only after that that I felt the cruelty and coolness of my family. It appeared that I was a favourite with my aunt above all others, either in our family or any other; she loved me, and promised that when

she died, she would leave me provided for, and that I should not be dependent upon any one. Well, I was, from the day after the funeral, an altered being. I was neglected, and no one paid any attention to me whatsoever; I was thrust about, and nobody appeared to care even if I had the necessaries of life. Such a change I could not understand. I could not believe the evidence of my own senses; I thought it must be something that I did not understand; perhaps my poor aunt's death had caused this distress and alteration in people's demeanour to me. However, I was a child, and though I was quick enough at noting all this, yet I was too young to feel acutely the conduct of my friends. My father and mother were careless of me, and let me run where I would; they cared not when I was hurt, they cared not when I was in danger. Come what would, I was left to take my chance. I recollect one day when I had fallen from the top to the bottom of some stairs and hurt myself very much; but no one comforted me; I was thrust out of the drawing room, because I cried. I then went to the top of the stairs, where I sat weeping bitterly for some time. At length, an old servant came out of one of the attics, and said —

“Oh! Miss Mary, what has happened to you, that you sit crying so bitterly on the stair head? Come in here!”

“I arose and went into the attic with her, when she set me on a chair, and busied herself with my bruises, and said to me —

“Now, tell me what are you crying about, and why did they turn you out of the drawing room — tell me now?”

“Ay,” said I, “they turned me out because I cried when I was hurt. I fell all the way downstairs, but they don't mind.”

“No, they do not, and yet in many families they would have taken more care of you than they do here!”

“And why do you think they would have done so?” I inquired.

“Don't you know what good fortune has lately fallen into your lap? I thought you knew all about it.”

“I don't know anything, save they are very unkind to me lately.”

“They have been very unkind to you, child, and I am sure I don't know why, nor can I tell you why they have not told you of your fortune.”

“My fortune,” said I; “what fortune?”

“Why, don't you know that when your poor aunt died you were her favourite?”

“I know my aunt loved me,” I said; “she loved me, and was kind to me; but since she has been dead, nobody cares for me.”

“Well, my child, she has left a will behind her which says that all her fortune shall be yours; when you are old enough you shall have all her fine things; you shall have all her money and her house.’

“Indeed!’ said I; ‘who told you so?’

“Oh, I have heard it from those who were present at the reading of the will, that you are, when you are old enough, to have all. Think what a great lady you will be then! You will have servants of your own.’

“I don’t think I shall live till then.’

“Oh yes, you will — or at least I hope so.’

“And if I should not, what will become of all those fine things that you have told me of? Who’ll have them?’

“Why, if you do not live till you are of age, your fortune will go to your father and mother, who take all.’

“Then they would sooner I should die than live?’

“What makes you think so?’ she inquired.

“Why,’ said I, ‘they don’t care anything for me now, and they will have my fortune if I were dead — so they don’t want me.’

“Ah, my child!’ said the old woman, ‘I have thought of that more than once; and now you can see it. I believe that it will be so. There has many a word been spoken truly enough by a child before now, and I am sure you are right — but do you be a good child, and be careful of yourself, and you will always find that Providence will keep you out of any trouble.’

“I hope so,’ I said.

“And be sure you don’t say who told you about this.’

“Why not,’ I inquired; ‘why may I not tell who told me about it?’

“Because,’ she replied, ‘if it were known that I told you anything about it, as you have not been told by them, they might discharge me, and I should be turned out.’

“I will not do that,’ I replied; ‘they shall not learn who told me, though I should like to hear them say the same thing.’

“You may hear them do so one of these days,’ she replied, ‘if you are not impatient: it will come out one of these days — two may know of it.’

“More than my father and mother?’

“Yes, more — several.’

“No more was said then about the matter; but I treasured it up in my mind. I resolved that I would act differently, and not have anything to do with them — that is, I would not be more in their sight than I could help — I would not be in their sight at all, save at meal times — and when there was any company there I always appeared. I cannot tell why; but I think it was because I sometimes attracted the attention of others, and I hoped to be able to hear something respecting my fortune; and in the end I succeeded in doing so, and then I was satisfied — not that it made any alteration in my conduct, but I felt I was entitled to a fortune. How such an impression became imprinted upon a girl of eight years of age, I know not: but it took hold of me, and I had some kind of notion that I was entitled to more consideration than I was treated to.

“Mother,’ said I one day to her.

“Well, Mary, what do you want to tease me about now?’

“Didn’t Mrs. Carter the other day say that my aunt left me a fortune?’

“What is the child dreaming about?’ said my mother. ‘Do you know what you are talking about, child? — you can’t comprehend.’

“I don’t know, mother, but you said it was so to Mrs. Carter.’

“Well, then, what if I did, child?’

“Why, you must have told the truth or a falsehood.’

“Well, Miss Impudence! — I told the truth, what then?’

“Why, then I am to have a fortune when I grow up, that’s all I mean, mother, and then people will take care of me. I shall not be forgotten, but everything will be done for me, and I shall be thought of first.’

“My mother looked at me very hard for a moment or two, and then, as if she was actuated by remorse, she made an attempt to speak, but checked herself, and then anger came to her aid, and she said —

“Upon my word, miss! What thoughts have you taken into your fancy now? I suppose we shall be compelled to be so many servants to you! I am sure you ought to be ashamed of yourself — you ought, indeed!’

“I didn’t know I had done wrong,’ I said.

“Hold your tongue, will you, or I shall be obliged to flog you!’ said my mother, giving me a sound box on the ears that threw me down. ‘Now, hold your tongue and go upstairs, and give me no more insolence.’

“I arose and went up stairs, sobbing as if my heart would break. I cannot recollect how many bitter hours I spent there, crying by myself — how many tears I shed upon this matter, and how I compared myself to other children, and how much my situation was worse than theirs by a great deal. They, I thought, had their companions — they had their hours of play. But what companions had I? And what had I in the way of relaxation? What had I to do save to pine over the past, the present, and the future? My infantile thoughts and hours were alike occupied by the sad reflections that belonged to a more mature age than mine; and yet I was so. Days, weeks, and months passed on — there was no change, and I grew apace; but I was always regarded by my family with dislike, and always neglected. I could not account for it in any other way than they wished me dead. It may appear very dreadful — very dreadful indeed — but what else was I to think? The old servant’s words came upon my mind full of their meaning — if I died before I was one and twenty, they would have all my aunt’s money.

“‘They wish me to die,’ I thought, ‘they wish me to die; and I shall die — I am sure I shall die! But they will kill me — they have tried it by neglecting me, and making me sad. What can I do — what can I do?’

“These thoughts were the current matter of my mind, and how often do they recur to my recollection now I am in this dull, dreadful place! I can never forget the past. I am here because I have rights elsewhere, which others can enjoy, and do enjoy. However, that is an old evil. I have thus suffered long. But to return. After a year had gone by — two, I think, must have passed over my head — before I met with anything that was at all calculated to injure me. I must have been near ten years old, when, one evening, I had no sooner got into bed, than I found I had been put into damp — I may say wet sheets. They were so damp that I could not doubt but this was done on purpose. I am sure no negligence ever came to anything so positive and so abominable in all my life. I got out of bed and took them off, and then wrapped myself up in the blankets and slept till morning, without awaking any one. When morning came, I inquired who put the sheets there?

“‘What do you mean, minx?’ said my mother.

“‘Only that somebody was bad and wicked enough to put positively wet sheets in the bed; it could not have been done through carelessness — it must have been done through sheer wilfulness. I’m quite convinced of that.’

“‘You will get yourself well thrashed if you talk like that,’ said my mother. ‘The sheets are not damp; there are none in the house that are damp.’

“‘These are wet.’

“This reply brought her hand down heavily upon my shoulder, and I was forced upon my knees. I could not help myself, so violent was the blow.

“‘There,’ added my mother, ‘take that, and that, and answer me if you dare.’

“As she said this she struck me to the ground, and my head came in violent contact with the table, and I was rendered insensible. How long I continued so I cannot tell. What I first saw when I awoke was the dreariness of one of the attics into which I had been thrust, and thrown upon a small bed without any furniture. I looked around and saw nothing that indicated comfort, and upon looking at my clothes there were traces of blood. This, I had no doubt, came from myself. I was hurt, and upon putting my hand to my head, found that I was much hurt, as my head was bound up. At that moment the door was opened, and the old servant came in.

“‘Well, Miss Mary,’ she said, ‘and so you have come round again? I really began to be afraid you were killed. What a fall you must have had!’

“‘Fall,’ said I; ‘who said it was a fall?’

“‘They told me so.’

“‘I was struck down.’

“‘Struck, Miss Mary! Who could strike you? And what did you do to deserve such a severe chastisement? Who did it?’

“‘I spoke to my mother about the wet sheets.’

“‘Ah! What a mercy you were not killed! If you had slept in them, your life would not have been worth a farthing. You would have caught cold, and you would have died of inflammation, I am sure of it. If anybody wants to commit murder without being found out, they have only to put them into damp sheets.’

“‘So I thought, and I took them out.’

“‘You did quite right — quite right.’

“‘What have you heard about them?’ said I.

“‘Oh! I only went into the room in which you sleep, and I at once found how damp they were, and how dangerous it was; and I was going to tell your mamma, when I met her, and she told me to hold my tongue, but to go down and take you away, as you had fallen down in a fit, and she could not bear to see you lying there.’

“‘And she didn’t do anything for me?’

“Oh, no, not as I know of, because you were lying on the floor bleeding. I picked you up, and brought you here.’

“And has she not inquired after me since?’

“Not once.’

“And don’t know whether I am yet sensible or not?’

“She does not yet know that.’

“Well,’ I replied, ‘I think they don’t care much for me, I think not at all, but the time may come when they will act differently.’

“No, miss, they think, or affect to think, that you have injured them; but that cannot be, because you could not be cunning enough to dispose your aunt to leave you all, and so deprive them of what they think they are entitled to.’

“I never could have believed half so much.’

“Such, however, is the case.’

“What can I do?’

“Nothing, my dear, but lie still till you get better, and don’t say any more; but sleep, if you can sleep, will do you more good than anything else now for an hour or so, so lie down and sleep.’

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“The old woman left the room, and I endeavoured to compose myself to sleep; but could not do so for some time, my mind being too actively engaged in considering what I had better do, and I determined upon a course of conduct by which I thought to escape much of my present persecution. It was some days, however, before I could put it in practice, and one day I found my father and mother together, and I said to her —

“Mother, why do you not send me to school?’

“You — send you to school! Did you mean you, miss?’

“Yes, I meant myself, because other people go to school to learn something, but I have not been sent at all.’

“Are you not contented?’

“I am not,’ I answered, ‘because other people learn something; but at the same time, I should be more out of your way, since I am more trouble to you, as you complain of me; it would not cost more than living at home.’

“What is the matter with the child?’ asked my father.

“I cannot tell,’ said my mother.

“The better way will be to take care of her, and confine her to some part of the house, if she does not behave better.’

“The little minx will be very troublesome.’

“Do you think so?’

“Yes, decidedly.’

“Then we must adopt some more active measures, or we shall have to do what we do not wish. I am amused at her asking to be sent to school! Was ever there heard of such wickedness? Well, I could not have believed such ingratitude could have existed in human nature.’

“Go out of the room, you hussy,’ said my mother; ‘go out of the room, and don’t let me hear a word from you more.’

“I left the room terrified at the storm I had raised up against me. I knew not that I had done wrong, and went up crying to my attic alone, and found the old servant, who asked what was the matter. I told her all I had said, and what had been the result, and how I had been abused.

“Why, you should let things take their own course, my dear.’

“Yes, but I can learn nothing.’

“Never mind; you will have plenty of money when you grow older, and that will cure many defects; people who have money never want for friends.’

“But I have them not, and yet I have money.’

“Most certainly — most certainly, but you have it not in your power, and you are not old enough to make use of it, if you had it.’

“Who has it?’ I inquired.

“Your father and mother.’

“No more was said at that time, and the old woman left me to myself, and I recollect I long and deeply pondered over this matter, and yet could see no way out of it, and resolved that I would take things as easily as I could; but I feared that I was not likely to have a very quiet life; indeed, active cruelty was exercised against me. They would lock me up in a room a whole day at a time, so that I was debarred the use of my limbs. I was even kept without food, and on every

occasion I was knocked about, from one to the other, without remorse — every one took a delight in tormenting me, and in showing me how much they dared do. Of course servants and all would not treat me with neglect and harshness if they did not see it was agreeable to my parents. This was shocking cruelty; but yet I found that this was not all. Many were the little contrivances made and invented to cause me to fall down stairs — to slip — to trip, or do anything that might have ended in some fatal accident, which would have left them at liberty to enjoy my legacy, and no blame would be attached to them for the accident, and I should most likely get blamed for what was done, and from which I had been the sufferer — indeed, I should have been deemed to have suffered justly. On one occasion, after I had been in bed some time, I found it was very damp, and upon examination I found the bed itself had been made quite wet, with the sheets put over it to hide it. This I did not discover until it was too late, for I caught a violent cold, and it took me some weeks to get over it, and yet I escaped eventually, though after some months' illness. I recovered, and it evidently made them angry because I did live. They must have believed me to be very obstinate; they thought me obdurate in the extreme — they called me all the names they could imagine, and treated me with every indignity they could heap upon me. Well, time ran on, and in my twelfth year I obtained the notice of one or two of our friends, who made some inquiries about me. I always remarked that my parents disliked any one to speak to, or take any notice of me. They did not permit me to say much — they did not like my speaking; and on one occasion, when I made some remark respecting school, she replied —

“Her health is so bad that I have not yet sent her, but shall do so by and by, when she grows stronger.”

“There was a look bent upon me that told me at once what I must expect, if I persisted in my half formed resolve of contradicting all that had been said. When the visitor went I was well aware of what kind of a life I should have had, if I did not absolutely receive some serious injury. I was terrified, and held my tongue. Soon after that I was seized with violent pains and vomiting. I was very ill, and the servant being at home only, a doctor was sent for, who at once said I had been poisoned, and ordered me to be taken care of. I know how it was done: I had some cake given me — it was left out for me; and that was the only thing I had eaten, and it astonished me, for I had not had such a thing given me for years, and that is why I believe the poison was put in the cake, and I think others thought so too. However, I got over that after a time, though I was a long while before I did so; but at the same time I was very weak, and the surgeon said that had I been a little longer without assistance, or had I not thrown it up, I must have sunk beneath the effects of a violent poison. He advised my parents to take some measures to ascertain who it was that had administered the poison to me; but though they promised compliance, they never troubled themselves about it — but I was for a long time very cautious of what I took, and was in great fear of the food that was given to me. However, nothing more of that character took place, and at length I quite recovered, and began to think in my own mind that I ought to take some active steps in the matter, and that I ought to seek an asylum elsewhere. I was now nearly fifteen years of age, and could well see how inveterate was the dislike with which I was regarded by my

family: I thought that they ought to use me better, for I could remember no cause for it. I had given no deadly offence, nor was there any motive why I should be treated thus with neglect and disdain. It was, then, a matter of serious consideration with me, as to whether I should not go and throw myself upon the protection of some friend, and beg their interference in my behalf; but then there was no one whom I felt that would do so much for me — no one from whom I expected so great an act of friendship. It was hardly to be expected from any one that they should interfere between me and my parents; they would have had their first say, and I should have contradicted all they said, and should have appeared in a very bad light indeed. I could not say they had neglected my education — I could not say that, because there I had been careful myself, and I had assiduously striven when alone to remedy this defect, and had actually succeeded; so that, if I were examined, I should have denied my own assertions by contrary facts, which would injure me. Then again, if I were neglected I could not prove any injury, because I had all the means of existence; and all I could say would either be attributed to some evil source, or it was entirely false — but at the same time I felt that I had great cause of complaint, and none of gratitude. I could hold no communion with any one — all alike deserted me, and I knew none who could say aught for me if I requested their goodwill. I had serious thoughts of possessing myself of some money, and then leaving home, and staying away until I had arrived at age; but this I deferred doing, seeing that there were no means, and I could not do more than I then did — that is, to live on without any mischief happening, and wait for a few years more. I contracted an acquaintance with a young man who came to visit my father — he came several times, and paid me more civility and attention than any one else ever did, and I felt that he was the only friend I possessed. It is no wonder I looked upon him as being my best and my only friend. I thought him the best and the handsomest man I ever beheld. This put other thoughts into my head. I did not dress as others did, much less had I the opportunity of becoming possessed of many of those little trinkets that most young women of my age had. But this made no alteration in the good opinion of the young gentleman, who took no notice of that, but made me several pretty presents. These were treasures to me, and I must say I gloated over them, and often, when alone, I have spent hours in admiring them; trifling as they were, they made me happier. I knew now one person who cared for me, and a delightful feeling it was too. I shall never know it again — it is quite impossible. Here, among the dark walls and unwholesome cells, we have no cheering ray of life or hope — all is dreary and cold; a long and horrible punishment takes place, to which there is no end save with life, and in which there is no one mitigating circumstance — all is bad and dark. God help me!

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“However, my dream of happiness was soon disturbed. By some means my parents had got an idea of this, and the young man was dismissed the house, and forbidden to come to it again. This he determined to do, and more than once we met, and then in secret I told him all my woes. When he had heard all I said, he expressed the deepest commiseration, and declared I had been most unjustly and harshly treated, and thought that there was not a harder or

harsher treatment than that which I had received. He then advised me to leave home.

“Leave home,’ I said; ‘where shall I fly? I have no friend.’

“Come to me, I will protect you; I will stand between you and all the world; they shall not stir hand or foot to your injury.’

“But I cannot, dare not to do that; if they found me out, they would force me back with all the ignominy and shame that could be felt from having done a bad act; not any pity would they show me.’

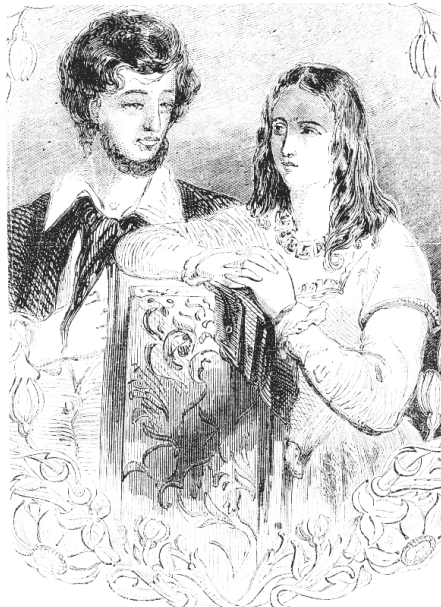
“Nor need you; you would be my wife — I mean to make you my wife.’

“You?’

“Yes! I dreamed not of anything else. You shall be my wife; we will hide ourselves, and remain unknown to all until the time shall have arrived when you are of age — when you can claim all your property, and run no risk of being poisoned or killed by any other means.’

“This is a matter,’ said I, ‘that ought to be considered well before adopting anything so violent and so sudden.’

“It does; and it is not one that I think will injure by being reflected upon by those who are the principal actors; for my own part my mind is made up, and I am ready to perform my share of the engagement.’



“I resolved to consider the matter well in my own mind, and felt every inclination to do what he proposed, because it took me away from home, and because it would give me one of my own. My parents had become utterly estranged from me: they did not act as parents, they did not act as friends, they had steeled my heart against them; they never could have borne any love to me, I am sure of it, who could have committed such great crimes against me. As the hour drew near, that in which I was likely to become an object of still greater hatred and dislike to them, I thought I was often the subject of their private thoughts, and often when I entered the room my mother and father, and the rest, would suddenly leave off speaking, and look at me, as if to ascertain if I had overheard them say anything. On one occasion I remember very well I heard them conversing in a low tone. The door happened to have opened of itself, the hasp not having been allowed to enter the mortise. I heard my name mentioned: I paused and listened.

“‘We must soon get rid of her,’ said my mother.

“‘Undoubtedly,’ he replied; ‘if we do not, we shall have her about our ears: she’ll get married, or some infernal thing, and then we shall have to refund.’

“‘We could prevent that.’

“‘Not if her husband were to insist upon it, we could not; but the only plan I can now form is, what I told you of already.’

“‘Putting her into a madhouse?’

“‘Yes: there, you see, she will be secured, and cannot get away. Besides, those who go there die in a natural way before many years.’

“‘But she can speak.’

“‘So she may; but who attends to the ravings of a mad woman? No, no; depend upon it, that is the best plan: send her to a lunatic asylum — a private madhouse. I can obtain all that is requisite in a day or two.’

“‘Then we will consider that settled?’

“‘Certainly.’

“‘In a few days, then?’

“‘Before next Sunday; because we can enjoy ourselves on that day without any restraint, or without any uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty about us.’

\* \* \* \* \*

“I waited to hear no more: I had heard enough to tell me what I had to expect. I went back to my own room, and having put on my bonnet and shawl I went

out to see the individual to whom I have alluded, and saw him. I then informed him of all that had taken place, and heard him exclaim against them in terms of rising indignation.

“Come to me,’ he said; ‘come to me at once.’

“Not at once.’

“Don’t stop a day.’

“Hush!’ said I, ‘There’s no danger; I will come the day after tomorrow; and then I will bid adieu to all these unhappy moments, to all these persecutions; and in three years’ time I shall be able to demand my fortune, which will be yours.’

\* \* \* \* \*

“We were to meet the next day but one, early in the morning; there was not, in fact, to be more than thirty hours elapse before I was to leave home — if home I could call it — however, there was no time to be lost. I made up a small bundle and had all in readiness before I went to bed, and placed in security, intending to rise early, and let myself out and leave the house. That, however, was never to happen. While I slept, at a late hour of the night, I was awakened by two men standing by my bedside, who desired me to get up and follow them. I refused, and they pulled me rudely out of bed. I called out for aid, and exclaimed against the barbarity of their proceedings.

“It is useless to listen to her,’ said my father, ‘you know what a mad woman will say!’

“Ay, we do,’ replied the men, ‘they are the cunningest devils we ever heard. We have seen enough of them to know that.’

“To make the matter plain, I was seized, gagged, and thrust into a coach, and brought here, where I have remained ever since.”

CHAPTER XXXI  
Tobias's Rapid Journey to London

There was something extremely touching in the tone, and apparently in the manner in which the poor persecuted one detailed the story of her wrongs, and she had a tribute of a willing tear from Tobias.

"After the generous confidence you have had in me," he said, "I ought to tell you something of myself."

"Do so," she replied, "we are companions in misfortune."

"We are indeed."

Tobias then related to her at large all about Sweeney Todd's villainies, and how at length he, Tobias, had been placed where he was for the purpose of silencing his testimony of the evil and desperate practices of the barber. After that, he related to her what he had overheard about the intention to murder him that very night, and he concluded by saying —

"If you have any plan of escape from this horrible place, let me implore you to tell it to me, and let us put it into practice tonight, and if we fail, death is at any time preferable to continued existence here."

"It is — it is — listen to me."

"I will indeed," said Tobias: "you will say you never had such attention as I will now pay to you."

"You must know, then, that this cell is paved with flagstones, as you see, and that the wall here at the back forms likewise part of the wall of an old woodhouse in the garden, which is never visited."

"Yes, I understand."

"Well, as I have been here so long, I managed to get up one of the flagstones that forms the flooring here, and to work under the wall with my hands — a slow labour, and one of pain, until I made a regular kind of excavation, one end of which is here, and the other in the woodhouse."

"Glorious!" said Tobias. "I see — I see — go on."

"I should have made my escape if I could, but the height of the garden wall has always been the obstacle. I thought of tearing this miserable quilt into strips, and making a sort of rope of it; but then how was I to get it on the wall? you, perhaps will, with your activity and youth, be able to accomplish that."

"Oh, yes, yes! You're right enough there; it is not a wall shall stop me."

They waited until, from a church clock in the vicinity, they heard ten strike, and they began operations. Tobias assisted his new friend to raise the stone in the cell, and there, immediately beneath, appeared the excavation leading to the woodhouse, just sufficiently wide for one person to creep through. It did not take long to do that, and Tobias took with him a piece of work, upon which he had been occupied for the last two hours, namely the quilt torn up into long pieces, twisted and tied together, so that it formed a very tolerable rope, which Tobias thought would sustain the weight of his companion. The woodhouse was a miserable looking hole enough, and Tobias at once thought that the door of it was fastened, but by a little pressure it came open; it had only stuck through the dampness of the woodwork at that low point of the garden. And now they were certainly both of them at liberty, with the exception of surmounting the wall, which rose frowningly before him in all its terrors. There was a fine cool fresh air in the garden, which was indeed most grateful to the senses of Tobias, and he seemed doubly nerved for anything that might be required of him after inhaling that delicious, cool fresh breeze. There grew close to the wall one of those beautiful mountain-ash trees, which bend over into such graceful foliage, and which are so useful in the formation of pretty summer houses. Tobias saw that if he ascended to the top of this tree there would not be much trouble in getting from there to the wall.

“We shall do it,” he said, “we shall succeed.”

“Thank God, I hear you say so,” replied his companion.

Tobias tied one end of the long rope they had made of the quilt to his waist, so that he might carry it up with him, and yet leave him free use of his hands and feet, and then he commenced ascending the tree. In three minutes he was on the wall. The moon shone sweetly. There was not a tree or house in the vicinity that was not made beautiful now, in some portions of it, by the sweet, soft light that poured down upon them, Tobias could not resist pausing a moment to look around him on the glorious scene; but the voice of her for whom he was bound to do all that was possible, aroused him.

“Oh, Tobias!” she said, “Quick, quick — lower the rope; oh, quick!”

“In a moment — in a moment,” he cried.

The top of the wall was here and there armed with iron spikes, and some of these formed an excellent grappling place for the torn quilt. In the course of another minute Tobias had his end of it secure.

“Now,” he said, “can you climb up by it, do you think? Don’t hurry about it. Remember, there is no alarm, and for all we know we have hours to ourselves yet.”

“Yes, yes — oh, yes — thank God!” he heard her say.

Tobias was not where he could, by any exertion of strength, render her now the least assistance, and he watched the tightening of the frail support by which she was gradually climbing to the top of the wall with the most intense and painful interest that can be imagined.

“I come — I come,” she said, “I am saved.”

“Come slowly — for God’s sake, do not hurry.”

“No, no.”

At this moment Tobias heard the frail rope giving way; there was a tearing sound — it broke, and she fell. Lights, too, at that unlucky moment, flashed from the house, and it was now evident an alarm had been given. What could he do? If two could not be saved he might himself be saved. He turned, and flung his feet over the wall; he hung by his hands as low as he could, and then he dropped the remainder of the distance. He was hurt, but in a moment he sprang to his feet, for he felt that safety could only lie in instant and rapid flight. The terror of pursuit was so strong upon him that he forgot his bruises.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Thank Heaven,” exclaimed Tobias, “I am at last free from that horrible place. Oh, if I can but reach London now, I shall be safe; and as for Sweeney Todd, let him beware, for a day of retribution for him cannot be far off.”

So saying, Tobias turned his steps towards the city, and at a hard trot, soon left Peckham Rye far behind him as he pursued his route.

CHAPTER XXXII  
Mrs. Lovett's Cook Makes a Desperate Attempt

There are folks who can and who will bow like reeds to the decrees of evil fortune, and with a patient, ass like placidity, go on bearing the ruffles of a thankless world without complaining, but Mrs. Lovett's new cook was not one of those. The more destiny seemed to say to him — "Be quiet!" the more he writhed, and wriggled, and fumed, and could not be quiet. The more fate whispered in his ears — "You can do nothing," the more intent he was upon doing something, let it be what it might. And he had a little something, in the shape of a respite too, now, for had he not baked a batch of pies, and sent them up to the devouring fangs of the lawyers' clerks in all their gelatinous, beauty and gushing sweetness, to be devoured. To be sure he had, and therefore having, for a space, obeyed the behests of his taskmistress, he could sit with his head resting upon his hands and think. Thought! What a luxury! Where is the Indian satrap — where the arch Inquisitor — where the grasping, dishonest, scheming employer who can stop a man from thinking? — and as Shakspeare, says of sleep,

"From that sleep, what dreams may come?"

so might he have said of thought,

From that thought what acts may come?

Now we are afraid that, in the first place, the cook, in spite of himself, uttered some expression concerning Mrs. Lovett of neither an evangelical or a polite character, and with these we need not trouble the reader. They acted as a sort of safety valve to his feelings, and after consigning that fascinating female to a certain warm place, where we may fancy everybody's pie might be cooked on the very shortest notice, he got a little more calm.

"What shall I do? — What shall I do?"

Such was the rather vague question he asked of himself. Alas! How often are those four simple words linked together, finding but a vain echo in the overcharged heart. What shall I do? Ay, what! — Small power had he to do anything, except the quietest thing of all — that one thing which Heaven in its mercy has left for every wretch to do if it so pleases him — to die! But, somehow or another, a man upon the uphill side of life is apt to think he may do something rather than that, and our cook, although he was about as desperate a cook as the world ever saw, did not like yet to say die. Now, in that curious combination of passions, impulses, and prejudices in the mind of this man it would be a hard case if some scheme of action did not present itself, even in circumstances of the greatest possible seeming depression, and so, after a time, the cook did think of something to do.

“Many of these pies,” he said to himself, “are not eaten in the shop, *ergo* they are eaten out of the shop, and possibly at the respective houses of the purchasers — what more feasible mode of disclosing my position, and ‘the secrets of my prison house,’ can there be than the enclosing a note in one of Mrs. Lovett’s pies?”

After reviewing all the *pros* and *cons* of this scheme, there only appeared a few little difficulties in the way, but, although they were rather serious, they were not insurmountable. In the first place, it was possible enough that the unfortunate pie in which the note might be enclosed might be eaten in the shop, in which event the note might go down the throat of some hungry lawyer’s clerk, and it might be handed to Mrs. Lovett, with a “God bless me, ma’am, what’s this in the pie?” and then Mrs. Lovett might, by a not very remote possibility, say to herself — “This cook is a scheming, longheaded sort of a cook, and notwithstanding he does his duty by the pies, he shall be sent upon an errand to another and a better world,” and in that case the delectable scheme of the note could only end in the total destruction of the unfortunate who conceived it. Objection the second was, that, although nothing is so easy as to say — “Oh, write a note all about it,” nothing is so difficult as to write a note about anything without paper, ink, and a pen. The cook rubbed his forehead, and cried —

“Damn it!”

This seemed to have the desired effect, for he at once recollected that he was supplied with a thin piece of paper for the purpose of laying over the pies if the oven should by chance be over heated, and so subject them to an overbrowning process.

“Surely,” he thought, “I shall be able to make a substitute for a pen, and as for ink, a little coal and water, or — ah, I have it, black from my lights, of course. Ha — ha! How difficulties vanish when a man has thoroughly made up his mind to overcome them. Ha — ha! I write a note — I post it in a pie — some lawyer sends his clerk for a pie, and he gets *that* pie. He opens it and sees the note — he reads it — he flies to a police office, and gets a private interview with a magistrate — a couple of Bow Street runners walk down to Bell Yard, and seize Mrs. Lovett — I hear a row in the shop, and cry — ‘Here I am — I am here — make haste — here I am — here I am!’ Ha — ha — ha — ha — ha — ha!”

“Are you mad?”

The cook started to his feet —

“Who spoke — who spoke?”

“I,” said Mrs. Lovett, looking through the ingenious little wicket at the top of the door. “What do you mean by that laughing? If you have gone mad, as one cook once did, death will be a relief to you. Only convince me of that fact, and in two hours you sleep the long sleep.”

“I beg your pardon, ma’am, I am not at all mad.”

“Then why did you laugh in such a way that it reached even my ears above?”

“Why, ma’am, are you not a widow?”

“Well?”

“Well then, you could not have possibly looked at me as you ought to have done, or you would have seen that I am anything but a bad looking fellow, and as I am decidedly single, what do you say to taking me for better or for worse? The pie business is a thriving one, and, of course, if I had an interest in it, I should say nothing of affairs down below here.”

“Fool!”

“Thank you, madam, for the compliment, but I assure you, the idea of such an arrangement made me laugh, and at all events, provided I do my duty, you don’t mind my laughing a little at it?”

Mrs. Lovett disdained any further conversation with the cook, and closed the little wicket. When she was gone he took himself seriously to task for being so foolish as to utter his thoughts aloud, but yet he did not think he had gone so far as to speak loud enough about the plan of putting the letter in a pie for her to hear that.

“Oh, no — no, I am safe enough. It was the laughing that made her come. I am safe as yet!”

Having satisfied himself fully upon this point, he at once set to work to manufacture his note. The paper, as he had said, was ready at hand. To be sure, it was of a thin and flimsy texture, and decidedly brown, but a man in his situation could be hardly supposed to stand upon punctilios. After some trouble he succeeded in making an apology for a pen by the aid of a piece of stick, and he manufactured some very tolerable ink, at least, as good as the soot and water commonly sold in London for the best “japan,” and then he set about writing his note. As we have an opportunity of looking over his shoulder, we give the note verbatim.

“SIR — (OR MADAM) — I am a prisoner beneath the shop of Mrs. Lovett, the pie female, in Bell Yard. I am threatened with death if I attempt to escape from my now enforced employment. Moreover, I am convinced that there is some dreadful secret connected with the pies, which I can hardly trust my imagination to dwell upon, much less here set it down. Pray instantly, upon receipt of this, go to the nearest police office and procure me immediate aid, or I shall soon be numbered with the dead. In the sacred names of justice and humanity, I charge you to do this.”

The cook did not, for fear of accidents, put his name to this epistle. It was sufficient, he thought, that he designated his condition, and pointed out where he was. This note he folded into a close flat shape, and pressed it with his hands, so that it would take up a very small portion of room in a pie, and yet, from its size and nature, if the pie fell into the hands of some gourmand who commenced eating it violently, he could not fail to feel that there was a something in his mouth more indigestible than the delicate mutton or veal and the flaky crust of which Mrs. Lovett's delicacies were composed. Having proceeded thus far, he concluded that the only real risk he ran was, that the pie might be eaten in the shop, and the enclosure, without examination, handed over to Mrs. Lovett merely as a piece of paper which had insinuated itself where it had no right to be. But as no design whatever can be carried out without some risk or another, he was not disposed to give up his, because some contingency of that character was attached to it. The prospect of deliverance from the horrible condition to which he was reduced, now spread over his mind a pleasing calm, and he set about the manufacture of a batch of pies, so as to have it ready for the oven when the bell should ring. — Into one of them he carefully introduced his note. Oh, what an eye he kept upon that individual pie. How often he carefully lifted the upper crust, to have a peep at the little missive which was about to go upon an errand of life or death. — How he tried to picture to his mind's eye the sort of person into whose hands it might fall, and then how he thought he would listen for any sounds during the next few hours, which should be indicative of the arrest of Mrs. Lovett, and the presence of the police in the place. He thought, then, that if his laugh had been sufficiently loud when merely uttered to himself, to reach the ears of Mrs. Lovett, surely his shout to the police would be heard above all other sounds, and at once bring them to his aid. Tingle! Tingle! Tingle, went a bell. It was the signal for him to get a batch of pies ready for the oven.

“Good,” he said, “it is done.”

He waited until the signal was given to him to put them in to be cooked, and then, after casting one more look at the pie that contained his note, in went the batch to the hot air of the oven, which came out upon his face like the breath of some giant in a highly febrile state.

“’Tis done,” he said. “’Tis done, and I am saved!”

He sat down and covered his face with his hands, while delicious dreamy thoughts of freedom came across his brain. Green fields, trees, meadows and uplands, and the sweet blue sky, all appeared before him in bright and beautiful array.

“Yes,” he said. “Yes, I shall see them all once again. — Once again I shall look, perchance, upon the bounding deep blue sea. Once again I shall feel the sun of a happier clime than this fanning my cheek. Oh, liberty, liberty, what a precious boon art thou!”

Tingle! Tingle! Tingle! He started from his dream of joy. The pies are wanted; Mrs. Lovett knew well enough how long they took in doing, and that by this time they should be ready to be placed upon the ascending trap. Down it came. Open went the oven door, and in another minute the note was in the shop. The cook placed his hand upon his heart to still its tumultuous beating as he listened intently. He could hear the sound of feet above — only dimly though, through that double roof. Once he thought he heard high words, but all died away again, and nothing came of it. — All was profoundly still. The batch of pies surely were sold now, and in a paper bag he told himself his pie, *par excellence*, had gone perhaps to the chambers of some attorney, who would be rejoiced to have a finger in it; or to some briefless barrister, who would be rejoiced to get his name in the papers, even if it were only connected with a story of a pie. Yes, the dream of freedom still clung to the imagination of the cook, and he waited, with every nerve thrilling with expectation, the result of his plan. One, two, three hours had passed away, and nothing came of the pie or the letter. All was as quiet and as calm as though the malignant fates had determined that there he was to spend his days for ever, and gradually as in a frigid situation the narrow column of mercury in a thermometer will sink, sank his spirits — down — down — down!

“No — no,” he said. “No hope. Timidity or incredulity has consigned my letter to the flames, perhaps, or some widemouthed, stupid idiot has actually swallowed it. Oh that it had choked him by the way. Oh that it had actually stuck in his throat. — It is over, I have lost hope again. This horrible place will be my charnel house — my family vault! Curses! — No — no. What is the use of swearing? My despair is past that — far past that —”

“Cook!” said a voice.

He sprang up, and looked to the wicket. There was Mrs. Lovett gazing in at him.

“Cook!”

“Well — well. — Fiend in female shape, what would you with me? Did you not expect to find me dead?”

“Certainly not. Here is a letter for you.”

“A — a — letter?”

“Yes. Perhaps it is an answer to the one you sent in the pie, you know.”

The unfortunate grasped his head, and gave a yell of despair. The letter — for indeed Mrs. Lovett had one — was dropped upon the ground floor from the opening through which she conversed with her prisoner, and then, without another word, she withdrew from the little orifice, and left him to his meditation.

“Lost! — lost! — lost!” he cried. “All is lost. God, is this enchantment? Or am I mad, and the inmate of some cell in an abode of lunacy, and all this about pies and letters merely the delusion of my overwrought fancy? Is there really a pie — a Mrs. Lovett — a Bell Yard — a letter — a — a — a — damn it, is there such a wretch as I myself, in this vast bustling world, or is all a wild and fathomless delusion?”

He cast himself upon the ground, as though from that moment he gave up all hope and desire to save himself. It seemed as though he could have said —

“Let death come in any shape he may, he will find me an unresisting victim. I have fought with fate, and am, like thousands who have preceded me in such a contest — beaten!”

A kind of stupor came over him, and there he lay for more than two hours; but youth will overcome much, and the mind, like some depressed spring, will, in the spring of life, soon recover its rebound; so it was with the unhappy cook. After a time he rose and looked about him.

“No,” he said, “it is no dream. It is no dream!”

He then saw the letter lying upon the ground, which Mrs. Lovett had with such irony cast unto him.

“Surely,” he said, “she might have been content to tell me she had discovered my plans, without adding this practical sneer to it.”

He lifted the letter from the floor, and found it was addressed “To Mrs. Lovett’s Cook, Bell Yard, Temple Bar;” and what made it all the more provoking was, that it seemed to have come regularly through the post, for there were the official seal and blue stamp upon it. Curiosity tempted him to open it, and he read as follows: —

“SIR — Having, in a most delicious pie, received the extraordinary communication which you inserted in it, I take the earliest opportunity of replying to you. The character of a highly respectable and pious woman is not, sir, to be whispered away in a pie by a cook. When the whole bench of bishops were proved, in black and white, to be the greatest thieves and speculators in the known world, it was their character that saved them, for, as people justly enough reasoned, bishops should be pious and just — therefore, a bishop cannot be a thief and a liar! Now, sir, apply this little mandate to Mrs. Lovett, and assure yourself; but no one will believe anything you can allege against a female with so fascinating a smile, and who attends to her religious duties so regularly. Reflect, young man, on the evil that you have tried to do, and for the future learn to be satisfied with the excellent situation you have. The pie was very good.”

I am, you bad young man,  
A Parishioner of St. Dunstan’s,  
SWEENEY TODD.”

“Now was there ever such a piece of cool rascality as this?” cried the cook, “Sweeney Todd — Todd — Todd. Who the devil is he? This is some scheme of Mrs. Lovett’s to drive me mad.”

He dashed the letter upon the floor.

“Not another pie will I make! No — no — no. Welcome death — welcome that dissolution which may be my lot, rather than the continued endurance of this terrible imprisonment. Am I, at my time of life, to be made the slave of such a demon in human shape as this woman? Am I to grow old and grey here, a mere pie machine? No — no, death a thousand times rather!”

Tears! Yes, bitter scalding tears came to his relief, and he wept abundantly, but those tears were blessed, for as they flowed, the worst bitterness of his heart flowed with them, and he suddenly looked up, saying —

“I am only twenty four.”

There was magic in the sound of those words. They seemed in themselves to contain a volume of philosophy. Only twenty four. Should he, at that green and unripe age, get rid of hope? Should he, at twenty four only, lie down and say — “Let me die!” just because things had gone a little adverse, and he was the enforced cook of Mrs. Lovett?

“No — no,” he said. “No, I will endure much, and I will hope much. Hitherto, it is true, I have been unsuccessful in what I have attempted for my release, but the diabolical cunning, even of this woman, may fail her at some moment, and I may have my time of revenge. No — no, I need not ask for revenge, justice will do — common justice. I will keep myself alive. Hope shall be my guiding star. They shall not subdue the proud spirit they have succeeded in caging, quite so easily, I will not give up, I live and have youthful blood in my veins, I will not despair. Despair? No — Hence, fiend! — I am as yet only twenty four. Ha — ha! Only twenty four.”

CHAPTER XXXIII  
Shows how Tobias Got to London

We will now take a peep at Tobias. On — on — on, like the wind, went the poor belated boy from the vicinity of that frightful prison house at Peckham. Terror was behind him — terror with dishevelled locks was upon his right hand, and terror shrieking in his ear was upon his left. On — on, he flew like a whirlwind. Alas, poor Tobias, will your young intellects yet stand these trials? We shall see! Through the deep mud of the Surrey roads — past pedestrians — past horsemen, and past coaches flew poor Tobias, on — on. He had but one thought, and that was to place miles and miles of space between him and Mr. Fogg's establishment. The perspiration poured down his face — his knees shook under him — his heart beat as though in some wild pulsation it would burst, but he passed on until he saw afar off the old Bridge of London. The route to Blackfriars he had by some chance avoided. Many, who for the last two miles of Tobias's progress, had seen him, had tried to stop him. They had called after him, but he had heeded them not. Some fast runners had pursued him for a short distance, and then given up the chase in despair. He reached the bridge.

“Stop that boy!” cried a man, “he looks mad!”

“No — no,” shrieked Tobias, “I am not mad! I am not mad!”

A man held out his arms to stop him, but Tobias dashed past him like a flash of lightning, and was off again.

“Stop him!” cried twenty voices. “Stop thief!” shouted some who could not conceive that anybody was to be stopped on any other account.

“No, no,” gasped Tobias, as he flew onwards — “not mad, not mad!”

His feet failed him. He reeled a few more paces like a drunken man, and then fell heavily upon some stone steps, where he lay bathed in perspiration. Blood too gushed from his mouth. A gentleman's horse was standing at the door, and the man came out to mount him at that moment, and he saw the rapidly collecting crowd. With the reins of his steed in his hand, he pushed his way through the mob, saying —

“What is it? what is it?”

“A mad boy, sir,” said some. “Only look at him. Did you ever see the like. He looks as if he had run a hundred miles.”

“Good God!” cried the gentleman. “It is he! It is he!”

“Who, sir? who, sir?”

“A poor lad that I know, I will take charge of him. My name is Jeffery, I am Colonel Jeffery. A couple of guineas to any strong man who will carry him to the nearest surgeon’s. Alas! Poor boy, what a state is this to meet him in.”



*The Flight of Tobias from Peckham Madhouse*

It was quite astonishing the numbers of strong men that there were all of a sudden in the crowd, who were each anxious and willing to earn the colonel’s two guineas. There was danger of a fight arising upon the subject, when one man, after knocking down two others and threatening the remainder, stepped up, and lifting Tobias as though he had been an infant, exclaimed —

“Ale does it! Ale does it! Come on, my little ‘un.”

All gave way before the gigantic proportions of no other than our old friend Big Ben the beefeater, who, as chance would have it, was upon the spot, and who, without a thought of the colonel’s two guineas, only heard that a poor sick boy had to be carried to the nearest medical man. Tobias could not be in better hands than Ben’s, for the latter carried him much more carefully than ever nursemaid carried a child out of sight of its mother.

“Follow me,” said Colonel Jeffery, as he saw in the distance a party coloured lamp, which hung over a door appertaining to a chemist. “Follow, and I will reward you.”

“Doesn’t want it,” said Ben. “It’s ale as does it.”

“What?”

“Ale does it. Here you is. Come on.”

Colonel Jeffery was rather surprised at the droll customer he had picked up in the street, but provided he carried Tobias in safety, which by-the-bye he (the

colonel) would not have scrupled to do himself, had he not been encumbered by his horse, it was all one to him, and that he saw Ben was effectually doing. Tobias had shown some slight symptoms of vitality before being lifted from the step of the door close to which he had fallen, but by the time they all reached the chemist's shop, he was in a complete state of insensibility. Of course the usual crowd that collects on such occasions followed them, and during the walk the colonel had time to think, and the result of those thoughts was, that it would be a most desirable thing to keep the knowledge to himself that Tobias *was* Tobias. He had, in order to awe the mob from any interference with him, announced who he was, but had not announced Tobias. At least if he had uttered his name, he felt certain that it was in an interjectional sort of way, and not calculated to awaken any suspicion.

"I will keep it to myself," he thought, "that Tobias is in my possession, otherwise if such a fact should travel round to Sweeney Todd, there's no saying to what extent it might put that scoundrel upon his guard."

By the time the colonel had arrived at this conclusion the whole party had reached the chemist's, and Big Ben walked in with Tobias, and placed him at once upon the top of a plate glass counter, which had upon it a large collection of trumpery scent bottles and wonderful specifics for everything, through which Tobias went with a crash.

"There he is!" said Ben — "Ale does it."

"Fire! Murder! My glass case!" cried the chemist, "Oh, you monster!"

"Ale does it. What do you mean, eh?"

Big Ben backed a pace or two and went head and shoulders through a glass case of similar varieties that was against the wall.

"Gracious bless the beasteses," said Ben, "is your house made of glass? What do you mean by it, eh? A fellow can't turn round here without going through something. You ought to be persecuted according to law, that you ought."

Now this learned chemist had in the glass case against which Big Ben had tumbled a skeleton, which, from the stunning and terrible look it had in his shop, brought him many customers, and it was against this remnant of humanity that Big Ben's head met, after going through the glass as a preparatory step. By some means or another Ben caught his head under the skeleton's ribs, and the consequence was that out he hooked him from the glass case, and the first intimation Ben had of anything unusual, consisted of seeing a pair of bony legs dangling down on each side of him. So unexpected a phenomenon gave Ben what he called a "blessed turn," and out he bounced from the shop, carrying the skeleton for all the world like what is called pickaback, for the wires that supplied the place of cartilages held it erect, and so awful a sight surely was never seen in the streets of London as Big Ben with a skeleton upon his back. People fled before — some turned in at shop doors;

and an old lady with a large umbrella and a pair of gigantic pattens went clean through a silversmith's window. But we must leave Ben and the skeleton to get on as well as they can *en route* to the Tower, while we turn our attention to Tobias.

“Are you a surgeon?” cried Colonel Jeffery.

“A — a surgeon? No, I'm only a druggist; but is that any reason why a second Goliath should come into my shop and destroy everything?”

Colonel Jeffery did not wait for anything more, but snatching Tobias from the remnants of the plate glass, he ran to the door with him, and handing him to the first person he saw there, he cried —

“When I am mounted give me the boy.”

“Yes, sir.”

He sprang upon his horse; Tobias was handed to him like a bale of goods, and laying him comfortably as he could upon the saddle before him, off set the colonel at a good round trot through Finsbury to his own house. Colonel Jeffery had no sort of intention that the chemist should be a sufferer, but in his hurry to be off with Tobias, and speedily get medical advice for him, he forgot to say so, and accordingly there stood the man of physic then fairly bewildered by the events of the last few moments, during which his stock in trade had been materially damaged and a valuable amount of glass broken, to say nothing of the singular and most unexpected abduction of his friend the skeleton.

“Here's a pretty day's work!” he said. “Here's a pretty day's work! More mischief done than enough, and the worst of it is, my wife will hear of it, and then there will be a deal of peace in the house. Oh, dear — oh, dear — was there ever such an unfort — I knew it —”

A good rap upon his head from a pair of bellows wielded by a little meagre faced woman, that he was big enough to have swallowed, confined his words. While all this was going on, Colonel Jeffery had ridden fast, and passing through Finsbury and up the City Road, had reached his house in the fashionable — but now quite the reverse, as the man says in the play — district of Pentonville.

“This is a prize,” thought the colonel, “worth the taking. It will go hard with me but I will extract from this boy all that he knows of Sweeney Todd, and we shall see how far that knowledge will go towards the confirmation of my suspicions regarding him.”

He carried Tobias himself to a comfortable bedroom, and immediately sent for a medical practitioner of good repute in the neighbourhood, who happening fortunately to be at home, obeyed the summons immediately. He sent likewise for his friend the captain, whom he knew would be overjoyed to hear of what he would call the capture of Tobias Ragg. The medical man made his appearance

first, as being much closer at hand, and the colonel led him to the apartment of the invalid boy, saying to him as he went —

“I know nothing of what is the matter with this lad — I have been very anxious to see him on account of certain information that he possesses, and only found him this morning upon a doorstep in the street, in the state you see him.”

“Is he very ill?”

“I am afraid he is.”

The medical man followed the colonel to the room in which poor Tobias lay, and after gazing upon him for a few moments, and opening with his fingers the closed eyelids of Tobias, he shook his head.

“I wish I knew,” he said, “what has produced this state. Can you not inform me, sir?”

“Indeed I cannot, but I suspect that the boy’s imagination has been cruelly acted upon by a man, whom you will excuse me from naming just at present, but whom I sincerely hope to bring to justice shortly.”

“The boy’s brain, no doubt, is in a bad condition. I do not take upon myself to say that, as an organ, it is diseased, but fractionally it is damaged. However, we must do the best we can to recover him from this condition of collapse in which he is.”

“Can you form any opinion as to his probable recovery?”

“Indeed I cannot, but he is young, and youth is a great thing. The best that can be done shall be done.”

“I thank you. Spare nothing for the lad, and pay him every attention, as though he were a son or a brother of my own; I long to hear him speak, and to convince him that he is really among friends, who are not only willing to protect him, but have likewise the power to do so.”

The medical man bowed, as he said —

“May I ask his name, sir?”

He had his tablets in his hand ready to book the name of Tobias, but the colonel was so very much afraid that Sweeney Todd might by some means learn that Tobias was in his house, and so take an alarm, that he would not trust even the medical man, who, no doubt, had no other motive in asking the name than merely to place it in his list of calls.

“Smith,” said the colonel.

The medical man gave a short dry sort of cough, as he wrote "Master Smith" upon his tablets, and then promising to return in half an hour, he took his leave. At the expiration of half an hour Tobias was put under a course of treatment. His head was shaved, and a blister clapped upon the back of his neck. The room was darkened, and strict quiet was enjoined.

"As soon as he betrays any signs of consciousness, pray send for me, sir," said the surgeon.

"Certainly."

In the course of the day the captain made his appearance, and Colonel Jeffery detailed to him all that had taken place, only lamenting that, after so happily getting possession of Tobias, he should be in so sorry a condition. The captain expressed a wish to see him, and they both went to the chamber, where a woman had been hired to sit with Tobias, in order to give the first intimation of his stirring. Of course, as it was her duty, and what she was specially hired for, to keep wide awake, she was fast asleep, and snoring loud enough to awaken any one much worse than poor Tobias. But that was to be expected.

"Oh," said the captain, "this is a professional nurse."

"A professional devil!" said the colonel. "How did you know that?"

"By her dropping off so comfortably to sleep, and her utter neglect of her charge. I never knew one that did not do so, and, in good truth, I am inclined to think it is the very best thing they can do, for if they are not asleep they are obnoxiously awake."

The colonel took a pin from his cravat, and rather roughly inserted its point into the fat arm of the nurse. She started up, exclaiming —

"Drat the fleas, can't a mortal sleep in peace for them?"

"Madam," said the colonel, "how much is owing to you for sleeping here a few hours?"

"Lord bless me, sir, is this you? The poor soul has never so much as stirred. How my heart bleeds continually for him, to be sure. Ah, dear me, we are all born like sparks, and keep continually flying upward, as the psalm says."

"How much do I owe you?"

"Here today, and gone tomorrow. Bless his innocent face."

The colonel rung the bell, and a strapping footman made his appearance.

"You will see this woman to the door, John," he said, "and pay her for being here about three hours."

“Why, you mangy skinflint,” cried the woman. “What do you —”

She was cut short in her vituperative eloquence by John, who handed her down stairs with such dispatch that a pint bottle of gin rolled out of her pocket and was smashed, filling the house with an odour that was quite unmistakeable.

“What do you propose to do?” said the captain.

“Why, as we have dined, if you have no objection we will sit here and keep this poor benighted one company for awhile. He is better with no one than such as she whom I have dislodged; but before night he shall have a more tender and less professional nurse. You know more of the world, after all, than I do, captain.”

CHAPTER XXXIV  
Tobias has a Mind Diseased

With a bottle of claret upon the table between them, Colonel Jeffery and his old friend sat over the fire in the bedroom devoted to the use of poor Tobias Ragg. Alas! Poor boy, kindness and wealth that now surrounded him came late in the day. Before he first crossed the threshold of Sweeney Todd's odious abode, what human heart could have more acutely felt genuine kindness than Tobias's, but his destiny had been an evil one. Guilt has its victims, and Tobias was in all senses one of the victims of Sweeney Todd.

"I am sufficiently, perhaps superstitious, you will call it," said Colonel Jeffery in a low tone of voice, "to think that my meeting with this boy was not altogether accidental."

"Indeed?"

"No. Many things have happened to me during life — although I admit that they may be all accounted for as natural coincidences, curious only at the best but still suggestive of something very different, and make me at times a convert to the belief in an interfering special Providence, and this is one of them."

"It is a dangerous doctrine, my friend."

"Think you so?"

"Yes. It is much better and much safer both for the judgment and imagination to account naturally for all those things which admit of a natural explanation, than to fall back upon a special Providence, and fancy that it is continually interfering with the great and immutable laws that govern the world. I do not — mark me — deny such a thing, but I would not be hasty in asserting it. No man's experience can have been without numerous instances such as you mention."

"Certainly not."

"Then I should say to you, as St. Paul said to the Athenians — 'In all things I find you superstitious.' What's that?"

A faint moan had come upon both their ears, and after listening for a few moments another made itself heard, and they fancied, by the direction of the sound, that Tobias's lips must have uttered it. Placing his finger against his mouth to indicate silence, the colonel stepped up to the bedside, and hiding behind the curtains, he said, in the softest and kindest voice he could assume —

"Tobias! Tobias! Fear nothing now you are with friends, Tobias; and, above all, you are perfectly free from the power of Sweeney Todd."

“I am not mad! I am not mad!” shouted Tobias with a shrill vehemence that made both the colonel and his friend start.

“Nay, who says you are mad, Tobias? We know you are not mad, my lad. Don’t alarm yourself about that, we know you are not mad.”

“Mercy! Mercy! I will say nothing — nothing. How fiendlike he looks. Oh, Mr. Todd, spare me, and I will go far, far away, and die somewhere else, but do not kill me now, I am yet such — such a boy only, and my poor father is dead — dead — dead!”

“Ring the bell,” said Jeffery to his friend, “and tell John to go for Mr. Chisolm, the surgeon. Come — come, Tobias, you still fancy you are under the power of Todd, but it is not so — you are quite safe here.”

“Hush! Hush! Mother — oh, where are you, mother — did you leave me here, mother? Say you took, in a moment of thoughtlessness, the silver candlestick! Is Todd to be a devil, because you were thoughtless once? Hide me from him — hide me — hide! Hide! I am not mad. Hark! I hear him — one — two — three — four — five — six steps, and all Todd’s. Each one leaves blood in its track. Look at him now! His face changes — ’tis a fox’s — a serpent’s — hideous — hideous — God — God! I am mad — mad — mad!”

The boy dashed his head from side to side, and would have flung himself from the bed had not Colonel Jeffery advanced and held him.

“Poor fellow,” he said, “this is very shocking. Tobias! Tobias!”

“Hush! I hear — poor thing, did they say you was mad too? — Hide me in the straw! There — there — what a strange thing it is for all the air to be so full of blood. Do we breathe blood, and only fancy it air? Hush! Not a word — he comes with a serpent’s face — oh, tell me why does God let such beings ever riot upon the beautiful earth — one — two — three — four — five — six — Hiss — hiss! Off — off! I am not mad — not mad. Ha! Ha! Ha!”

An appalling shriek concluded this paroxysm, and for a few moments Tobias was still. The medical man at this time entered the room.

“Oh,” he said, “we have roused him up again, have we.” Medical men are rather fond of the plural identifying style of talking.

“Yes,” said Colonel Jeffery, “but he had better have slept the sleep of death than have awakened to be what he is, poor fellow.”

“A little — eh?”

The doctor tapped his forehead.

“Not a little.”

“Far away over the sea!” said Tobias, “Oh, yes — in any ship, only do not kill me, Mr. Todd — let me go and I will say nothing, I will work and send my poor mother hard-earned gold, and your name shall never pass our lips. Oh, no — no — no, do not say that I am mad. Do you see these tears? I have — I have not cried so since my poor father called me to him and held me in a last embrace of his wasted arms, saying, ‘Tobias, my darling, I am going — going far from you. God’s blessing be upon you, poor child.’ I thought my heart would break then, but it did not, I saw him put from the face of the living into the grave, and I did not quite break my heart then, but it is broken — broken now! Mad! Mad! Oh, no, not mad — no — no, but the last — but the last. I tell you, sir, that I am — am — am *not* mad. Why do you look at me, I am not mad — one — two — three — four — five — six. God — God — God! I am mad — mad. Ha! Ha! Ha! There they come, all the serpents, and Todd is their king. How the shadows fly about — they shrink — I cannot shrink. Help! God! God! God!”

“This is horrible,” said Colonel Jeffery.

“It is appalling, from the lips of one so young,” said the captain.

The medical man rubbed his hands together as he said —

“Why, ahem! It certainly is strangely indicative of a considerable amount of mental derangement, but we shall be able, I dare say, to subdue that. I think, if he could be persuaded to swallow a little draught I have here, it would be beneficial, and allay this irritation, which is partly nervous.”

“There cannot be much difficulty,” said the colonel, “in making him swallow anything, I should think.”

“Let us try.”

They held Tobias up while the doctor poured the contents of a small phial into his mouth. Nature preferred performing the office of deglutition to choking, and it was taken. The effect of the opiate was rapid, and after some inarticulate moans and vain attempts to spring from the bed, a deep sleep came over poor Tobias.

“Now, gentlemen,” said Mr. Chisolm, “I beg to inform you that this is a bad case.”

“I feared as much.”

“A very bad case. Some very serious shock indeed has been given to the lad’s brain, and if he at all recovers from it, he will be a long time doing so. I do not think those violent paroxysms will continue, but they may leave a kind of fatuity behind them which may be exceedingly difficult to grapple with.”

“In that case, he will not be able to give me the information I desire, and all I can do is to take care that he is kindly treated somewhere, poor lad. Poor fellow, his has been a hard lot. He evidently has a mind of uncommon sensibility, as is manifest from his ravings.”

“Yes, and that makes the case worse. However, we must hope for the best, and I will call again in the morning.”

“Will he awake soon?”

“Not for six or eight hours at least, and when he does, it is very unlikely that those paroxysms will again ensue. He will be quiet enough.”

“Then it will be scarcely necessary, during that time, to watch him, poor fellow?”

“Not at all. Of course, when he awakens it will be very desirable that some one should be here to speak to him; for, finding himself in a strange place, he will otherwise naturally be terrified.”

All this was promised by the colonel, and the medical man left the house, evidently with very slender hopes in his own mind of the recovery of Tobias. The colonel and his friend retired to another room, and then, after a consultation, they agreed that it was highly proper they should inform Sir Richard Blunt of what had taken place, for although poor Tobias was in no present condition to give any information, yet his capture, if it might be called by such a term, was so important an event that it would be unpardonable to keep it from the magistrate. They accordingly went together to his house, and luckily finding him at home, they at once communicated to him their errand. He listened to them with the most profound attention, and when they had concluded, he said —

“Gentlemen, it will be everything, if this lad recovers sufficiently to be a witness against his rascal of a master, for that is just what we want. However, from the account you give me of him, I am very much afraid the poor fellow’s mind is too severely affected.”

“That, too, is our fear.”

“Well, we must do the best we can, and I should advise that when he awakens some one should be by him with whose voice, as a friendly sound, he will be familiar.”

“Who can we get?”

“His poor mother.”

“Ah, yes, I will set about that at once.”

“Leave it to me,” said Sir Richard Blunt, “leave that to me — I know where to find Mrs. Ragg, and what’s best to say to her in the case. Let me see, in about four hours from now probably Tobias may be upon the point of recovery.”

“Most probably.”

“Then, sir, expect me at your house in that time with Mrs. Ragg. I will take care that the old lady’s mind is put completely at ease, so that she will aid us in any respect to bring about the recovery of her son, who no doubt has suffered severely from some plan of Todd’s to put him out of the way. That seems to me to be the most likely solution to the mystery of his present condition.”

“Todd, I am convinced,” said Colonel Jeffery, “would stop at no villany.”

“Certainly not. My own belief is, that he is so steeped to the lips in crime, that he sees no other mode of covering his misdeeds already done than by the commission of new ones. But his career is nearly at an end, gentlemen.”

The colonel and the captain took the rising of the magistrate from his chair as a polite hint that he had something else to do than to gossip with them any longer, and they took their leave, after expressing again to him how much they appreciated his exertions.

“If the mystery of the fate of my unhappy friend,” said the colonel, “is ever cleared up, it will be by your exertion, Sir Richard, and he and I, and society at large, will owe to you a heavy debt of gratitude for unmasking so horrible a villain as Sweeney Todd, for that he is such no one can doubt.”